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Chapter

The Amazon Forest in Classes of “Guamá Bilíngue” Project

Douglas Rodrigues Pinheiro da Costa and Rita de Cássia Paiva

Abstract

This chapter describes first the program Guamá Bilíngue (name referred to the river along the university bank which is part of the Amazon Basis) that, from the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA in Portuguese acronym meaning the Federal University of Para State) and its purpose of social transformation through the foreign languages teaching/learning process. Then, is to divulge the proposal to produce a textbook for future English classes in the program, especially because it is where students can discuss about the Brazilian Amazon Forest to generate critical consciousness about taking care of it. So, it will be presented some steps to that creation considering the theoretical framework and the objectives that students must reach in this program. Some authors are mentioned as a researching base but are not present in this paper.

Keywords: Guamá Bilíngue, foreign languages textbook, Brazilian amazon forest, students in vulnerability, amazon conservation studies

1. Introduction

We are the fruit of a society whose unique technological moment is shaping us. It is really a very hard situation and as well as a very hard issue to talk and deal with all the (almost endless) conditions on the schooling in the riverbanks all over the world and assure those populations a quality education or even any education at all.

It is not—and it is never going to be—a beautiful sight. Brown children among wastes do not go to billboards, do not they? Even if they are cuties offered by the Amazon rainforest. However, the forest peoples are not only those who have lived in the forest. Students in the peripheral areas of the main cities are as uncared by the government as the autochthonal ones. And there comes the environmental/social/cultural education that can provide a new perspective to adolescents in public schools as a way of reaching the formal work market or even taking them out of the shantytown dirty streets.

Awaking a critical view in the enormous population of poor students is an impossible task if it is taken as a whole. But when a free language course is offered to such public, as a lure, to bring them to a new paradigm of thinking and learning, important themes can be discussed. So, a foreign language textbook is built especially for this public—adolescents in secondary public schools—aiming to provide them a game-changing.
In other words, the proposal is not a social experiment or just teaching languages. The discourse implicit in the whole project, whether in the texts, in the parallel research, or in the training to take over a classroom, is very simple: education, as a right guaranteed in the Brazilian constitution, offered in the classroom is, to a large extent, involved with the discourse of that elite that seeks to maintain the status quo of the minimum quality of public education and that it is up to Guamá Bilíngue\(^1\) to raise its voice and offer didactic materials and activities that can provide the necessary inputs for students to find their academic path in the midst of what the contemporary school is offering in the way of education.

And there is an important advantage: environmental care in the Amazon region is as needed as the forest itself; then, teaching English while teaching respect and conservation may be, or shall be, an opportunity for adolescents, volunteers, and society.

### 2. Guamá Bilíngue project

Guamá Bilíngue is an extension program of the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA in the Portuguese acronym) and exists since 2010 with one main objective: to transform the lives of teenagers from the most peripheral areas of Belém, the capital of Pará state, in Brazilian Amazon Forest region. Those teenagers must be in public high school yet, but for any reason do not hold any perspective on the future. In this program, such students have the chance to study a foreign language and increase their world vision and the way they interpret their environment. In other words, the overall aim of the project is to reduce violence and social prejudice through education. At the same time, the underlying idea is to try to rescue young people from 15 to 18 years old who are in secondary education in the public network and help them to stay away from marginality using strategies in the theoretical framework of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2012); the mental models of Lawson and Lawson (1993); Meaningful Learning (Ausubel, 1982); premises of Vygotsky (1998); and cognitive linguistics. For it, the classes have been designed to involve language properly and jointly with what is known as transversal themes or transversal subjects according to the PCN (Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais in Portuguese) that align the course of Brazilian education. In addition, it collaborates with both the undergraduate students of language and literature as well as the adolescents who attend the classes, as it is proposed as a place of formation for future generations with a critical conscience and willingness to transform themselves and their work environment based on their new perception of the world.

In the first part, the chapter will present the same theories that are related to the elaboration of a textbook and its importance for a learning process, some concepts about the transversal themes, and what allows to be performed discussions in the classroom about subjects that are important to increase critical thinking. Then, it will be presented a suggestion for the elaboration of a unit for the textbook talking about the Brazilian Amazon Forest, the pedagogical steps that the unit will have and its justifications. Also, it aims alert people about the importance to start and initiate the English classes in the project and especially the relevance to involve the subject of Amazon Forest to reach the goal of fomenting the responsibility in students that sometimes do not think about their own environment in which they are inserted and conserves their own cultural background, their values, and responsibilities.

