11. Books that make a literature teacher: Relationships between the personal and the school canon

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Introduction

Socio-historical and didactic-pedagogical demands have historically shaped literature teaching, transforming its status and curricular configuration (Cosson, 2020). In Portugal, due to the decisive position assumed by the State in regulating education (Duarte, 2013), the development of literature as a curricular subject has been defined by conflicted combinations of theoretical concepts and motivated by sociopolitical interests (Duarte, 2013; Witte & Sâmihaian, 2013). During the Estado Novo (1933-1974), the school approach of literary texts was a critical propaganda tool to disseminate the values of the non-democratic government. Because of that, the oeuvre, theme, and content were carefully chosen to reinforce its ideology dissemination and suppress dissenting voices from the school space (Duarte, 2013; Magalhães, 2019). Fortunately, despite the efforts of the regime, the Carnation Revolution blossomed in 1974, defining the beginning of a new democratic era in Portugal, which has celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2024. Among the changes resulting from the historic event is the redefinition of the social role attributed to literature teaching. We believe that the understanding of the development of literature teaching in the country since then could inform the proposition of further enhancing and democratising literary education.

Aiming to contribute to this process, we have developed a research project¹ to produce professional life histories of teachers who teach or have taught literature, which will contribute to the characterisation of the paradigms that have guided the teaching of Literature in Portugal during this period. We designed it aligned with the life history methodology (Goodson & Sikes, 2017), as it enables understanding

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social phenomena as biographical narratives people produce about how they experience them, both as the process and product (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To that, we intend to analyse professional life narratives of literature teachers who began their careers in the 1970s, as they can offer a valuable vision into the literature teaching panorama due to the span of their work as essential agents in its development.

In this paper, we will consider the narrative of one participant, Teacher Luis, to explore the relationship between the constitution of the professional identity of literature teachers and their reading paths. The section 'Key concepts' presents the theoretical background that endorsed this focus. In section 'Research design', we briefly describe the methodology by which we conduct this study. Following, in the section 'A reader-teacher journey', we explore the emerging findings. Finally, in the last section, we sketch some 'Concluding remarks'.

Key concepts

Literary texts have been a topic and instrument of formal teaching since at least the birth of the concept of modern school (Arbona & Garcia-Raffi, 2017). During the following centuries, educational institutions established their validation power through different instruments, such as curricula, assessments, and textbooks. By them and based on non-transparent ethical and aesthetical criteria, the school selected an oeuvre worthy of teaching and learning, forming the school canon (Godoy & Lopes, 2025).

However, its configuration has traditionally been marked by disputes on which texts should be included in literature classes and who should be responsible for choosing them. They are motivated by the critical functions that the school canon develops as a legitimiser of curricular literature teaching and different political and theoretical approaches to the capacities the literature holds. Despite this contentious scenario and criticism, the school canon continues to privilege literary work from hegemonic culture, composed mainly of thematically and formally homogeneous texts written by white, western men (Godoy & Lopes, in press).

The generally imposed school canon contrasts with the concept of personal canon, formed by classics, in the broad sense defined by Calvino (2007). In this way, it represents the metaphorical library curated by the preferences of one and shaped by their taste and experiences (including those in the school), orienting the perspectives of the reader, influencing their way of perceiving reality, and serving their critical and creative endeavours and fruition.

Mediating these two canon relations is a complex and sensible mission for all readers-in-formation. However, it is more demanding and impactful for literature teachers, as their reading habits and formal and informal literary education process influence their professional vision of the literature and their beliefs about didactical-pedagogical practices and theoretical concepts. Biographical-narratives studies identified and analysed the connections between the personal and professional spheres within teachers-to-be.

Ballester Roca and Ibarra-Rius (2019) studied the reading life narrative of 31 students from the master in Didácticas Específicas, en la especialidad de Educación Literaria y Lingüística. They demonstrated that, despite the perception that the standardised classics are outdated and undermine the promotion of a taste for reading

in schools, the reading preferences of future teachers continue to be based on the school canon. Because of that, the authors conclude that paying critical attention to its composition is essential since it contributes to the perpetuation of teaching beliefs about literature.

