



**“FOI BACANA O QUE A TOUPEIRA FEZ?”:
CONVERSANDO COM CRIANÇAS NAS RODAS DE HISTÓRIA
NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL**

**“WAS THAT NICE WHAT THE MOLE DID?”:
TALKING IN STORY CIRCLES WITH CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

**¿FUE TAN BUENO LO QUE HIZO EL TOPO?:
CONVERSANDO CON NIÑOS E NIÑAS EN CÍRCULOS DE HISTORIAS DE LA
EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL**

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ABSTRACT

The study discusses a teacher's mediation during story reading and talk-group sessions with 5/6-year-old children. The dialogues were videotaped and transcribed, with qualitative analysis of the passages in which the children were invited to express their opinions, justify and confront ideas based on the stories read to them. The literature books selected by the teacher met aesthetic criteria and contained interesting topics for discussion. However, in four out of the six story circles observed, the conversation seemed to be guided, in a doctrinal way, towards certain moral teachings previously established by the teacher. The data point out the need to explore other possibilities of teachers' mediation which promote children's thinking and their autonomy to take positions on controversial issues raised by the stories.

KEYWORDS: Reading Mediation. Moral values. Early Childhood Education.

RESUMO

O estudo discute a leitura de histórias e conversa de uma professora com seu grupo de crianças de 5-6 anos. Os diálogos foram videogravados e transcritos, sendo analisados qualitativamente os trechos em que os pequenos foram convidados a opinar, justificar e confrontar ideias a partir das histórias lidas. Os livros de literatura selecionados pela docente atendiam à critérios estéticos e traziam temas interessantes para conversar. Entretanto, em quatro das seis rodas de história observadas, a conversa parecia ser guiada, de forma doutrinária, em direção ao ensino de certos valores morais. Os dados apontam a necessidade de explorar outras possibilidades de mediação que promovam o pensamento das crianças e sua autonomia para se posicionar frente às questões controversas suscitadas pelas histórias lidas na roda.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Mediação de leitura. Valores morais. Educação Infantil.

RESUMEN

El estudio discute la mediación de lectura de historias y conversas conducidas por una maestra con su grupo de niños de 5 a 6 años. Los diálogos se grabaron en video y se transcribieron, con un análisis cualitativo de los pasajes en que los niños fueron invitados a dar su opinión, justificar y confrontar ideas basadas en las historias leídas. Los libros de literatura elegidos cumplieron con criterios de calidad estética y abarcaron temas interesantes. Sin embargo, en cuatro de seis sesiones de lectura, las conversas parecían ser guiadas doctrinariamente hacia ciertas enseñanzas morales previamente establecidas por la maestra. Los datos apuntan la necesidad de explorar otras posibilidades de mediación que promuevan el pensamiento de los niños y su autonomía para posicionarse ante temas controvertidos planteados por las historias.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Mediación de lectura. Valores morales. Educación Infantil.



INTRODUCTION

When reading stories with children, mediated by parents or education professionals, not seldom, questions such as these may appear: what lesson did you hear from this story? Is it beautiful to do what such a character did? Did you see what happens to those who don't behave well?

This type of conversation from reading does not happen by chance. It is the result of representations built in a historical, social and cultural process that, since the 18th century, put children's literature as an instrument to propagate rules of behavior and moral, civic and religious values. Thus, it is possible to understand why issues such as those exemplified above are frequent in the story circles, even when it is present, in our society and, in particular, in the educational environment, the discourse of the formation of active, creative and critical readers/listeners.

At school, the use of literary texts with this didactic bias has sometimes provoked an opposition between literature and pedagogy. In this article, however, we will move in another direction, reinforcing the importance of re-signifying the role of pedagogy in children's reading education, without disregarding the possibilities of ethical and moral questions that children's literature, in fact, can provoke.

In assuming this position, we agree with Zilberman (2003), when she emphasizes that the formative function of literature does not necessarily presuppose a "catechesis" and/or kind of "pedagogical mission", but rather a larger task and committed to the expansion of the cultural universe and the personal and social emancipation of readers. After all, as also noted by Reyes (2012, p. 28),

[...] although reading literature does not transform the world, it can make it at least more habitable, because the fact that we see ourselves in perspective and look inside, contributes to the opening of new doors for the sensitivity and understanding of ourselves and others.

