


Using social media for daily, critical and reflective reading

ARTICLE


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Abstract

This work is about an action research developed at Luiz Gonzaga de Alcântara High School, in Tarrafas-CE, through a project and is justified by the need for actions that motivate reading, using technology as an ally. A reading that provides reflections on various themes, highlighting those associated with ethnic-racial relations. In this sense, the general objective of the research is to develop and strengthen the habit of daily reading, using social networks as a strategic tool. For the development of the project, qualitative and quantitative research was used, questionnaires were applied at the beginning and end of each phase of the project, daily text posts on Instagram and thematic weeks were held. The theoretical basis is based on Almeida (2010), Santos; Oliveira; Melo (2021), Ribeiro (2019), Evaristo (2020), among others. Finally, it is found that the daily reading habits of the target audience improved, developing anti-racist awareness and dialogues on ethnic-racial relations.

Keywords: Reading. Social Interaction. Ethnic Relations. Social media.

Utilização das redes sociais para uma leitura diária, crítica e reflexiva

Resumo

Este trabalho versa sobre uma pesquisa-ação desenvolvida na Escola de Ensino Médio Luiz Gonzaga de Alcântara, em Tarrafas-CE, por meio de um projeto que se justifica pela necessidade de ações que motivem a leitura, usando a tecnologia como aliada. Uma leitura que proporcione reflexões sobre diversas temáticas, destacando-se as associadas às relações étnico-raciais. Nesse sentido, o objetivo geral da pesquisa é desenvolver e fortalecer o hábito da leitura diária, utilizando-se das redes sociais como ferramenta estratégica. Para o desenvolvimento do projeto, foram utilizadas pesquisas qualitativa e quantitativa, aplicação de questionários no início e no final de cada fase do projeto, postagens diárias de textos no Instagram e realização de semanas temáticas. A fundamentação teórica baseia-se em Almeida (2010), Santos; Oliveira; Melo (2021), Ribeiro (2019), Evaristo (2020), entre outros. Por fim, constata-se que os hábitos de leitura diária do público-alvo melhoraram, desenvolvendo uma conscientização antirracista e diálogos sobre relações étnico-raciais.

Palavras-chave: Leitura. Interação Social. Relações Étnicas. Redes Sociais.

1 Introduction

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This research, based on the "5 Minutos" ("5 minutes") project, was carried out at the Luiz Gonzaga de Alcântara High School between May and November of the 2023 school year. However, the idea and planning of an action aimed at motivating reading, while using technology, social networks, in favor of the main objective, began at the end of the 2022 school year.

The investigation took shape as the project reached fruition, with the participation of one (1) student and three (3) students from one of the school's 3rd grade classes in the planning and development of the project, under the guidance of teachers from the language area. The students played a leading role throughout the period and found room for the creativity that emanates from their youth.

In this sense, the justification and contextualization of the research lie in the perception of the need for the project, which arose after an activity developed in the Reading Circle elective - year 2022, in which it was found that one of the biggest obstacles to students reading assiduously is the use of cell phones.

This gave rise to the idea of developing a reading project that would motivate students to develop the habit of daily reading, using smartphones and social networks, since young people tend to spend a lot of their free time surfing the web. In this way, the reach of the project and the interaction with the target audience became easier and broader.

Following this strategy, an official Instagram profile¹ was created for the project and disseminated in the school and in the class WhatsApp groups. The students were then set a challenge: to set aside five minutes a day for reading. Since then, the project team has met weekly to select the texts to be posted on Instagram as a challenge. The posts were made daily, from Monday to Friday, and the texts chosen had some common characteristics: short texts, current and relevant themes that could instigate

¹https://www.instagram.com/5_minutoss?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzIxNw==

reflection, debate and interaction between the followers (students) and the project team.

The genres and text types were diverse and both verbal and non-verbal texts were chosen. In addition, there were some themed weeks, such as "Love Week", "June Festivities Week", "Student Week", "Law 10.639/03 Week" and "Grammar Tips Week", in which the student team posted texts relating to the theme of the week. The writers and artists varied from among the school's own students because, from the outset, the project aimed to publicize and value them, as well as regional and nationally renowned writers.

