

# Teacher Education, Hypermedia Language, and Social Constructions of Time

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**Abstract:** In this paper, we undertake a dialectical analysis of the relationship between teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language and social constructions of time. Drawing on Habermas' works, we argue that instrumental rationality is intrinsic to the currently hegemonic social construction of time, which relies on the concept of Chronos, objective time as measured by a clock; because Chronos does not account for contemporary social subjects' lived time, it promotes human objectification. On the other dialectical pole, we demonstrate the compatibility between communicative rationality and the concept of time as Kairos: lived time, something unique to each human being. Next, we elaborate on how Kairos and communicative rationality can help shape an Education whose goal is human emancipation. As a result of the dialectical contrast between these theoretical perspectives, we propose changes to teacher training processes so that the usage of hypermedia language may promote the emancipation of future teachers, enabling them to take on their role of makers of their own historical and social circumstances.

**Keywords:** Communicative rationality, instrumental reason, hypermedia language, social construction of time, teacher education.

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## 1. Introduction

Firstly, it is worth noting that this study stems from a research project on digital inclusion policies and its impact on both K-12 education and teacher education, which is coordinated by the author.

Humans have historically wondered about their relationship with time. In the current socio-historical settings, as men and women's relationship with time is heavily impacted by the frenzy instilled by hypermedia language [1] – that language which, through the Internet, articulates sound, video, animation, and text, among others – that question becomes even more relevant.

Specifically, regarding K-12 teachers' education, we ask the following question: how does this new relationship with time manifest in teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language?

This question invites us to take a closer look at social constructions of time. Thus, in this study we reflect upon the relationship between time and teacher education, focusing particularly on teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language.

## 2. Methodology

This paper is a theoretical study based on a qualitative, bibliographic research [2].

With the goal of studying teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language, this study undertakes a dialectical analysis and contrasts two conceptual categories using two distinct viewpoints: instrumental reason x communicative rationality, and time as *Chronos* x time as *Kairos*.

## 3. Findings

The findings of this theoretical-conceptual study span two interrelated conceptual fields: a) teacher education and the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language; b) social constructions of time and hypermedia language.

### 3.1 Teacher education and the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language

Habermas' critique of instrumental reason based on the concept of communicative action [3] is a cornerstone of theoretical discussions in many fields, Education among them.

Habermas identifies two types of rationality: communicative and instrumental. Put very simply, communicative rationality is based on the intersubjectivity of linguistic understanding and its goal is human emancipation; it is intrinsically linked to the historical materiality of a given social context, and manifests in everyday relations. Meanwhile, instrumental rationality is the work of an egologically constituted subject and consists of strategic actions aiming at control and domination.

Long has Enguita[4] pointed out the connection between social relationships in education and professional ones. In so doing, he unveils how education has historically shaped itself after the economical

demands of its time. This is not without consequences to education; under these conditions, it seems to us that Brazilian teacher education policy has privileged instrumental rationality [3, 5] over the years.

The National Right to Education Campaign [6] illustrates the urgency of taking regional action to change the subaltern place occupied by public education in the unfair, wealth-concentrating development model that plagues Latin America. Accordingly, Candau [7] argues that curricular reforms in several Latin American countries are driven by indicators such as efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity, in line with those countries' project of taking part in the globalized world. To tension a key aspect of these curricular reforms, Candau raises the following dialectical category: "centralizing decentralization", that is, having educational services be operated at the city level, and "decentralized centralization", which consists of a triad formed by national evaluation systems, the core educational contents of the national syllabus, and centralized teacher education strategies.

Thus, the State's technical control over education functions as a ramification of macrostructural Work sphere settings. Catani, Oliveira, and Dourado[8] note that the recent increase in work flexibility and mobility has helped consolidate mechanisms of exerting control and pressure over workers.

Current job market trends (commonly referred to as Toyotism) translate as lean teams that may call on extra professionals on an as-needed basis, employing external personnel when required by a project.

For an Education subordinated to the job market, this means that workers must be instrumentalized, that is, made to successfully fit into an increasingly fleeting, volatile Work sphere where hard-won workers' rights are being progressively dismantled. In terms of national curricular parameters and guidelines, this is implemented by perverting the concept of "learning to learn": the goal of an Education subordinated to the job market consists of preparing workers for employability, meaning that these social actors will be ready to quickly mobilize knowledges as applicable to their current professional project.

The insidious presence of instrumental reason in the legal documents that regulate all education levels in Brazil is attested by the frequency and importance of terms such as "competences and abilities" in those texts.