In this context, this article intends to analyze the mediation of a teacher during story circles and conversation about literature books with children aged 5-6 years, in the last year of Early Childhood Education. We will highlight the moments when the children were invited to give their opinion, justify and confront ideas based on the stories heard, in order to reflect on the role of children's literature and its socializing possibilities.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF VALUES

With the advent of private property and the Industrial Revolution, human relations underwent significant transformations, which, in turn, contributed to the formation of a new social



context. The concept of childhood, for example, emerged from this scenario of changes, and with it a new conception on the way of looking, dressing, caring and guiding the little ones (ARIÉS, 2011). In this panorama, children's literature started to be mediated by pedagogy, dividing itself between a field of poetic aptitude and the adult appeal to the child's moral formation.

As we know, the first books aimed specifically at children sought to fulfill the social function of teaching them to be obedient, charitable or clean. As Colomer (2016) points out, this "didactic eagerness" remains, in fact, until today. For the author, only the values that the books intend to teach have changed. Therefore, today, instead of obedient, clean or charitable, we expect children to be creative, curious, questioning, supportive or concerned with the preservation of nature. According to Colomer (2016, p. 99),

In all times, literature has fulfilled this socializing function simply because it speaks of humans, that is, because it allows us to see with the eyes of others how people can feel, how they evaluate the facts, how they face their problems or even what it means to follow or break the rules in each case.

In this sense, Colomer (2016) reiterates that the idea of presenting books that contemplate experiences, conflicts or dilemmas lived in our daily lives is not absurd (jealousy of the newborn brother, fear of being abandoned, parents splitting up, new family settings, among other topics). However, it is necessary that "[...] this world is offered 'from the perspective of literature' and not 'from the perspective of pedagogy' (COLOMER, 2016, p. 99, emphasis by the author).

In fact, as pointed out by authors such as Zilberman (2003), Cademartori (2010) and Coelho (2010) point out, the dichotomy between the poetic and the doctrinal has been the target for several criticisms of the work of pedagogy involving children's literature. Not by chance, therefore, Zilberman (2003) points out that children's literature is classified as a "colony of pedagogy" when it adopts objectives more committed to the domination of children than with the opening of a genuine and formative dialogue between them and the books.

There is no doubt that, when a text is used as a vehicle for transmitting a predetermined content, the plurisignification dimension of language is reduced. In other words, the divergent direction of the literary texts is abandoned in favor of the formulation of a global, unitary thought, in which the literary is subordinated to a predetermined end, which tends to homogenize the experience (ANDRUETO, 2012).

Although we recognize the relevance of the criticisms indicated above, we consider it possible to reconstruct the relationship between pedagogy and literature, as indicated in the research conducted by Kirchof and Bonin (2016), establishing more promising articulations between these two fields.



In this perspective, as Reyes (2012, p. 26), we understand that the school can give “the tools to make free and transgressive readings”, entering into the imaginary world, in the aesthetic and multifaceted experience that characterizes literary reading, allowing the production of new singularities and new ways of acting and thinking.

In other words, we consider that, through planned and reflected teaching mediation, reading and talking about literary texts at school, instead of being instruments of domination, can constitute, from an early age, a starting point for exercising the thought, autonomy and freedom, so that ideas and values mobilized by literary texts can be discussed, questioned and understood in the contexts of each culture.

MEDIATION OF LITERARY TEXT AND ETHICAL FORMATION OF CHILDREN

As we announced earlier, we consider the need to reframe the relationship between pedagogy and literature, emphasizing the formative nature of both and challenging the role, sometimes catechetical, assumed by children's literature that is present at school. In this perspective, as highlighted by some authors (BRANDÃO; ROSA, 2005, 2010; CHAMBERS, 2011; NASCIMENTO, 2012), the quality of teaching mediation in the story circles is fundamental for the construction of a space for reading and conversations conducive to thinking, understanding, listening and arguing, expanding the meanings of texts read to children since Early Childhood Education.