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1. Guamá is the name of one of the main rivers in the Amazon Basin and Bilíngue means bilingual.
As the realization of the entire book would not be possible in this chapter, it is going to present the steps for creating one unit about nature will have in the textbook considering the purpose that teachers have to achieve in these students and to explain how the text suggestion and the grammar part will foment the oral discussion during the classes when the English classes start, because until now the program just offers Spanish classes with a special textbook for this language and German whose beginning of the classes are settled to April/2023.

2.1 Theoretical framework

At the same time, the program offers some benefits to students with social vulnerability, undergraduate students with degrees in English Language, and Literature could practice their teaching skills with this program which becomes a place to put into practice all was learned during their career and reflecting about their professional actions in the classroom. Guamá Bilingüe program has been a teaching laboratory for 13 years. Therefore, the program, sustained by the university volunteers, has the power to motivate as many students that are learning the language as students from the degree in English Language and Literature. Paiva supports that “el proyecto propone, en el mismo afán, incentivar la motivación en los alumnos que se benefician del proyecto, el alumno de la carrera de letras/espánol, tal como el alumno joven en riesgo social” [1].

For that, the classes count with material that was elaborated by the volunteers, divided by lessons containing basically two parts: a grammatical one, which presents the structure of the language, vocabulary and exercises, and a reading part, which can be found a text that talks about any theme or subject which takes students to deliberate about the society, nature, technology, or literature. It is important to mention that the main goal of the program turns around the transformation and motivation of students to make them create their own critical perspectives and objectives for their lives. Teaching language becomes just an instrument, a tool to reach this goal. Clearly, students will learn the language during this process, but not without stimulating their critical thinking.

Each unit of the material available to the program contains a theme to be discussed where there is a text to be read and some questions for students to make a text comprehension. To keep the structure of the material, it will be presented a plan to elaborate a unit where the main theme to be discussed involves the environment. As known, Belém is the biggest city placed in the Amazon Forest, so it becomes much important to stimulate critical thinking about caring for the place and its benefits and also to encourage the responsibility of citizens of the forest themselves. That is why the objective of the program is not only to teach language, but also citizenship. It is a commitment to society, education, and nature. Silva says that “O ensino da língua inglesa deve ir além das quatro habilidades linguísticas, contribuindo para a formação de cidadãos críticos e transformadores da realidade social” ([2], p. 195).

Volunteer teachers of Guamá Bilingue have the mission to stimulate this critical thinking in the students as the first goal. The language and the subject discussions become a very important tools to reach it. Through it, students will have time to learn how to identify a problem in order to find a probable solution or even how to see possibilities that they are not used to see yet. “Critical thinking can develop if it is practiced, and there needs to be enough time in the learning process. One way to develop thinking skills in the learning process is by training the students to search and find the problem” ([3], p. 2).
Discussing subjects such as those, students have the chance to open their minds to points of view that they have not thought about yet. Concerning to conservation of nature, for example, they would be able to think about their own reality, precisely about the environment they are inserted (the Amazon region), and reflect about the problems and difficulties that this environment can present. For example, volunteer teachers would be able to make them think about the problems the Amazon region faces, know about dilemmas they do not know yet, know the law related to this environment, sustainable actions that could be put into practice seeking reforestation always facing the reality. Reality such as presented by Fearnside: “Sustainable Forest management has become a requirement of Brazilian legislation and an objective at least nominally espoused by all. But it faces fundamental contradictions between restraining harvest rates to levels that will allow the forest to regenerate and maximizing financial returns to loggers” ([4], p. 766).

In this case, it becomes important the process of making the material that works as a textbook to make teaching an increasing process of critical thinking. The textbook guides the teaching practice, the learning process and contains the subjects that students must study and have contact with. “O LD é um guia para professores e alunos, orientando a prática pedagógica e também que é uma ferramenta que deve ser utilizada de maneira crítica pelos alunos e professores” ([2], p. 195).