Alongside other scholars, Barreto [9] and Pesce [10] warn us that the mere preparation of future teachers for the job market is but an instrumental approach to teacher education, which fails to be in line with the "social quality education" recommended by CONAE, the Brazilian National Education Conference [11]. Applying the social quality education principle to teacher training for pedagogical usage of hypermedia language means refusing instrumental reason tenets, refusing to merely train workers to engage in the current capitalist production processes, and thus working against what Adorno [12] terms the fetishization of technique.

Many future teachers are also affected by such fetishization and expect classes to train them to use software and virtual platforms. Whilst developing technological fluency is evidently indispensable, by no means should it be the main goal of those educational processes – especially given how quickly hypermedia resources become obsolete in our day and age. Just as teacher education must go beyond instruction and effectively prepare future educators to deal with the complexity of children and teenagers' formative processes<sup>1</sup>[13], teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language must go beyond producing competent digital media users.

In their study on how the concepts of education and semi-education are invigorated in our digital culture society, Zuin & Gomes [14] discuss the contradictory effects of digital culture to formative processes. They emphasize the fact that despite its potential to boost democratic practices, digital culture has preponderantly risen amidst a staggering increase of social control.

When addressing Brazil's national policy for the education and appreciation of education professionals, CONAE [11] guidelines advocate the relevance of mastering hypermedia language, given its key role in today's cultural capital.

This succinct overview of how the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language is viewed in current Brazilian national teacher education policy documents and practices outlines the socio-historical context from which emerges our concern about how this educational field must address its ontological dimension, especially regarding the relationship between hypermedia language and identity constitution. For that purpose, it is of the utmost importance to examine social subjects' historical relationship with time, as well as how hypermedia language fits into the *modus operandi* of current societal settings.

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<sup>1</sup>Generally speaking, formative processes are all and any social practices that promote social subjects' ontological and epistemological education. However, for the purposes of this paper, we use the expression in reference to processes that take place in Formal Education settings, regardless of educational level (K-12 education, higher education) or mode (in-person education, distance education, hybrid learning).

### **3.2 The social construction of time and hypermedia language**

The In order to better understand the relationship between teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language and the social construction of time in Initial K-12 Teacher Education courses, it is perhaps useful to look at Pesce's thoughts [15] on the issue of contemporary time, drawing on the work of Abbagnano[16], Pineau[17], Aguiar [18], Glezer[19], and Assmann[20]. Before we begin, it should be noted that most scholars and philosophers referred to in this section develop their work from strictly Eurocentric perspectives, and therefore further studies featuring more plural standpoints would be most welcome.

Abbagnano[16] addresses the issue of time based on three different views: time as a measurable movement magnitude, time as intuited movement, and time as a structure of possibilities. Time as a measurable movement magnitude dates to Antiquity when the cyclical dimension of the world and of human life played a central role. This understanding of time is present in medieval theologian St. Thomas Aquinas' oeuvre the scientific concept of time prevalent during Western Modernity. Time as intuited movement relates to the notion of consciousness, especially as developed by Hegel and St. Augustin. Bergson's lived time (*la durée*) and Husserl's phenomenological time are also modern takes on the concept of time as intuited movement. Time as a structure of possibilities has strong ties to existentialist philosophy, in particular Heidegger's *Being and Time* [21], where time is linked to the notion of project.

In his historical analysis of production modes, Pineau[17] relates time and power. He differentiates between various social chronometries and proposes the existence of four major eras: the time of gods, the time of bodies, the time of machines, and the time of codes. In the time of gods (12th century), time measurement units and instruments were nature-based (sun watches, hourglasses) and timekeeping was the province of religious authorities. In the time of bodies (12th to 17th centuries), urban tradesmen became the protagonists of time management. In the time of machines (17th to 20th centuries), the reference for all measurement was the coin, and industrials has controlled workers' free time. We live now in what Pineau[17] terms the time of codes: our social chronometry is based on the relationship between information and education. Thus, social subjects strive for an informational and educational relationship with their constitutive environment.