In this regard, Reyes (2012) also emphasizes that the teacher must create, around each text shared with his students, both an atmosphere of introspection and dialogue, so that the voices, experiences, and particularities of each one can be express. The teacher, therefore, occupies a primordial place in the formation of the reader, he being the main mediating agent between the student and the text in the school space. According to Bajour (2012, p. 27), it is up to the teacher not only to select books that “[...] provoke questions, silences, images, gestures, rejections, attractions [...]” but also to imagine specific ways of penetrating into texts, asking questions that encourage readers/listeners to think and talk about the texts or about the themes and experiences they raise.

In this context, we understand that, when leading the story circles since Early Childhood Education, the teacher needs to enhance children’s creativity and reflection, avoiding a catechetical stance. For this, we consider it is essential that the teacher must be sensitive and open to dialogue, encouraging children to listen to each other, to express their opinions, to think and to formulate their own questions and answers.

It is also important to emphasize that the approach proposed above is not dissociated from the possibility of contributing to the ethical education of children. In other words, we understand



that the conversation on the story circles only occurs when the teacher is willing to take what the children say as a starting point, articulating what they say with the text or with what is said by other children, favoring the progression and deepening of the presented ideas, as well as the confrontation of opinions and values mobilized from what was read.

We therefore share, with Sátiro (2012), the idea that being a mediator of reading interested in ethics, affectionately and pedagogically in the intellectual and emotional development of children does not imply the adoption of a moral discourse in which the adult owns the truth, leaving children to absorb the values that he considers edifying.

In summary, we consider that, as mediators of reading, the role of teachers should be to stimulate the child's encounter with literature, in order to listen to what he says about what is read and contribute to broaden their horizons, developing their thinking and enabling them to know about different ways of looking at life and to stand before it with criticality, creativity and authenticity.

STORY CIRCLES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: EXPLORING MORAL VALUES

The data presented in the study were extracted from a larger research (NASCIMENTO, 2012), of a qualitative-collaborative nature, which investigated the teaching mediation in story circles and the development of the argumentative skills of children in Early Childhood Education. In this direction, six sessions of story circles conducted by a teacher from Group 5 were videotaped and after transcribed, based on the reading of children's literature books previously selected by her. In synchrony with the collaborative perspective, in the intervals of the sessions, the teacher also participated in meetings for reflection and discussion, in which she watched the video recordings and received the transcript of the story circle she had participated.

The option for video recording intended to increase the quality and quantity of information captured (IBIAPINA, 2008), since the audio recording feature would not allow a visual reading of the interactions and movements of children during the story circles. Then, all the dialogues and mediation activities proposed by the teacher were recorded on video, before, during and after reading each book. Open semi-structured observation was also adopted, in which the observed subject - in this case, the teacher - knows the objectives of the study (VIANNA, 2007).

Observing the data from Nascimento's research (2012), we found that, in four of the six observed story circles, the conversation conducted by the teacher seemed to be guided, in a doctrinal way, towards the teaching of certain moral values. In the present study, we set out to discuss this trend more closely, since it had not been the object of analysis of the



mentioned research. With this objective in mind, we then analyzed the moments of the conversation when the children were asked to assess the behavior and/or decisions made by the characters and to express their opinion, highlighting here the excerpts of recorded conversations, particularly those of two reading circles in which the mobilization of moral values was more evident.

As already mentioned, the children who participated in the story circles attended the last year of Early Childhood Education and were between 5 and 6 years old. The moment of story reading was very much appreciated by the group, and, in all the sessions observed, the interest and the affective and cognitive availability of children to hear stories were evident. Most of the time, during reading, they already started talking to each other and commenting on the characters and/or events narrated, demonstrating that they were active listeners and that they sought to understand and connect what was read with their personal experiences.

The Early Childhood Education School, in turn, was located in a popular neighborhood in Recife and as it was an adapted house, the children's classroom occupied one of the rooms in the residence. Due to the extremely small space, Group 5 included only 12 children, a smaller number than commonly found in other state institutions. In the classroom there was no space for a reading corner with a rug, pillows and a bookcase, as the teacher said she would like to have. Despite this, there was a book display hanging on the wall, with large pockets of transparent plastic, freely accessible to children.