The consequences of reading paths on the professionality of teachers are also the centre of the study developed by Contreras Barceló (2021). It combines the answers to an Author Recognition Test with reading life narratives to understand the possible impacts of the reading mediation processes on the potential performance of 35 students of the graduation course Educación Infantil y Primaria. The results apprise us of a possible vicious cycle in which students who have had more exposure and positive experiences with literary reading, mediated by familiar members and/or good teachers, are more likely to become successful literary mediators. To tackle this issue, the author suggests that teacher education courses should enhance awareness of the importance of the mediator.

Also focusing on teacher education needs, Gómez Rubio (2021) analysed 256 reading autobiographies written by students from teaching degrees courses. Although the findings of the study indicate that the participants value the literature and know a varied range of genres and titles, they also reveal that the teacher education programmes should include more opportunities to reflect on literary texts and practice teaching them.

By studying the reader life narrative of four students in formation, Munita (2013) aimed to explore the belief and knowledge systems they hold on to literature and school literary teaching. Their narratives informed the classification of the teachers-to-be into strong and weak readers. The first category represents those who develop a broader understanding of literature and adopt diverse, engaging pedagogical methods to teach it. The second one is dedicated to those with a view of literature that relies on traditional teaching styles and standardised school canon. The study suggests that incorporating strategies to cultivate positive reading habits in teacher education programmes can enhance the beliefs and approaches of future teachers in the classroom.

A group of 18 students enrolled in the course Master de Profesorado de Secundaria, Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanzas de Idiomas participated in the case study conducted by Romero Oliva and Trigo Ibañez (2018). Based on the analysis of data collected through various instruments, including a biographical narrative, the researchers analysed the influences of the course on the education of future language and literature teachers. The conclusion shows that the course represents an evolution for the participants at their professional and personal literary education levels.

Considering these contributions, we would like to add a different perspective arising from the narrative of a long-career teacher to the discussion. We conducted this study based on the research design subsequently presented to accomplish it.

Research design

As previously mentioned, this paper stems from a research project that aims to write professional life histories of literature teachers who had begun their careers in the 1970s and, based on them, to characterise the paradigms that have guided liter-

ature teaching in Portugal in the last 50 years. We develop it using the life history methodology, triangulating the i. narrative of one with the ii. narratives of their peers, and iii. official socio-historical discourses that have impacted their experiences (Goodson, 2017a; 2017b). In this process, it was crucial to consider contextual sources that integrate the construction of a socially located life story. Attending to this design, we describe the processes of the collection and analysis of the narrative in the following subsections.

Narrative of one

In this first stage, we collected and analysed the narrative of Teacher Luis. Adopting the convenience sampling method (Cohen et al., 2018), we selected him as a potential participant because he attends the inclusion criteria, as he is a literature teacher whose career began in the 1970s and continued during the following years. Thus, we invited Teacher Luis to narrate his professional life story in a semi-directive interview (Atkinson, 2007), addressing his relationship with literature, his literary and professional education process, his career trajectory focusing on his role in teaching literature, and his appreciation of his professional life.

After conducting the data treatment, we analysed the interview by combining narrative and paradigmatic analysis methods (Bolívar, 2002; Bolívar & Segovia, 2019; Polkinhorne, 1995), focusing on personal literary taste, valuation, and professional positioning regarding the school canon. This process allowed us to identify the relations between the literary books, the narrative constructed by Teacher Luis and the sociohistorical aspects that might have influenced it. To accomplish this, it was important to consider contextual sources that integrate the construction of a socially located life story. We describe the processes of their collection and analysis in the following subsections.

Narrative of his peers

In the second stage, we analysed narratives from ten teachers identified through a snowball sample (Cohen et al., 2018). These teachers, like Luis, initiated their careers in the 1970s and have taught literature in secondary education during the past decades. These narratives are part of a larger project entitled Fifty Years of Teaching: Factors of Change and Intergenerational Dialogues (FYT-ID)² which aims are produce 'life narratives' that account for key analytical dimensions of the transformations in teachers' daily lives across the last decades, identifying crucial factors of innovation's in Portugal.

Although the interviews conducted in the context of the FYT-ID project do not explicitly contemplate the literature teaching development, the positioning of these teachers on the school canon was an emergent result. To understand the views of the participants on the subject, we conducted a paradigmatic analysis (Bolívar, 2002; Bolívar & Segovia, 2019; Polkinhorne, 1995) like the one from the first stage. The analysis centred on aspects related to their literary taste and valuation of the school canon. The results provide us valuable insights from other literature teachers that support the narrative of Teacher Luis.