According to Aguiar [18], the time of obedience to one or more deities spanned multiple cultures and its bedrock is the notion of time as something cyclical, which materializes as cultural and ritualistic traditions and differs fundamentally from the Judeo-Christian notion of linear time. Aguiar [18] explains that both cyclical and linear understandings of time coexisted until the Middle Ages. It was only with the rise of a mercantile bourgeoisie that linear time became hegemonic, with cyclical time restricted to cultural and religious celebrations and rituals. Aguiar [18] claims that contemporary technology obliterates geographical distances and enables us to experience instantaneity, which can cause the consciousness of contemporary social subjects to become saturated with information to the point of dullness. Whilst technological speed can foster alienation and passivity, we must not overlook its potential to articulate social relationships that resist massification. Aside from promoting human objectification by saturating us with massive amounts of information to be processed in increasingly short time intervals, the technology of instantaneity can also strengthen cultural countercurrents that use digital media to mobilize resistance movements; two recent examples are the Arab Spring and the Brazilian "Clean record" initiative<sup>2</sup>.

As she charts social chronometries, historian Glezer[19] alerts us that the current volatility of time threatens subjective time, lived time. According to her, while classical capitalism was based on territorial (that is, geographic) expansion, late capitalism covets time. The weight of the ephemeral, of the instantaneous, and of presentism are inherent to our "real time" society. This frenetic rhythm has grave consequences for the constitution of contemporary social subjects.

After noting that the existence of different societal organizations opens several possibilities of relating with time, Assmann[20] distinguishes between two major temporal dimensions, referred to by the Ancient Greeks as *Kairos* (καῖρός – subjective, qualitative, lived time) and *Chronos* (Χρόνος – objective, quantitative, clock time), and cautions us about the latter's hegemony in the capitalist world. According to Assmann[20], these concepts are not unrelated to the role played by ICT in our day and age, for those technologies allow humans to save time while also being chronophages, that is, time-devourers.

In "An Avantgardistic Instinct for Relevances: The Role of the Intellectual and the European Cause", Habermas [22] examines the role of ICT in contemporary social processes. The philosopher exposes the contradictions intrinsic to that symbolic apparatus: whilst hypermedia language helps broaden the mediatic public sphere as communication networks are condensed and egalitarianism rises, it also contributes to decentralize information access and shatter communication nexuses. This polarity engenders another internal

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<sup>2</sup>a nation-wide mobilization in Brazil to legally bar people convicted of crimes from running for public offices for eight years.

tension: hypermedia can empower positive subversion in totalitarian regimes, but its anonymity and informational dispersion can also weaken traditional public sphere conquests.

Another key point raised by Assmann[20] and entirely applicable to teacher education is the thin line between having formative processes be regulated by the precision of clocks, without any regard for lived time, and overlooking the very real fact that many aspects of human existence are ruled by clock time.

Such theoretical considerations about the social construction of time underpin our understanding that, under capitalism, chronological time is hegemonic in human lives. For this reason, our experiences with the cyclical dimension of time are limited to religious and cultural celebrations and rituals. The capitalist societal frenzy causes the Kairos temporal dimension to be neglected, inasmuch as contemporary subjects are subjected to the interference of chronological time, which is finely attuned to instrumental reason.

This unbalance between the Chronos and Kairos temporal dimensions has nefarious consequences for identity constitution, as the hegemony of presentism undermines both the phenomenological notion of lived time and the existentialist notion of time as a structure of possibilities.

The hegemony of Chronos over Kairos is at the root of the ephemeral and increasingly shallow interpersonal relationships characteristic of our day and age. Just as cultural and consumer goods soon become disposable, men and women are prematurely made to leave the job market – often at the prime of their intellectual and productive capacity. In Chauí's[23, p. 33] words: “Volatile and ephemeral, our contemporary experience knows no sense of continuity and is restricted to the present, which is experienced as a fleeting moment”.

The hallmark frenzy of current societal organizations increasingly depletes the social spaces where human beings constitute themselves as historical subjects. Such numbness also affects educational settings and the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language: firstly, when this field of teacher education promotes human objectification by limiting itself to the mere development of technological fluency; secondly when, by failing to address the contradictions inherent to hypermedia (as is the case with any and all capital-appropriated symbolic apparatus), the field undercuts human emancipation; thirdly, when the field succumbs to pragmatism and focuses exclusively on gnoseological issues, neglecting ontological ones such as the relationship between the social construction of time and the identity constitution of contemporary social subjects..

#### **4. Discussion**

By means of a theoretical-conceptual study, in this paper we sought answers to the following research question: how does our new relationship with time manifest in the ways Teacher Education programs address the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language?

Our efforts involved a twofold analysis: first, we reflected upon how the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language tends to be addressed in Brazilian Initial Teacher Education programs and guidelines. Next, based on the premise that time, as a category, is a historical construction, we offered a succinct overview of multiple readings of time produced by critics working within various philosophical frameworks.