These themes that are contained in each unit can be considered the main part of the class offered by the program because in this material we have an opportunity to create a space in the classroom where students can express themselves and have a chance to think of their knowledge about the world and even about their self-knowledge. Sometimes, this debate during the language class is the only moment that students must expose their opinion and practice the critical thinking about some subject. For it, the transversal themes get into action as a tool to make this discussion happen in class. “Os temas transversais dizem respeito à compreensão dos diferentes objetos de conhecimento, possibilitando a referência a sistemas construídos na realidade dos alunos” ([2], p. 198). In other words, transversal themes are subjects that explore the comprehension of students about various objects of knowledge.

When these themes are worked on during the classes, the teacher is responsible to manage the discussion and guide the opinion exposing in order to detect any sign where pedagogical intervention is necessary. It means that the teacher has the challenge to open the mind of students who needs to be encouraged to make himself or herself an active agent of society. Furthermore, the transversal themes are requirements within PCN that determines the methodological ways in the education of Brazil:

[Trabalhar os temas transversais, segundo os PCN, não significa que os professores devem parar sua programação para trabalhar os temas, mas sim de que explicitem as relações entre ambos e as incluam como conteúdo de sua área, articulando a finalidade do estudo escolar com as questões sociais, possibilitando aos alunos o uso dos conhecimentos escolares em sua vida extraescolar. ([2], p. 199)]

Lopes mentions Hutchinson e Waters (1987) when these authors say consider some topics about the elaboration of pedagogical material. These authors mention the importance to analysis the language description and the Learning Theories which becomes much relevant to the Guamá Bilingüe program. It is about thinking which are
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the necessities of students and it can help the teacher to define the objectives of the class. As mentioned previously, this objective is to transform positively students’ life. Teach the language is left in the background.

[A análise de necessidades, quando bem realizada, trará informações valiosas a respeito do aluno (como suas lacunas e expectativas), do meio onde o curso será ministrado, da tarefa a ser realizada na situação-alvo e das competências necessárias para bem desempenhá-la. Toda essa informação, no entanto, precisa ser organizada e direcionada ao aluno de forma que o objetivo, a priori determinado, seja alcançado. ([5], p. 22)]

Reading can be not only a process of comprehension of random information. It must be meaningful to the student. A chance to learn some subject or lesson from that text. In the program Guamá Bilíngue, the reading process works as a window to see the world outside and a moment to reflect on this subject beyond learning the language. Braga “entende a leitura em língua estrangeira como uma atividade de solução de problemas, pode também favorecer a aquisição de língua via leitura.” ([6], p. 6)

The program Guamá Bilíngue already has a textbook for the students of Spanish, the only language that has been taught until this year, 2022. To the next year the goal is to initiate English classes, and for that, it is necessary that the program also has a textbook containing texts in English and its respective grammatical and vocabulary topics. In unit 10 of the Spanish textbook, a text about the Patagonia is found. In it, it is possible to discuss about the nature, global warming, and foment the responsibility of the students to take care of the environment. This chapter seeks to present a proposal for the elaboration of a unit where students of English can reach this same objective about the natural theme.

2.2 Methodology

Originally the Spanish material should have 13 units, however, due to several issues that are not going to be related here, the book was finished with 10 units. The Guamá Bilíngue project is used as a language course as a laboratory for the future teachers who emerged from the UFPA language and literature degree. So, starting from the premise that students on under graduating Spanish Language and Literature courses will be future facilitators and representatives of the teaching of Spanish in everyday life in elementary and high schools, it is expected that their academic guidance should go beyond the teaching materials used up to secondary school level. How, then, can we train ESL teachers in Brazilian Language Courses who are linguistically competent and capable of going beyond the classroom, searching for solutions to the daily praxis of teaching Spanish?

In the Meaningful Learning theory, subsidies can be found to contribute to the design of a methodology which, based on the use of analogies, in order to allow students of Language Studies/Spanish to have a differentiated treatment when learning a foreign language which should be used as a working and professional improvement tool. In the context of this work, the focus is on the Romance language family, Iberian, focusing on Spanish and Portuguese. This proposal does not deal fundamentally with “Linguistics”, nor does it intend to make or propose a new appreciation of this science. It only intends to suggest a new approach of teaching methodology for future Spanish teachers which will give them the tools to work in their profession with critical analysis and the ability to understand/teach Spanish at some of its levels: phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. This proposal assesses professional
training with a view to its application to the teaching of the Spanish language in
degree courses in Languages.