²(ref. PTDC/CED-EDG/1039/2021)

Sociohistorical discourses

In the third stage, we addressed official discourses that have informed the constitution of the Portuguese school canon since the Estado Novo times (1936-1974). We decided to consider the years before Teacher Luis entered the career attending to the importance of his literary and professional education in the professional identity constitution (Ballesteros Roca & Ibarra-Rius, 2019; Contreras Barceló, 2021; Gómez Rubio, 2021; Munita, 2013; Romero Olivia & Trigo Ibañez, 2018).

We conduct a documentary analysis (Cohen et al., 2018), adopting the thematic content analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2012) on a corpus of eleven primary documents. These documents are laws, orders, curricula, and programmes that have guided and regulated literature teaching for almost a century and are available on government databases and repositories (e.g. Biblioteca Digital – Direção-Geral da Educação; Diário da República Eletrônico and PORBASE - Base Nacional de Dados Bibliográficos).

Considering the aim of this paper, we focused our reflections on the contributions of each document to the construction and consolidation of the Portuguese school canon. We also analysed sociohistorical and theoretical aspects that may have influenced them. The results from this process provided the opportunity to contextualise and support the narrative of Teacher Luis.

In the subsequent section, we discuss the findings arising from triangulating the results from the three stages.

A reader-teacher journey: A monologue in three acts

During his narrative, Luis presented himself as a teacher and an actor. He attributed some of the success he had in his career to his activities in the theatre, inside and outside the professional context. Inspired by this perception, we organised the presentation of his narrative analysis into three parts, which we called acts. Each of them explores the literary and professional development of Teacher Luis, aiming to analyse the relation he established between his personal and school canon based on his narrative and supported by considerations from his colleagues and information from sociohistorical official discourses.

Act I: The awakening of the reader

Luis: I think my relationship with literature began at school... Maybe before... Maybe before, because I have older brothers and my brothers already read, I must have had access to literature at a very early age. Well, I also had a grandmother who read a lot. She lived with us. She was a widow and lived in my house since I was five years old or so. She read a lot and used to tell us what she read and, by doing so, taught us the love of literature. And I always read a lot! I read a lot throughout my schooling... I spent many hours in the library. And, at that time, we're talking about fifty years ago, there weren't books in houses like there are today. We don't even know where to put the books today, do we? Everywhere is full of books. But it wasn't this way before. My parents bought some books for me, but only a few. There was no

money, no market, there were few bookstores. So, I spent many, many, many hours in the school library, until later, reading... or in the municipal library. It happened to be close to my house, and it was easy. All those young adult books, everything for boys and girls, the Countess of Segur's books, I read all of that... I read indeed all of that. I read a lot and have always read many contemporary authors, the most contemporary... There's a writer I love, José Luís Peixoto, or the Mozambican writer Mia Couto. There was a time when I only read Mia Couto, but it passed... I really like reading. Sometimes, I don't have time to read... I must retire to have more time to read.

Teacher Luis was born, grew up, attended school classes, and learnt to read during the Estado Novo. Because of these achievements, he can be considered a member of a minority group, which includes his colleagues, who enjoyed rights denied to a large part of the population, resulting in the high rates of infant mortality (Almeida, 2017) and illiteracy that characterise the regime (Beja, 2019). He also could count on the support of literary mediators from his family and school during his first years of life and formal education process, which, according to Contreras Barceló (2021), may have contributed to his current fulfilment in his career as a literature teacher. However, even in this distinctive scenario, the beginning of his literary education was not as free and diversified as desired due to the constraints imposed by the political context.

For example, the difficulties he felt in owning books resulted from the Estado Novo policies. All the national book chain, formed by artists, publishing houses and bookstores, suffered from a fragile market with few readers and the pressure of a hostile and censorious government (Beja, 2019). The National Censorship Services, authorised by Decree 22.469/1933, ostracised publications authored by political opponents of the regime and/or whose content was considered harmful to the status quo (Ferrão et al., 2015). Because of that, even spending countless hours in libraries, Teacher Luís could not read all the titles and authors he could want during his childhood and youth.