Our research findings suggest that when teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language fails to consider students' lived time and assumes a pragmatic and instrumental stance, focusing exclusively on technological fluency, this 'education' partakes in a naive enthusiasm towards the insertion of hypermedia language in Education and, in so doing, might promote acritical appropriation of digital media in schools. This goes against the CONAE recommendations [11], according to which we must imbue media content with educational meaning.

A major challenge in the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language is helping students become more than mere consumers of the information that circulates on the web: it is our duty to form creative and critical digital media users.

#### **5. Conclusion**

We hope that this study can contribute, however slightly, to the ongoing debate on teacher education by reflecting on the relationship between hypermedia language and time as a social construction.

By briefly outlining how teacher education in Brazil has been preparing future teachers for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language, and by succinctly presenting the notion of time as a social construction, we meant to contribute to the existing body of academic research on teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language.

As the inclusion of the ontological dimension in teacher education processes is likely to foster human emancipation, this discussion may be of interest to those who intend to work towards that end and to those who would like future teachers to be attentive to the formative times of their K-12 students – in Bonilla's words [24], these times are also realized as people “fully experience digital culture”.

Importantly here, we should understand that amidst the frenzy caused by hypermedia language, paying attention to Kairos, to lived time, can contribute significantly to promote the emancipation of the social subjects undergoing formative processes, enabling them to become makers of their own historical and social circumstances.

Our proposals are underpinned by a brief overview of how the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language is treated in Initial Teacher Education in Brazil, and by the succinct outline of various concepts of time.

Far from presuming to have conclusively addressed the broad range of issues within the topic, our goal was simply to move the reader to reflect upon the challenges posed to K-12 teachers' training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language, so that we may collectively come up with ideas and actions befitting the current historical moment.

Teacher education is of paramount importance to the formative processes of the new generations, and for those yet to come. When dealing with such a vital issue, we must keep in mind one of Education's core contradictions: as Arendt [25] explains, whilst we are responsible for connecting students to socially legitimated knowledge, so that they are not left to fend for themselves, it is equally important to not take away their opportunity to build something new.

Based on Habermas' [3, 5] concept of communicative rationality, we discern three major challenges posed to the field of teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language: firstly, although future teachers must develop technological fluency, their education should not be limited to that; secondly, the contradictions inherent to the inclusion of hypermedia language into school spaces must be addressed; last, but not least, future teachers' educators must strive for a balance between the field's gnoseological and ontological aspects.

This means that in addition to addressing how hypermedia language can help humans construct knowledge, we must also discuss how digital media plays a role in the identity constitution of contemporary social subjects. To that end, it is crucial to ponder how current social actors are subjected to a frantic rhythm that shallows social practices – school practices and teacher education practices included.

The three challenges listed above are a call to action, demanding new practices for teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language. These practices must meet the social quality education standards recommended by CONAE [11].

The Chronos temporal dimension has ruled teachers' formative processes (including the ones aimed at training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language), and this is not compatible with a "social quality" education [11]. The fact that teacher education courses try to cover complex concepts in short periods of time exposes how the temporality of those courses is not attuned to the reality of the vast majority of their students, whose cultural repertoire does not match the one of the 'model student' the courses are planned for; who struggle with conceptual gaps from their schoolyears, and most of whom work their way through undergrad school and thus must divide their time between academic duties and professional ones, and often domestic chores as well, as pointed out by Gatti and Sá-Barreto [26], and Gatti, Sá-Barreto and André [27].

Aside from not limiting itself to the development of technological fluency, teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language must address the ontological dimension of those subjects' education, which may be accomplished by addressing the role of hypermedia language in the identity constitution of contemporary social subjects, in face of how relationships become increasingly fleeting under the frantic rhythm imposed by hypermedia language.

In teacher training for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language, time may be regarded as Kairos based on the prospective notion of time as a structure of possibilities; this has strong ties to the notion of projects, which is a cornerstone concept of educational thought. As we prepare future teachers for the pedagogical usage of hypermedia language, minding the lived dimension of time can contribute to meaningful construction of knowledge, so that the students may imbue "media content with educational meaning" [11].

Regarding the limitations of this paper, we must point out that the interpretation of the produced and analyzed data is closely linked to the researcher's gnoseological and ontological stance (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In other words, far from being a neutral, passive observer, the researcher interprets data and theoretical concepts based on her understanding of knowledge, of being, and on her worldview.

As this paper is based on qualitative research, its findings are only transposable to an investigative corpus with social and historical settings like the ones examined here. Thus, non-probabilistic or theoretical generalization applies, but not statistical generalization [28].

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