The research was divided into two phases. Phase 1 took place during the 2nd school term and was aimed exclusively at the students of the Luiz Gonzaga de Alcântara EEM. Phase 2 took place between August and November 2023, in which the actions were expanded to reach the entire school community and society in general.

In the second phase, there was a lot of interaction with the students and all the participating public, through posts on Instagram, on themes that focused mainly on ethnic-racial issues. During this period, there were themed weeks that deserve to be highlighted, such as "Student Week", in which texts by student authors and artists from our school were published, "Victims of Racism Week" and "Afro Culture Week". These highlighted important names in our literature, such as Conceição Evaristo—one of the most prominent names in contemporary literature—and Carolina Maria de Jesus, who has been studied in various segments of Brazilian education. Law 10.639/03 and names such as Zumbi dos Palmares were also discussed.

On these occasions, real episodes of racism in Brazilian society were highlighted and debated, providing the opportunity to critically discuss how racism is rooted in Brazil and how it negatively affects people's lives. Also noteworthy during this phase was the participation of the "5 Minutos" project in Ceará Científico 2023²,

² It is SEDUC's annual scientific itinerary and has three stages: school, regional and state. In 2023, the theme of Ceará Científico was Science education and ethnic-racial relations.

winning the school stage and, consequently, representing EEM Luiz Gonzaga de Alcântara in the regional stage.

The general objective was to develop and strengthen the habit of daily reading, using social networks as a strategic tool. Based on this general objective, some specific ones were drawn up, namely: to motivate students to carry out daily reading; to use social networks as a strategy to motivate critical reading; to promote the reading of texts that address relevant issues such as racism and the implementation of Law 10.639/03; to make it possible to get to know local, regional and national writers and artists..

The theoretical basis for the project was based on Almeida (2010), Santos, Oliveira and Melo (2021), Nunes, Santana and Franco (2021), Freire (2020), Ribeiro (2019), Evaristo (2020), Mota (2021) and Law 10.639/03, in order to discuss the concepts of reading, critical reading, racism and ethnic-racial relations.

The methodology used to carry out the research is presented below.

2 Methodology

The research presented was conducted between May and November 2023 at EEM Luiz Gonzaga de Alcântara. The school is considered small, with 285 students enrolled in 2023, and is located in the town of Tarrafas, in the interior of the state of Ceará. The town is situated in the Cariri-West region and, according to the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), has a population of 7,529 inhabitants³.

The investigation of the "5 Minutos" ("5 Minutes") project was based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches, as it aimed to understand the research object subjectively while also incorporating data measurement when appropriate.

According to Prodanov and Freitas (2013), in relation to qualitative research,

³ Available at: <https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/ce/tarrafas/panorama>. Accessed on: May 19, 2024.

[...] the research has the environment as a direct source of data. The researcher maintains direct contact with the environment and the object of study in question, requiring more intensive fieldwork. In this case, the issues are studied in the environment in which they arise without any intentional manipulation by the researcher (Prodanov; Freitas, 2013, p. 70).

This aspect of the research is evident in the project's Instagram posts and the interactions they generated, such as likes, comments, and shares. Another element that highlights the qualitative nature of the study is the active participation of students in producing texts to be published on the project's Instagram page.

Regarding the quantitative aspect, it is reflected in the data collected through questionnaires distributed and answered via Google Forms, which tracked the progress of the research. In reference to quantitative research, Prodanov and Freitas (2013, p. 70) state that "in the development of quantitative research, we must formulate hypotheses and classify the relationship between variables to ensure the accuracy of the results, avoiding contradictions in the process of analysis and interpretation."

Methodologically, this study is characterized as action research—a research approach that combines scientific inquiry with practical action, aiming not only to generate knowledge but also to promote social change. This approach is collaborative and participatory, involving both researchers and participants in a continuous process of identifying a problem, planning an intervention, implementing actions, and evaluating the outcomes.

Thus, in action research, "[...] it is possible to dynamically study the problems, decisions, actions, negotiations, conflicts, and awareness that occur among agents during the process of transforming the situation" (Thiollent, 1986, p. 19).