Authors such Maffesoli (apud Bango; Stubbs; Gangé, 2002) refers to the specific-
ity of analogical thinking as being “typified forms without any concern with their
existence, in order to give greater prominence to what constitutes the essentials of
the social plot”. Therefore, it should be considered that, through the exercise of the
comparison when it comes to the training of Spanish teachers, meaningful learning
implies the organization of linguistic material in the student's cognitive structure.

One of the most important professors and researchers on the language teaching/learn-
ing process Almeida Filho [7] explained several factors that affect the whole process
in/out the classroom, so, Figure 1 is adapted from his ideas:

In Figure 1, we can see how teaching material becomes a base for this process
of teaching and learning process where factors like the quality of this material, the
affective filter of the teacher and the student, the teachers’ approach of teaching, and
many other can intervene in the result of the students learning process.

When the idea was to build English material, it was necessary to “re-process” all
the themes constructed on linguistic similarity. It was possible working the same
“simple” methodology that uses structural analogs as a tool for language teaching,
which allows an innovative approach to the teaching of English based on the Spanish
textbook to students due to the philological proximity—among others—of the
languages: English/Portuguese/Spanish. So, in this chapter it is demonstrated how
was the process of creating only one unit of a textbook talking about the Amazon as
a guideline for English classes, taking as basis the unit 10, from the Spanish textbook,
that talks about Patagonia. In it, it is possible to find a text explaining the Patagonia
of Chile followed by some questions of comprehension and at the final of the text
comprehension part a question directed for the students where they will be able to
think what their role in the world is to not contribute to global warming.

One of our main concerns about this was finding the grammatical part contain-
ing the Future Tense of Spanish, called “Futuro Simple” with its conjugation and
exercises. The proposal of putting the future in this unit that talks about nature helps
students to form sentences talking about how the nature in our future will be. Then it
is found another text explaining the concept of global warming, its causes, its conse-
quences, and possible solution to avoid it.

![Figure 1](https://example.com/figure1.png)

**Figure 1.**
Main factors intervening in the process of teaching and learning other languages.
The following figures are the 10th unit of the Spanish book using Chilean Patagonia as a biome to be taken care:

**Figure 2** shows the front page of a unit from the textbook of Spanish classes of Guamá Bilíngue. The title and the pictures are the showiest when students come to this page, what helps them to know previously the subject and recognize the context. In the same page, a text about the nature of Patagonia where students can get vocabulary and start a discussion about that. This figure shows how is structured the Spanish material of the program and how could be structured the English material to meet the same proposal of Spanish.

The questions about the text have already addressed the climate change issue:

**Figure 3** shows several questions in Spanish related to the text about Patagonia with the goal to test the comprehension of the information presented on the previous page. In this photo, it is possible to notice that at the bottom of the page, there is a question that is directed to the student, which is not possible to answer by finding responses in the text, but making a reflection on our own habits, due to the question: “¿Cuál es mi papel para no contribuir al calentamiento global?”, which means “What is my role in not contributing to global warming?”

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**Patagonia**

Unit 10

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Montserrat, islas y bosques virgenes, una zona inhóspita y salvaje con todo su mágico encanto original es la que ofrece este territorio de naturaleza pura. Nuevos lugares en el mundo donde el misterioso de la geomorfología de las grandes montañas se mezcla con la frágil naturaleza, ambiental y acuática que ponemos a su vez en riesgo de ser revelados en lo que ahora es el Patagonia.

La Patagonia chilena es una subdivisión de la Patagonia que se extiende entre los paralelos 53º y 55º aproximadamente, con el sector que va desde la isla Magallanes hasta la isla de las Lobas, Aysén y Magallanes. Es una de las superficies más espaciosas del país, con un espacio de más de 1,5 habitantes por km². Las naciones allí permanecen prácticamente iguales.

