

## Literature and aesthetic education in child education<sup>i</sup>: reflections on proposals for a textbook

*Literatura e educação estética na educação infantil:  
reflexões sobre propostas de um livro didático*

*Literatura y educación estética en la educación infantil<sup>ii</sup>:  
reflexiones sobre propuestas de un libro didáctico*

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**Abstract:** This article aims to analyze work proposals concerning literary reading in a textbook for Early Childhood education considering aesthetic education proposed by Vigotski, by means of teacher mediation as a fundamental element for adult and children humanization. Through documentary analysis, the textbook proposals that use the literary texts were selected and numbered. Some examples for reflexion on didactic proposals based on the Historical-Cultural Theory principles were highlighted from specific sections about the work with literature. As a result, it is possible to infer that the proposals of the studied textbook show mainly fragments of literary texts, with the purpose of teaching some content or technical aspects of the mother tongue, disregarding specificities of teaching and learning in childhood. Therefore, it can be concluded that an education that is intended to be aesthetic requires an intentional teaching directed towards active child participation in pedagogical situations orientated towards access to the arts and its humanizing potential.

**Keywords:** Education. Early childhood education. Children's literature. Textbook. Aesthetic education.

**Resumo:** Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar propostas de trabalho com a leitura literária em um livro didático para a Educação Infantil, levando em consideração a educação estética, proposta por Vygotski, por meio da mediação docente como elemento fundamental para humanização de adultos e crianças. Mediante análise documental, foram quantificadas e selecionadas as propostas do livro didático que utilizam texto literário. Das seções específicas acerca do trabalho com a literatura, foram destacados exemplos para reflexão, à luz de princípios da Teoria Histórico-Cultural. Como resultado, é possível socializar que as propostas do livro didático estudado evidenciam majoritariamente fragmentos de textos literários, com finalidade de ensinar algum conteúdo ou aspectos técnicos da língua materna, desconsiderando especificidades do ensino e da aprendizagem na infância. Conclui-se que uma educação que se pretenda estética requer a atuação docente, dirigida intencionalmente à participação infantil ativa, em situações pedagógicas orientadas ao acesso às artes com seu potencial humanizador.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação. Educação infantil. Literatura infantil. Livro didático. Educação estética.

**Resumen:** Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar propuestas de trabajo con la lectura literaria en un libro didáctico para la Educación Infantil, teniendo en cuenta la educación estética, propuesta por Vigotski, promedio de la mediación de los profesores como elemento esencial para la humanización de adultos y niños. Bajo análisis documental, han sido cuantitativas y seleccionadas las propuestas del libro didáctico que utilizan texto literario. De las partes determinadas sobre el trabajo con la literatura, fueron destacados ejemplos para reflexión, a la luz de los principios de la Teoría Histórico Cultural. Como resultado, es posible socializar que las propuestas del libro didáctico estudiado manifiestan en su mayoría fragmentos de textos literarios, con la finalidad de enseñar algún contenido o aspectos técnicos de la Lengua Materna, no considerando

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*particularidades de la enseñanza y del aprendizaje en la infancia. Se concluye que una educación que se desee estética requiere la actuación docente dirigida deliberadamente a la participación infantil activa en situaciones pedagógicas orientadas al acceso a las Artes con su potencial humanizador.*

**Palabras clave:** *Educación. Educación infantil. Literatura infantil. Libro de texto. Educación estética.*

## Introduction

Conceived as a human creation, literature “appears as a universal manifestation of all humans at all times” (CANDIDO, 2011, p. 176). In this perspective, from the simplest to the most complex forms, this art form becomes a source of learning and human development in all cultures and civilizations.

With the possible advances (as well as setbacks) that come from different laws such as the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), the Law of Educational Guidelines and Foundations (BRASIL, 1996), the National Education Plan (BRASIL, 2014) and the National Common Core Curriculum (BRASIL, 2017), Early Childhood education undergoes its universalization process in Brazil. Since the Constitutional Amendment of 2009 (BRASIL, 2009), schooling becomes obligatory at four years of age. Thus, although progress may be slow, more children are attending school beginning with the first few months of life, with higher numbers for entrance and retention rates in schools for older children, starting at four years of age.

We agree with Paschoal (2018, p. 777) in emphasizing that compulsiveness can be misinterpreted and “can contribute to precocious schooling practices, above all with respect to literacy and, on the other hand, for the return of attentive actions in daycares, with professionals lacking adequate training”. We affirm the necessity for reflections regarding the impact of this compulsiveness, especially those concerning the guarantee of the right to education for children.