In his school, Luis possibly experienced a lack of literary freedom as well due to the instrumentalisation of the literature teaching by the regime, as we previously addressed. The literature curricula, defined and published by Decrees³, had their objectives founded on the rhetoric-historiographical approach. The teachers were watched, and the most courageous tried to talk about different arts and ideologies from the proposed in official documents with half words, as related by two of the literature teachers from the FYT-id project. Besides defining objectives, the documents generally listed specific titles and prescribed the topics to be addressed by them in classrooms (Duarte, 2013). Given the ideology of the regime, the school canon from these times was characterised by jingoist outlines. It is curious to notice that only Portuguese male authors formed the selected compendium. The most recurrent names in the lists were Alexandre Herculano, Camilo Castelo Branco, Almeida Garrett, Padre Antônio Vieira, Luís de Camões and Eça de Queiroz.

Considering this context, having a personal or school canon different from those who held power in Portugal was legally impossible. However, the scenography changed, and red carnations emerged to decorate the stage for the next act.

³Decrees 27.084/1936; 27.085/1936; 27.279/1936; 27.603/1937; 39.807/1954; 42.994/1960; 23.485/1968 and 23.601/1968

Act II: The freedom to read

Luis: The 25th of April happened in Portugal. It made me more prepared to take on various possibilities. First, I was involved in the theatre, I did my Civic Service at the theatre. I was already at Teatro Experimental in 1975 while finishing high school. And then, the Student Civic Service opened, and I did it at the Círculo de Cultura Teatral. I worked taking care of the for the library, even worked on restoring the Biblioteca do Teatro Central and was an actor in the amateur group. The universities remained closed for a long time, and we had nothing to do... Then, the Teaching School opened, the place to educate primary teachers. And I was selected... I attended the teachers' course between 1976 and 1979. I took that course, and I really liked it. The school had a very modern pedagogical environment, and it had professors who had come from France and other places. It was an excellent experience. I was a primary school teacher for seven years... I also worked with many stories for children and, of course, books for children. Even today, I really enjoy reading them to my grandchildren. I was a primary school teacher until 1987. In the meantime, I completed a degree in Portuguese Studies. The level of instability in primary school was extremely high... There was no job, and there was no possibility of permanent employment. We had no place on the official teaching staff...

The Carnation Revolution allowed Portuguese people to interact freely with pedagogical, scientific, and cultural trends in vogue abroad (Duarte, 2013). Besides, there was a joint effort for the newly conquered democracy to consolidate public policies to expand access and quality of education and culture (Beja, 2019). Teacher Luis and his colleagues actively participated in those processes, embracing teaching and art as a profession from different paths and motivations. He first chose the primary school and the theatre. During the following years, the fall of censorship and the influence of new theoretical currents on pedagogy, science and arts changed the social role attributed to literature and its teaching. Despite no longer being a student and yet to become a literature teacher, Luis could enjoy this fruitful moment through his initial education as a primary teacher and the opening of the book sector, which has been booming since then (Beja, 2019).

The freedom to think and the influence of new educational, linguistic, and literary theoretical movements are also reflected in the renewing and democratising of the literature curriculum. The process first allowed teachers to experiment with didactic and pedagogical strategies. Critical pedagogy, sociolinguistics, textual linguistics, structuralism, and reception theories were widely studied, and didactic and pedagogical experiments were adopted during these first years (Duarte, 2013). The resultant innovations were later synthesised and consolidated in official guiding documents that came into force at the end of that decade⁴. Those prescribed a more diversified school canon, adding to the list consolidated by the previous regime titles and authors that had been banned until then, despite their literary quality, for

⁴Programa Ensino Secundário (1975); Programas do Preparatório e do Secundário (1978); Programas de Português do Curso Complementar do Ensino Liceal (1979); Programas da disciplina de Português dos 10.º e 11.º anos do curso complementar – Área D (1979); Programa de Língua Portuguesa (1980)

ideologic, thematic or biographical reasons. It is worth noting the presence of texts written by opponents of the Estado Novo (e.g. Alves Redol and Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen) and foreign authors (e., g. Selma Lagerlöf and Truman Capote), with particular attention to those in Portuguese (e. g. Érico Veríssimo and Graciliano Ramos).