En su totalidad accidentada geográficamente, remarcan los pecados de la naturaleza y el lugar poblado en espacios inexplorados. Una región de altitudes altas con una proporción de la flora y fauna local que son únicos en el mundo como compensa la ecosistema y se complementa con esto. Las indígenas que habitaban este lugar este lugar usaban sus cuatro oceános con arcos de 360 y utilizaban pieles para protegerse de los vientos y el frío mismo. Tal vez por esto Patagonia tiene sus maravillas, Trumpas y ciudades de Patagonia.

La historia del punto más extremo del continente siempre ha estado ligada a navegantes y aventureros, a descubridores en rios, habitantes originales, como los patagones, el navegante portugués Fernan- do de Magallanes llegó a la zona en 1520 y la bautizó con el nombre Tierra del Fuego, tras atravesar las islas y llegar a la isla Orteorós o Salimard en las islas Malvinas. Comenzó su conquista y caza de los animales, las aves, islas y canales que guardan trazas de identidad legendaria.

A 312 kilómetros de Punta Arenas, se encuentra el parque nacional Torres del Paine, uno de los monumentos más impresionantes de la Patagonia. Un paraje donde se encuentra una de las zonas más montañosas, en el entorno 24 de ellos, la mayoría con la cima de más de 1,500 metros de altura, y más de 100 kilómetros de largo, que recibe año a año a miles de visitantes de todo el mundo.

La Patagonia es el territorio más cercano al con- tinentes antártico y al polo sur, la que constituye una gran vía hacia el Nuevo Mundo, la que ha hecho que varias de las tradiciones y costumbres se hayan conservado hasta nuestros días. Por ello, la patagonia es dirigida como un lugar históricamente, que siempre ha estado ligado a la historia y a la cultura, con una peculiaridad que se ha mantenido a lo largo de los años.

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**Figure 2.** Main text page 41 in the Spanish material.
Due to this perspective, for the English textbook, it was decided to consider the following suggestion: a unit directed to the environment discussion that will present the title "The Brazilian Amazon Forest", followed by a text taken from a new from the website Global Witness where a 24-year-old activist, called Txai Suruí, from the Brazilian Amazon, speaks about the reality of the forest. In the text, subjects such as indigenous representatives, worried about the Amazon forest state as well as the increase of deforestation in this area leading to climate change. It means that the students of the program will be able to discuss about these problems searching for possible solutions with help of the teacher, and furthermore, thinking of how we are taking care of our forest and all its particularities.

2.3 Discussing topics

After presenting and explaining some vocabularies and language structures, the unit will contain beside questions to test the text comprehension of students, these questions will be a way of brainstorming for the oral discussion part. The questions of this part of the unit and the objectives of each one will be presented below.
2.3.1 How many indigenous women were present at COP26 (the conference presented in the text)?

This question has the objective to make students think about the lack of opportunities that women have in spots that historically were thought to be for men, especially for indigenous people, and how important was to the Brazilian Amazonians to have Txai Suruí in the event representing the indigenous community.

2.3.2 According to Txai Suruí, what are the consequences lived by the indigenous people in the Amazon Forest?

Here, the objective is to make students think about these consequences that affect the indigenous community and how they suffer with it. It is also important to make them put themselves in indigenous people’s shoes and imagine how they would deal with each situation that deforestation causes.

2.3.3 How much has deforestation increased in percentual?

This question will make the student not only search for statistical data but also consider what causes are to deforestation and who is responsible for this situation. Probably will be kind of hard to get the exact reply due to the complex knowledge necessary about politics and the economy in relation to the environment. It is worth reminding that the students from the program do not have access to education of quality due to their social vulnerability.

2.3.4 What is the profession of Txai Suruí presented in the text?

With this question, students will be able to recognize how important is to provide education to indigenous people and it is an opportunity for the teacher to foment in them the search for this education opening their minds to think about the academic context.