The teacher who planned and conducted the reading sessions was graduated in Language Arts and had a Master's degree in Linguistics, both attended at the Federal University of Pernambuco. She was a teacher in the state school in Recife for twelve years, teaching in Early Childhood Education and Elementary School (Years one and two), and for the past four years she was only working in pre-school children. Reading stories was part of the routine of Group 5, being, therefore, a very familiar activity for both the children and the teacher.

It is worth noting that the children's literature books selected by the teacher had good graphic quality and interesting narratives, in addition to illustrations that expanded the possibilities of constructing meanings. Thus, we can affirm that the texts, as well as the possible themes raised from them, had the potential to stimulate reflective conversations with the children. However, as we stressed earlier, in four of the six observed story circles, this conversation was conducted in a restricted way, directed to the teaching of certain moral.

As we announced above, we will present examples extracted from two reading circles, in which the following works were read: *The little red hen*, by Elza Fiuza (2010), and *The story of the little mole who knew it was none of his business*, by Werner Holzwarth and Wolf



Elbruch (2009). In the Brazilian version of this book the title was: 'The little mole who wanted to know who had pooped on her head'.

The first book is a very popular fable, in which a chicken, upon finding some wheat seeds, decides to grow them, with the intention of making a delicious cake. To do this, she asks for help from her friends, a little pig and a duck, who, however, refuse to work. The hen then does everything by herself and, in the end, does not share the cake with her friends. The second book tells the story of a mole who is just emerging from his hole and gets pooped in his head by an unidentified animal. The narrative continues with the mole, trying to discover the author of the 'service'. Thus, he asks the hare, the horse, the pig, the cow, the dove, the goat, and everyone denies authorship. With the help of two flies, however, the little mole finally identify the culprit. Without thinking twice, she climbs the little house where the butcher's dog was dozing, and exacts his revenge by pooped on the dog's head and happily returns to his hole.

Finally, it was observed that, during the story sessions, the conversations between the teacher and the children occurred, predominantly, *after* reading the texts, since the teacher used not to stimulate the dialogue *during* reading. Therefore, even when the children made spontaneous comments about the story, she preferred to continue reading, without drawing attention or commenting on what they said.

Next, we analyze excerpts from the conversation between the teacher and the children who mobilized moral values, based on the reading of the two books mentioned above.

Talking about the book The little red hen

After reading the book, the teacher conducted the conversation with the children, emphasizing the following question: should the hen share the cake with her friends, the duck and the pig or not? As we will see below, the idea of teaching that the chicken should have acted in a 'more understanding or supportive' way guided the dialogue conducted by the teacher with her group of children.

In this sense, after reading the book, the teacher proposed a dramatization of the story guided by her. Below, we analyze some fragments of the conversation that occurred after this activity.

Fragment 1¹

- 1 **T: Who was right, who was cool here in this story?**
- 2 C [several]: The chicken!

¹ In all the excerpts of conversation presented from here on, "T" means teacher and "C" means Child/Children.



- 3 C2: The chicken at work!
- 4 **T: Jeez! The chicken, the duck or the pig?** [pointing to the children who played these characters in the dramatization].
- 5 C11: The chicken!
- 6 **T: Was the chicken right to plant?**
- 7 C11: Yes.
- 8 **T: Was she?**
- 9 C11: No.
- 10 **T: Was she or not?**
- 11 C11: Yes.
- 12 **T: And they** [referring to the duck and pig], **who just wanted to play? Were they right or wrong?**
- 13 C [some]: Wrong!
- 14 **T: Wrong!** [...].

Fragment 2

- 1 **T: C5 , if you were the hen, would you give it to the duck and the pig?** [referring to the cake, which the chicken made alone].
- 2 C5: [stays in silence].
- 3 **T: Would you share with them?**
- 4 C5: [remains in silence].
- 5 **T: Yes or no?**
- 6 C5: [nods yes].
- 7 **T: C11, if you were the chicken, would you give [the cake] to them or not?**
- 8 C11: No.
- 9 **T: No? Why wouldn't you give them?**
- 10 C11: Because they don't help!
- 11 **T: Because they didn't help. C1, would you give?**
- 12 C1: [nods yes].
- 13 **T: Would you share it with the duck and the pig?**
- 14 C1: [nods yes again].
- 15 **T: The chicken decided she wouldn't give either to the duck or the pig, right? They didn't help, so they won't get it. C4, if you were the chicken, would you give it to them or not? Would you share it or not?**
- 16 C4: [nods yes].
- 17 C4: I'd give it.
- 18 **So the chicken did it wrong, right? And C1, would you share or not with your colleagues?**
- 19 C1: [denying with his head].