Despite being happy teaching young children, the inconsistencies of the profession and the possibility of working with this new canon encouraged Teacher Luis to make some changes to his role.

Act III: The professional reader

Luis: As I had already concluded Portuguese Studies - because I always really liked Portuguese language, literature, and linguistics - I became a teacher in the middle school and had job stability. But I really liked working on literature and, although I really appreciated the atmosphere at the school where I was, because it had a fantastic team of teachers, extremely creative, I moved to a secondary school in 1987. At the secondary school, the environment was... heavier, and the teachers were more traditional, pedagogically speaking. There, I started working on Portuguese in secondary school... Education had changed. Some teachers noticed, others didn't. Thinking of myself, for example, I was a good lecturer. I managed to capture my students' attention for a long time. I had also been an actor. That helped my skills, shaping how I am in the classroom, how I draw attention, and, as I say, the tricks I do. During a time, I thought I was good. But then, as time went by, I realised that it wasn't enough, that it was necessary to have other strategies, other resources... It was a natural process for me because I already had a solid teaching education, which not all teachers could access. But even in this school, we have evolved a lot due to educational policies and evolution. When we receive all the students, we must have a lot of strategies because students who come from home without books and access to culture need to be involved. There were Portuguese A and Portuguese B subjects then; one had more literature, and the other was more technical. Even the Portuguese B subject has always had a lot of literature in Portugal. However, the programmes were not always the same: as governments and the teams hired to make the programmes changed, the programmes changed. If they were more conservative, the programmes would be more conservative; If they were less conservative, the programmes would be more innovative. What do I call innovative? What do I call conservative? All literature is good, but we cannot always work only on the classics or focus heavily on the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. We have some golden ages, in fact. Portugal was a wealthy country during the 16th century, and consequently, the culture developed. Therefore, authors like Camões and Gil Vicente must be studied because they are very good. Then we have some good authors from the 17th and 18th centuries... Nonetheless, we have the duty to give more expression to contemporary authors in curricula. And when I say 'contemporaries', I'm talking about those who write today. Valter Hugo Mãe, Afonso Cruz and many others... And those great names of the 20th century, like Saramago, Sophia de Mello Breyner, etc... We have an outstanding literature. We have

good authors, men and women. We have feminine literature that has a tradition, since the Cantigas de Amigo, even before the founding of nationality and this is very important. Thus, the programmes vary because their authors are sometimes more focused on religion, more focused on psychological issues... And others are more focused on social questions. This relates to the options of those who make them. Literature itself sometimes plays a conservative role in Portuguese teaching. However, we, teachers, are artists. We are able to bend the curriculum a little bit. I always follow the curriculum, but I do it in my own way. If I want, I can spend five or two classes characterising the character Blimunda from Memorial do Convento.

Teacher Luis began to teach Portuguese and literature during the first year that compulsory education included all nine years of basic education (Law 46/1986). The change transformed the profile of the student body and imposed several challenges to the entire educational system. To overcome them, committed teachers relied on their teaching education to elaborate strategies inspired, for example, by the New School and Critical Pedagogy theories. The expansion of schooling took a long time to include secondary education, which happened only in 2009, with the approval of Law 85/2009. The hierarchical structure and traditional approach common in those institutions were represented in their heavy furniture and stately buildings, as observed by colleagues of Teacher Luis. Because of that, the pedagogical innovation developed in basic education since the 25th of April Revolution has faced more difficulties in flourishing in secondary school, which are reflected in its curricula.

Although it has changed since teacher Luis became a literature teacher, responding to the interests and ideology of the government that proposed it⁵, the alterations have not configured ruptures to the standardised literature teaching model, based on historiographic knowledge (Duarte, 2013; Magalhães, 2019). This continuity resulted in the literature teaching focusing on transmitting a selected cultural capital. Because of that, there were few and timid expansions of the prescribed school canon, making teacher Luis, in chorus with some of his colleagues, criticised its outdatedness, given its similarity with the one they studied during their own schooling, under the Estado Novo government.

To overcome what they considered deficiencies in the literature curriculum, Luis, like many of his colleagues, has used creativity and some rebellion to teach literature according to the expectations he developed throughout his career, literary and professional education years. The initiatives they narrate generally aim to overcome the encyclopaedic view of literature and allow students to develop a taste for literary reading.