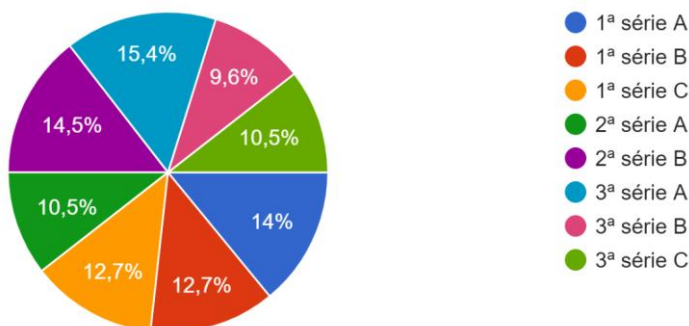
The tools used in this study included the analysis of social media interactions, the selection of relevant texts and studies—particularly those related to ethnic-racial relations—and the application and interpretation of questionnaires administered to students at the educational institution. The primary purpose of the questionnaires was to identify students' reading habits and their use of social media platforms.

With regard to the development of the project's activities, an official Instagram account was created for posting texts and engaging with the target audience, based on the analysis of the data obtained. Since then, the project team has met weekly to select texts, which were posted daily on Instagram as part of a reading challenge. The project also featured themed weeks, during which all published texts addressed specific topics.

Finally, it is worth noting that surveys were conducted at the end of each phase of the project, with the aim of assessing its impact and reach among the target audience.

Graph 1 - Data obtained from the questionnaire applied at the start of the project

Série / Turma
228 respostas



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

The results obtained from the project are discussed below.

3 Results and Discussion

The practice of reading is essential for strengthening a range of skills connected to various areas of knowledge, particularly interpretation and comprehension, which extend beyond the text itself. From this perspective,

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Reading is vital for interpretation. To interpret is, first and foremost, to understand. When it comes to a text, interpreting means going between the lines, to the details, to the subtleties of the message. To interpret is to go beyond the surface, to penetrate deep into the text, to feel all the emotions it can arouse. Successful interpretation involves careful reading (Almeida, 2010, p. 38).

Based on this idea, reading has the power to transport individuals to new spaces and expose them to a wide range of emotions and experiences, awakening a sense of critical awareness that is fundamental to the development of citizenship. Moreover, reading plays a crucial role in enhancing educational outcomes. As Almeida (2010, p. 39) states, “the inclusion of students in the universe of literate culture through reading develops their ability to engage in dialogue with the texts they read, contributing to the formation of their citizenship, culture, and sensitivity.”

The use of social media has become increasingly prevalent among young people, and schools must be attentive to this reality by encouraging reading within the context of digital technologies. In this way, social media can serve as a powerful tool for promoting reading across various dimensions. However, integrating platforms like Instagram into school-based reading practices is not a simple task, as students tend to engage only with content that captures their interest. This,

The school must help develop the necessary skills so that students can act effectively in the information and communication society. [...] Reading in the digital environment makes it possible to use information in a creative and innovative way to develop new ideas, and the school must contribute by teaching how to control the purposes of literary or non-literary reading, of searching for, selecting and finding information (Santos; Oliveira; Melo, 2021, p.304).

These competencies must be developed with the aim of contributing to the construction of an informative and awareness-raising approach to many relevant contemporary issues. Among the numerous topics addressed through texts, particular emphasis is placed on those concerning ethnic-racial relations, based on Law 10.639/03—which amended the Brazilian Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação – LDB), making the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture mandatory in schools. Developing curriculum proposals focused on reading and the fight against racism is essential, since

[...] Education has been one of the structuring pillars in the maintenance of racism in the country, particularly with regard to the curriculum. The History curriculum is largely racialized: it focuses on the construction of the nation and the contributions of the Euro-descendant population to culture, the economy, politics, the arts, and social organization (Mota, 2021, p. 17).