As we can see, children are encouraged by the teacher to express their opinion, which is a very positive move. However, although the teacher asks the children to justify their point of view (line 9, fragment 2), she is unable to establish a proper conversation. Thus, she repeats the same question, and the dialogue seems to occur only between her and the children, who are questioned one at a time. The conversation then follows the model 'teacher asks questions, and children answer', which denotes a certain difficulty, on the part of the teacher, in mediating the dialogue and articulating what different children tell.

Another aspect that caught our attention was the way the teacher gave clues to her own point of view in the way she asked certain questions. For example: "And they [the duck and the pig], who *just* wanted to play, were they right or were they wrong?" (line 12, fragment 1), as if playing were something less important. Also in the same fragment, in relation to the question that opens the dialogue (Who was right, *who was cool* here in this story?), it is implicit the idea that there are characters who were not cool in the story. Besides in fragment 2, we see the silence of child 5 (lines 2 to 6), possibly indicating that she understood the teachers opinion and considered that there was an 'expected' response related to the chicken's decision of not to share the cake with her friends since she did it without their help. We consider it essential to observe these silences, because, many times, they reveal the understanding, on the part of the children, that there is a 'correct opinion', the one that her teacher wants to hear from them. When this occurs, there is a great risk that the conversation will become a guessing game of the teacher's opinion, rather than a genuine moment of exchange and discussion of different points of view.

Still regarding the lack of opinion on the part of the children during the story circle, it is interesting to note that, commonly, this reaction is seen as sign of low interest or lack of having what to say. We understand, however, that children's silence deserves a closer look on the part of the mediator. After all, this silence can represent the necessary reflection time before formulating an answer or even a sign of disagreement, as well as a way to leave the question open, a common posture when we discover that, at the moment, we have nothing to say.

Thus, we agree with Sontag (2005), when stating that there is no pure, empty silence. Silence is a form of speech and a fundamental element of dialogue.

In line 18 of fragment 2, it is also important to observe the way the teacher formulated the question, questioning whether child 1 *would share the cake with colleagues*. We see that it is no longer a question of whether the *chicken* would share the cake with the pig and the duck, but whether *the children would share the cake with their colleagues*. The question asked, therefore, establishes a direct transfer from the story's dilemma to the children's lives, possibly in an attempt to teach them the value of sharing.



Later on, another section of dialogue between the teacher and child 1 (C 1) reinforces what was said above. Let's see:

Fragment 3

- 1 **T: Look at people** [addressing C1]: **if I brought a snack, and you didn't, was it okay for me to share it with you?**
- 2 C1: No.
- 3 **T: No? Why?!**
- 4 Ch 1: I had to wait for you to offer!
- 5 **T:** [smiles, looks at another child and asks].
- 6 **T: C11, if you didn't bring a snack, would you think it was okay for me to share it with you?**
- 7 C11: [nods yes].

Finally, following the opinion she considered correct, the teacher made the proposal to change the end of the fable, because, as expressed in the interview for the researchers: “The hen was fair, since those who do not work do not earn, but was not tolerant”. The children, however, did not seem to disagree with the original outcome of the text and, therefore, did not show any enthusiasm for the teacher’s proposal. However, despite the small participation of the children, the teacher wrote a new ending on the small board in the room, including an extra speech for the hen: “Okay, I’ll give you [the cake], but next time help me instead!”.

From the extracts presented above, we can reflect on certain questions that seem relevant to us: does understanding the text from a single bias contribute to children's ethical/moral education? By accepting that the hen should have shared the cake with friends who did not want to help her, were the children demonstrating that they understood ethical principles? What, after all, would be correct from the point of view of children's ethical education?