To do this, they use several tricks to make the literary text seem as attractive to students as it is to them. They are mainly based on the relationships that literature can establish with other subjects, other arts, and the world. Through their agency, they also open space in the school canon to include the personal canons of teachers and students. At some moments in history, when educational policies provided

⁵Programa de Português do Ensino Secundário (1991); Programa de Português para o Ensino Secundário (2004); Programas e Metas Curriculares do Português – Ensino Secundário (2014); Aprendizagens Essenciais – Ensino Secundário (2018).

more autonomy and conditions, these acts of agency, creativity, and rebellion were formalised into projects like the one that teacher Luis proudly describes below.

Luis: We did fantastic interdisciplinary projects. One of them was called «Onde o Português é pensado e falado», which was about Portuguese-speaking culture, everything that had to do with Portuguese-speaking countries and regions. The government here is also important, as it is curricula. It was easier to change programmes at that time. Imagine, for example, that I had to teach a short story by a Portuguese author. Instead of teaching the story recommended by the document, which was, let's imagine, by Eça de Queiroz, I would use another story by a Cape Verdean author, for example. And this is how culture was approached... And this was done in almost all subjects.

Concluding remarks

In this paper, we explored the relationship between the constitution of the professional identity of literature teachers and their reading paths by analysing the narrative of Teacher Luis, focusing on his considerations about his personal and the school canon. Through the analysis of his narrative, endorsed by narratives of ten other literature teachers and official documents, we verified, as other studies (Ballester Roca & Ibarra-Rius, 2019; Contreras Barceló, 2021; Gómez Rubio, 2021; Munita, 2013; Romero Oliva & Trigo Ibañez, 2018), that access to quality literary and professional education had enhanced his success as a literature teacher. His childhood experiences in a family and school environment and his subsequent professional training, initial and ongoing, empowered him to develop his pedagogical practices to conquer the professional autonomy not always provided by educational policies.

The analysis of curricula and other official guiding documents demonstrated that, despite the many evolutions achieved after the 25th of April, the literature curriculum and the school canon continue to assume prescriptive and traditional approaches. The informal alternatives developed by Professor Luís and his colleagues aimed to approach literature from a less content-based and more agentic perspective, allowing students to realise that literature relates to the rest of the world besides being a school subject. Although the rebelliousness of these teachers was welcome, it is essential to develop curricula that better contemplate the potential of teaching literature and to implement public policies that respect the authority and autonomy of the teacher.

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12. Corpografíar el cuerpo en movimiento. Un espacio pedagógico para relatar la afectividad de los cuerpos

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Introducción

Esta comunicación aborda la primera aproximación de los resultados obtenidos en el marco del proyecto de investigación «La formación docente inicial en Educación Física. Un estudio exploratorio sobre la efectivización de las relaciones pedagógicas y las sensibilidades en la educación superior en Argentina y España en el contexto de post pandemia», concedido por el Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente de Argentina y la Secretaría de Ciencia y Técnica de la Universidad de Luján (Buenos Aires) (INFOD Y SCYT-UNLU).

Esta primera aproximación se ha realizado a través de la participación del alumnado en tres asignaturas vinculadas al área de Didáctica de la Expresión corporal en el marco de la formación inicial del Grado en Educación Infantil, Grado en Educación Primaria y Grado en Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte de la Universidad de Almería, durante el primer cuatrimestre del curso académico 2023/24. En el contexto real del aula («in situ») y en base a las dinámicas de educación corporal que se plantean se invita al alumnado a reflexionar y grafiar mediante composiciones visuales la experiencia vivida en la asignatura bajo tres premisas: a) ¿qué tipo de afectos y cómo se materializan estos a partir de las dinámicas expresivo-corporales que se plantean en el aula?, b) ¿cuáles son los afectos que se asocian a los modos de aprender los conocimientos propios de las asignaturas?; c) cómo se puede materializar la experiencia vivida en el aula a través de expresiones o composiciones artísticas visuales que ayuden a comprender las relaciones de afectividad en el aprendizaje?.

Para ello, se propone familiarizarse con instrumentos pocos usuales en la formación inicial, como es el uso de corpografías. «La corpografía imprime una mirada