Anti-racist education must be strengthened so that young people can learn about and value the culture and history of African peoples and their descendants. According to Nunes, Santana, and Franco (2021, p.11): “The school has the responsibility to construct positive representations of Black populations and to develop actions that promote respect for cultural and historical diversity from the very first moments of a child’s contact with school.” Another important factor is the need to foster reflection on structural racism, so that naturalized practices can be rethought and a new society can be formed. Freire (2020, p.15) states that “we need critical hope, just as fish need unpolluted water.”

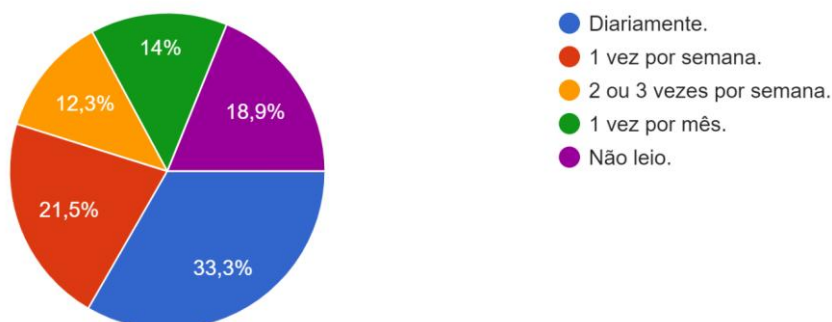
In advocating for anti-racist education, Ribeiro (2019, p.51) argues that “white people must critically take responsibility for the system of oppression that has historically privileged them, producing inequalities, and Black people can become aware of the historical processes in order not to reproduce them.” In this sense, being anti-racist is a responsibility assigned to everyone, and the school is a suitable space for such discussions.

In light of this, it is worth highlighting the relevance of action research through the “5 Minutos” project for both the school community and the local society, as the activities developed encouraged students at EEM Luiz Gonzaga de Alcântara to become readers, along with members of the project’s follower community. These actions contributed to combating structural racism through the reading and analysis of different textual genres, creating spaces for the interpretation and understanding of socially relevant themes. Furthermore, the research project made it possible to give visibility to student writers and artists, to value regional authors, and to strengthen the agency and protagonism of the students involved in the project.

Based on the questionnaires applied at the beginning and end of each phase of the project, it was found that the number of students with a daily reading habit increased significantly, and the reach of the project was considered satisfactory, as it managed to engage the vast majority of enrolled students, as well as a large portion of our broader community. As can be demonstrated below:

Graph 2 - Frequency of daily reading at the start of the project

Com que frequência você costuma ler?
228 respostas



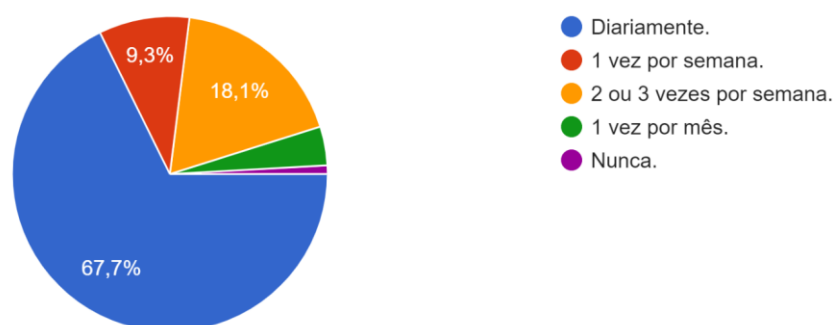
Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

Graph 3 - Frequency of daily reading at the end of the 1st stage of the project

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Com que frequência você costuma realizar a leitura proposta pelo projeto 5 MINUTOS?! nas redes sociais?

226 respostas



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

According to the graphs presented, students' engagement in daily reading increased. A significant decrease was also observed in the number of students who reported reading only once a month, as well as those who did not usually read at all. These figures reflect the impact generated by the implementation of the project.