It is worth noting that we do not consider wrong the fact that the teacher has a point of view and expresses it clearly. However, the conversation about the text cannot be directed so that every group accepts and agrees with what the teacher thinks about the topics discussed. On the contrary, we understand that the mediation of the teacher in this context should encourage children to listen to each other's opinions, to reflect, to elaborate, to express and to justify their opinions in an increasingly reflective way. With this, we hope to move away from a model of catechesis and submission, in which young children simply learn to agree either with the adult, to avoid confrontation, or for fear of losing their approval.

Next, we will discuss another reading session, as we announced earlier.

Talking about the book 'The little mole who wanted to know who had pooped in her head'

In this circle, before starting to read the book, the teacher talked briefly with the group, starting from the following question: "If someone pooped in your head, what would you do?". Let us look at some fragments of this dialogue between the teacher and the children:

Fragment 1

- 1 **T: If someone pooped on your head?** [hiding the book behind her body].
- 2 C12: I would throw it away.
- 3 **T: And you, C11, what would you do if someone pooped on your head?**
- 4 [Another child responds]: I would punch them [smiling].
- 5 **T: C12, what would you do?!**
- 6 C12: Huh?
- 7 **T: If someone pooped on your head, what would you do?**
- 8 C12: I would punch them!
- 9 **T: Would you punch them?!**
- 1 **T: And C12, what would you do?**
- 0
- 1 C12: In the face!
- 1
- 1 C11: In the face, too!
- 2

Fragment 2

- 1 **P: What do you think he** [the mole] **is going to do with the person who did it** [pooped on her head]?
- 2 C11: I don't know!
- 3 C12: Punch her!
- 4 **T: Really? What will she do with the person?**
- 5 C 11: How can I know?!
- 6 **T: You don't know, do you?** [smiling] **let's see the story to find out what the mole is going to do! So, the name of this book is 'The little mole who wanted to know who had pooped on her head'** [reading the book's title].
- 7 [Children find it very funny].

Observing this initial conversation, we see that the teacher tries to invite the children to read the book, an important procedure. However, in doing so, she explores a highly unlikely issue: the possibility of someone pooped in their heads. With this, the teacher moves away from what would be a 'more natural' invitation to listen to the story, asking, for example, a question related to the book's title in Portuguese, as such: "Who do you imagine that could have pooped



in the head of the little mole?”. From the children's responses, it would also be possible to explore the justifications given by them for the hypotheses launched.

As we will see, however, the option to initiate the reading in this way does not seem to have been by chance, since the mole's 'reaction' to get even and pooped on the dog's head served as a start for the conversation the teacher conducted after the reading. Let us see, then, a fragment of the discussion at the end of the book reading:

Fragment 3

- 1 **T: And was it cool what the mole did?** [referring to the fact that the mole got even and pooped the dog's head].
- 2 C6: No.
- 3 **T: What do you think? Was this attitude of the mole cool?**
- 4 C [some]: Yes!
- 5 **T: Wait, I'm just going to ask the girls now. Do you think what the mole did to the dog was cool?**
- 6 C 12: It was!
- 7 **T: [pointing to C6] : Was it cool?**
- 8 C6: [nods her head, apparently changing his mind and agreeing with his colleagues].
- 9 **T: Was it cool ?!** [looking at C 6].
- 10 C12: It was! [C6 stays in silence, and another child responds].
- 11 **T: Was it really?**
- 12 C12: It was!
- 13 [The teacher points to C13].
- 14 C13: It was!
- 15 **T: Was it cool what she did?** [pointing to C11].
- 16 C11: It was not!
- 17 [C13 looks at Cr 11 and decides to change their answer].
- 18 C13: No, it wasn't either!
- 19 **T [looking at Cr 12]: Was it cool? Why wasn't it cool what she did?**
- 20 C12: Because the dog pooped in her head!
- 21 **T: C11, why wasn't it cool what she did?**
- 22 C11: Because the mole is very bad! [smiling].
- 23 **T: Was the mole bad?**
- 24 C11: Uh-huh [nodding].
- 25 **T: C13, was the mole right?**
- 26 C13: It was wrong!