Clearly, during the process of elaboration of all of the units, it is possible to add more questions according to the needs of them. Other suggestion for this unit is a section where students will find some questions directed to them. Questions like: “How are you taking care of Amazon Forest?”, “Are you against or in favor to deforestation?”, “Do you agree that saving the Amazon Forest is important to the rest of the world?”. The core of the textbook is given to Guamá Bilingue students the total picture of the current situation of the Brazilian Amazon Forest focusing on lifestyle, predatory extraction, deforestation versus conservation, equality in education, especially indigenous and “quilombos orignal peoples” as much as it is possible in 10 units always keeping in mind that the analogical understanding process has to be used from the vocabulary choice to the grammar topics and language linguistic register.

After the text reading and comprehension, the grammar presented in the material contribute to the learning process of students. The suggestion is to follow the example of the Spanish textbook and insert the Future Tense of English in the unit. Although, the section part will not start right with the grammar explanation, some questions like: “Will the Amazon Forest disappear?”, “Will indigenous people reach their goals with their activism?” “Will we suffer the consequences of deforestation too?” “Will global warming finally end some day?”. The proposal of these questions is to introduce the future in a contextualized way and then to explain how to use the auxiliary verb “will” in the affirmative, negative, and interrogative forms with its respective
exercises. With this, students can think about the future of nature and the actions that must be taken to guarantee a good future for us.

Here it is presented the grammar topic in the Spanish textbook which is Simple Future as it has been mentioned above:

In Figure 4, it is possible to notice how the grammar part is presented. It is worth reminding that grammar is not the main focus of the program but is a tool in the learning process for Guamá Bilingüe students.

One final item to be shown is that the final page in the Spanish textbook is already about global warming. Here it will be found a topic that seems not to belong to the ecological/sustainable tactic of the textbook. STD issues are a constant menace to Guamá Bilingüe students as much as to the forest peoples so that topic is somehow correlated with the even living in the relations with forest peoples.

Figure 4. Present simple explanation and questions, page 43 in the Spanish material.
Figure 5 shows another part of the unit that contains another text about global warming. Here is a big important part of the class in the program. It is where students will know the causes and consequences of the destruction and deforestation of nature through the reading activity.

After the reading part, the teacher will start a discussion in order to increase the critical thinking of these students mentioning each cause of global warming presented in the text and trying to make them identify who causes it or how. Then, the discussion goes to the consequences, where students are able to identify how these consequences are already affecting us directly or indirectly, and maybe invite some
students to talk about their own experience, because sometimes some of them could
have already lived some experience such as facing a flood in their neighborhood, or
some kind of contamination of food.

This makes the discussion in class more personal about what involves the affective
filter. Then, teachers encourage students to find solutions or even to start practicing
actions that they are not used to practicing like saving water, energy, etc.

3. Conclusions

In a nutshell, it is possible to realize how the suggested unit for the English
textbook to the Guamá Bilíngue will take students to a mood of reflection about the
environment and the Amazon Forest, where they are interleaved. The textbook must
be elaborated following the proposal of the program and the goals that teachers and
students must reach. For this reason, is important to consider the needs that students
have, the objectives they must reach and the learning process of the language that
works as a tool for the achievement of the main proposal of the program: to encourage
teenagers that are about to conclude the high school and have little or no perspective
to their future.

All issues regarding conservation must be focused on the development of Guamá
Bilíngue material for English learners. While we are still trying to find the best way
to teach sustainability to these vulnerable students, we still keep growing in our way
of seeing sustainability in Amazon Forest based on education from the elementary
school until teachers under graduation course.

The material or textbook is a guide much relevant in any learning process and it
must be elaborated thinking about the goal that the teacher wants to reach in their
students. In this program, the textbook differs slightly from other textbooks of other
languages courses where the main objective is to learn the language properly, whether
to travel or to get communication with others. In Guamá Bilíngue, the textbook is
configured to serve as a guide to mind opening process of students.

It is worth to mention that is important to select themes to contain in units of
the textbook that serve correctly to this objective of social transformation. And the
English becomes an issue of background to construct opinion and foment responsibil-
ity in relation to nature, the current situation of the Amazon Forest, and the problems
that its indigenous communities are suffering. Something that has to be done about it
by starting a guided discussion in the classroom in an attempt to make those teenag-
ers create responsibility in themselves that was mentioned previously. In conclusion,
when the English classes start finally in the program, by the middle of 2023, its
benefice is expected to have a textbook available with units talking about the Amazon
Forest and then continuing this social work that has been developed since 2010.

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