It is also evident that students' interactions with the texts and the themes addressed demonstrate a clear improvement in their ability to engage with relevant topics through reading, fostering the development of critical and reflective thinking, as shown below:

Image 1 - First publication of the "5 minutos" project



Source: The project's official Instagram page

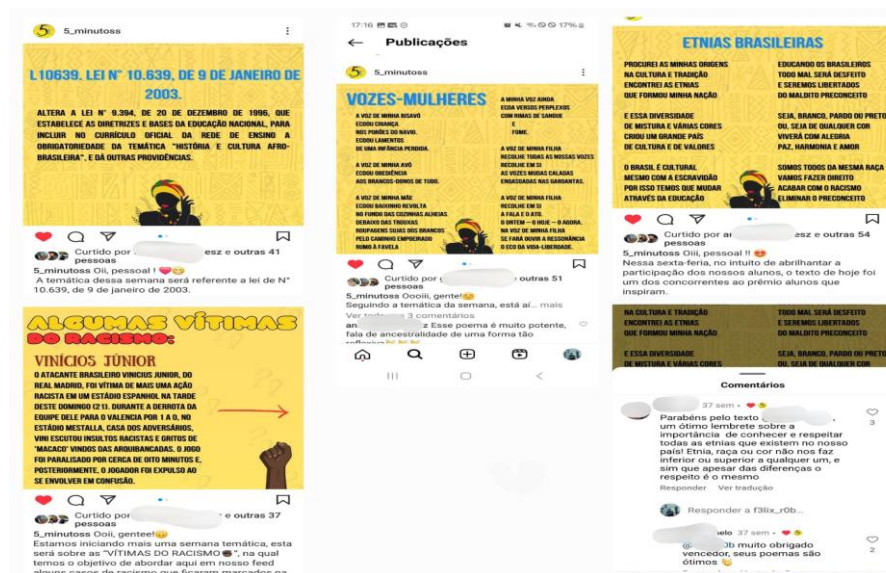
Image 1 presents the first post and the interaction it generated through likes and comments on the text. In this way, the project's intention is made clear: that the text would be read and commented on, thereby inviting students to reflect on what they read and contribute to the understanding of other readers.

It is also important to highlight that the project enabled contact with a wide variety of textual genres and highly relevant themes for our society, such as Law 10.639/03 and structural racism in Brazil, thereby promoting anti-racist education and discussions on ethnic-racial relations. This was achieved through the strategic use of Instagram as a tool in the development of project activities and the attainment of its objectives, thus allowing for a redefinition of how social media can be used in educational contexts.

The selection of texts authored by Black women, such as those by Conceição Evaristo, amplified the discussion in favor of raising awareness about these vital issues. Evaristo (2020, p. 38) states: “Among the literatures that innovate the national literary project, the authorship of Black women introduces powerful texts into a system previously shaped, notably, by the authorship of white men and women.” In this regard, the choice of such literature becomes a symbolic act in the fight against structural racism.

These were some of the texts posted, followed below by a selection of comments generated through follower interactions:

Image 2 - Some posts and interaction from followers



Source: The project's official Instagram page

Image 2 showcases some of the texts posted on the project's Instagram page—short, diverse texts with content relevant for discussion. From this perspective, it is possible to perceive the reach of the investigation through the “5 Minutos” project,

particularly in terms of encouraging daily reading and promoting critical reflection on a wide range of topics, especially those related to ethnic-racial relations.

4 Final considerations

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In light of the above, it can be concluded that the growing disconnection of young people from reading is a contemporary issue that must be addressed through initiatives capable of capturing their interest. In this sense, the actions carried out through the “5 Minutos” (“5 Minutes”) project were of great importance to the institution and its students, as significant changes in the reading habits of students at EEM Luiz Gonzaga de Alcântara were observed, as well as among members of the broader community who participated in the second phase of the project. This was evident in the comparative analysis of data collected through questionnaires administered at the beginning and current stage of the project, as well as in the evaluation of some posts and the interactions through likes and comments.

Furthermore, the research focused on actions aimed at promoting anti-racist education, fostering students’ capacity for critical and awareness-building reading, contributing to the improvement of ethnic-racial relations, combating structural racism, and encouraging a reflective mindset.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the significant reach of this action-research project, as demonstrated by the level of engagement on the project’s official Instagram account, showing that its impact extends beyond the school walls and reaches other sectors of our society.

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