As it is possible to perceive, unlike the practice of other teachers, who tend to ask questions for the whole group and get answers in chorus (MARTINS, 2010; SILVA, 2014), the teacher



commonly directs her questions to specific children, which expands the possibilities of a more authentic conversation. However, although she sometimes encourages the child to justify her opinion (lines 19 and 21), is not established a conversation in which different points of view are confronted and the dialogue progresses. On the contrary, in most cases, the answers were restricted to a 'yes' or 'no' for the same question, which is repeated and is always asked by the teacher: "Was it cool what the mole did?" (see, for example, lines 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 15).

In the fragment below, we observe the teacher's attempt to empty the mole's 'revenge' sense, by posing the possibility that the dog did not poop on her head on purpose.

Fragment 4

- 1 **P: C13, come here, look here. I'll ask the boys something else. Boys, do you think the dog pooped on the mole's head on purpose?**
- 2 C1: Yes.
- 3 C6: Tell, C10 [asking the colleague to take a stand].
- 4 C1: The dog pooped on the head of the 'coconut tree'.
- 5 **T: The mole, right? But did it do it on purpose?**
- 6 C1: [nods his head positively].
- 7 **T: Did it do it because he wanted to? Ah, I'm going to poop on the mole! Can it be?**
- 8 C1: [nods yes].
- 9 **T: Was it? Do you think it was?**
- 10 C1: [nods yes].
- 11 C12: But it was, it fell from the sky.
- 12 **T: The mole kept digging, then when she raised her head, pow! The poop fell! But did the dog do it on purpose?**
- 13 C12: It did, it did, it did it on purpose!! [slamming his hand on the table].
- 14 **T: C10, did the dog do it on purpose?**
- 15 C10: [timidly, he makes a negative sign with his head].
- 16 **T: Say, why do you think not?**
- 17 C10: [stays in silence].
- 18 **T: What do you think? Look, you can't know for sure, we weren't there, we didn't see it, but what do you think? Did the dog do it on purpose or not?**
- 19 C12: It did it on purpose!
- 20 **T: C12 thinks it did it on purpose. C6, what do you think? That the mole did it on purpose?**
- 21 C6: No!
- 22 **T: No! [emphasizing the child's response]. Why do you think he didn't do it on purpose?**



23 C 6: [stays in silence].

We see, in the fragment above, that the teacher's insistence on the same question and her reaction to the children's responses seem to imply her opinion, which, certainly, was captured by the little ones. In addition, it is noted that the dialogue is, once again, limited to questions with answers of the type 'yes' or 'no'. Thus, the mediation of the teacher does not lead, for example, children to observe possible clues, given in the text or in the illustrations, which provide some evidence to reinforce one or another answer. In other words, it seems that the teacher is more concerned with taking the blame out of the dog and devaluing the mole's vindictive behavior than with encouraging children to reflect and base their opinions based on the text, an essential skill in the formation path of a reader.

In this context, as we have also seen in other fragments already presented here, some children seem to give their opinion or even change it without reflecting (see, for example, fragment 3), just to 'side with' their colleagues or to please the teacher.

Still with the intention of teaching behaviors that she deemed appropriate, the teacher took advantage of the question that opened the discussion of the book and wrote the following questions on the board: "What do you do when someone: speaks loudly to you?", "steps on your foot? " and "hits you?". Beside the three alternatives, the teacher also pasted a representative illustration of each question.

To discuss these issues, the teacher organized the room into three groups, among which she distributed the illustrations, then asked each of them to think about it and present their position in the large group. Let's look at an excerpt from that conversation, in which the children presented their answers.

Fragment 5

- 1 **T: Guys, guys, let's hear the girls, see the suggestions! What do you do when someone speaks loudly to you?**
- 2 C12: I hang them!
- 3 **T: Jeez! Did C6 also agree with this attitude?**
- 4 C6: [makes a 'no' gesture].
- 5 **T: Just a minute, what is your opinion, C6?**
- 6 C6: [stays in silence].
- 7 **T: Guys, do you agree with what C12 said?**
- 8 C [majority]: No! [emphatic].
- 9 **T: What do you do when someone speaks loudly to you? C 12 said that she would hang the person. It it necessary?!**
- 10 C [some]: No!



11 C11: I would ask his mother...

12 T: Ask or speak?

13 C11: Tell us!

14 [the children laugh].

15 T: And you need to talk to the person's mother because the boy spoke loudly to the other? What do you think?

16 C13: I don't think anything, I agree with my sister! [during the story circle, children 13 and 11 played that they were sisters, and, it seems, that "sisters cannot disagree..."].

17 T: Don't you think anything?!

As it is possible to conclude, the intention of the teacher with this proposal, certainly, was to discuss problems of coexistence present in the daily lives of children: talking loudly with colleagues, stomping on the feet and fights between them. We understand that this is a legitimate concern, however we question the need to create an artificial situation to teach certain basic rules of relationship. It is also worth reflecting on how the story of the little mole was able to inspire the teacher to go so far in an attempt to teach certain behaviors to children.

Considering the dialogues illustrated here, we can conclude that teaching mediation ended up collaborating little, both for the construction of meanings based on the text and for the ethical formation of children. In this sense, there is an inhibition of genuine dialogue, reducing the conversation to binary questions and answers of right and wrong. The result of this is that the children ended up not reflecting on the themes raised by the stories or on the stories texts themselves. Also noteworthy is the lack of encouragement for children to elaborate the verbal expression of their points of view.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The story circles that supported the reflections presented until now were conducted by a post-graduated teacher, experienced, very committed to her work and sensitive to the choice of books she reads for her group of children. However, in four out of six reading sessions, talking about the stories seemed to be used for moral teachings. Thus, the dialogues about the text or about its theme seem to aim the teaching of the values that the teacher believes in (for example, to be tolerant or not to be revengeful). This means that reading was associated to domination and indoctrination, and not exactly as a path for reflection and commitment to ethical issues. As we know, although the story circles are usually part of the routine of Early



Childhood Education, which is undoubtedly something extremely positive, it is necessary to take a more careful look at the way these first encounters with literary reading occur.

In this way, we ask some questions: what does it mean the task of reading mediation with such young children? Or how to conduct a conversation that contributes to the ethical and critical education with small children? Our data showed that, responding to the way that the teacher led the conversation, sometimes the children try to find the “correct answer”, the one that would be expected by their teacher, but there were also times when they resisted and tried to keep what they thought. Not rarely, this second type of response seems to occur through silence. In other words, the option for stay in silence seems to be an attempt by the children to leave the answer open, perhaps to preserve their own thinking without directly confronting the teacher’s position.

It is important to emphasize that, when criticizing this way of conducting reading and conversation based on literary text, we do not defend an educational field exempt from its responsibility to contribute to the ethical education of children. On the contrary, like other authors (SÁTIRO, 2012; DEVRIES; ZAN, 1998), we understand that Early Childhood Education should also be concerned with the social and moral education of children. However, we disagree that this sociomoral formation must take place through the reading of literary texts, taking this situation as a springboard for a catechetical and coercive conversation, asking for obedience, submission from boys and girls and incorporation of a false *self* formed by supposedly more acceptable behaviors in the eyes of adults.

Therefore, we consider it is essential to review this type of mediation on the story circles, that is, conducting a conversation based on the literary text with the objective of saying right and wrong, as if children could not develop critical thinking, always subordinating themselves to socially imposed moralism.

We understand that the role of reading mediators is to stimulate children's contact with literature, in order to listen to what they say about the text read and contribute to broadening their horizons, developing critical thinking and promoting knowledge about different forms of seeing life and to stand before it with creativity and authenticity.

In summary, by inviting the children to listen to a story and talk, we hope to cultivate their freedom to think, to imagine, to listen to the opinions and comments of others, in addition to supporting the formulation and expression of their own thoughts, feelings and experiences.

The data produced in the present study reinforce the need of studying teaching mediation in the story circles during initial and in service teacher education courses. As we have seen, although the teacher selects good literature books and plans how she intends to read and talk with her group, it is necessary to develop a less directive posture, creating an atmosphere in



which children are more listened to and encouraged to reflect, express themselves and exchange opinions with each other.

After all, as Bajour (2012, p. 24) points out, “[...] listening to reaffirm a truth that only looks at itself and waits for the other's word only to exalt its own word is the antithesis of dialogue, and not rare it contains intentions of power and control over the senses brought to the surface”. Certainly, this is not what we want to see in the story circles, either in Early Childhood Education, or in any other stage of schooling.

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