We reflect about compulsiveness as an educational right, considering the child as a subject of rights, capable of appropriating cultural riches, such as children’s literature. This is understood as a social right of childhood, and a fundamental point for a humanizing education in the early years of life. In this context, which calls for the guarantee of children’s social rights, alongside the growing inclusion of children in Early Childhood education and as a first stage of Basic Education, we have as an objective, in this text, to analyze several work proposals concerning literary reading in a textbook for Early Childhood education, taking into consideration aesthetic education, as proposed by Vigotski<sup>iii</sup>, by means of teacher mediation as a fundamental element for the humanization of adults and children.

According to Nascimento (2012) and Brandão and Silva (2017), there has been a notable increase in the usage of textbooks in Early Childhood education. Although a national statistic concerning the availability of textbooks for Early Childhood education does not yet exist, Nascimento (2012) completed a survey in one hundred and forty-seven municipalities in São Paulo, nearly twenty percent of which started to use textbooks as a means of adopting the Private Teaching System (SPE). According to Bittencourt (2004), textbooks suffer from

interference in different subjects in the production, circulation and consumption phases for its different functions and meanings, depending on the social, cultural and temporal conditions under which they are used.

Especially concerning the production, circulation and use of textbooks in Early Childhood education, while available research is limited, it is growing nonetheless (NASCIMENTO, 2012). In a preliminary bibliography search with the keywords “children’s literature and Early Childhood education” not one article was found. Upon refining the search, works published in the past ten years with the keywords “children’s literature”, “Early Childhood education” and “Early Childhood education textbook” were found in the SciELO database - Scientific Electronic Library Online, on Google Scholar and in the Capes Periodicals Portal, included the following articles related to the theme: Nascimento (2012); Souza and Martins (2015); Boito, Barbosa and Gobbato (2016); Brandão and Silva (2017). This limited number of works related to the theme denotes and justifies the value of proposed discussions.

Given this reality, in this article, we will analyze several pedagogical works related to literature, proposed in the integrated book of the *Ápis* collection, volume 3 (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c), for five year old children. Through means of documentary analysis, the recurring textbook literary texts will be quantitatively presented, and several proposals from this same book that utilize literary text will be selected and analyzed.

With this objective in mind, the article will be structured in the following format: first we will present the foundations derived from Historical Cultural Theory (ELKONIN, 1998; VIGOTSKY, 1998), from studies on literature (CHARTIER, 2001; CORSINO, 2010; CANDIDO, 2011; TODOROV, 2012) and from legal advances towards Early Childhood education (BRASIL, 2009). Following this, we will discuss proposals for a textbook concerning Early Childhood education, specifically regarding aesthetic education and, lastly, give final considerations.

## **Children’s literature in aesthetic education and teacher mediation**

Literature understood as an art form is a possibility for active insertion for children in relation to objects of human culture, given its ability to significantly contribute to intellectual, aesthetic and moral development in childhood, as well as interaction with diverse artistic manifestations, establishing concrete conditions for learning and human development.

In 2009, the new version of the National Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood education (DCNEI’s) (BRASIL, 2009), with legal determinations concerning ethical principles, aesthetics - for example, the appropriation of the arts (literature) - and politics, contributed to emphasize the role of children’s literature and its value in human formation during childhood.

This legal guidance can subsidize pedagogical proposals directed towards access to this cultural object, literature books, as an essential condition for children to broaden their knowledge and appreciate the literary wealth of children’s literature (CORSINO, 2010). It is

worth noting the value of books as material objects of human culture; no book exists outside of the support that sustains it and, furthermore, it is the support that guides the production of meaning. (CHARTIER, 2001). The materiality of books also make up the criteria for choosing children's literature books. Some editions used in schools are simplified replications of classical stories, that, for the most part, are not presented as narratives in their original versions, occasionally distorting the story's plot and reducing the information that makes up the book in question. The diluted versions of classical stories, for example, do not encourage motivated learning in childhood development, nor do they broaden their literary references.

Supported by the arguments of Vigotsky (1998), we emphasize that the contribution of teaching art in classrooms of Early Childhood education and primary school, for example, involves the opportunity for appropriation of aesthetic values. In this way, the possibility of appreciating the music of Bach, listening to a text, or reading traditional Brazilian stories, such as those of Cascudo (2001), can only exist by means of presentation, availability and access to these materials so that we can, as teachers, recognize them, appreciate them and make choices based on fundamental theoretical criteria.

Aesthetic education in school can be effective in existence, by means of appreciation, that, for Vigotski (2010), consists of three moments: stimulation; elaboration and response. It is worth noting that lessons are first experienced collectively, to be later internalized, which means knowing human art is not an innate process, but a process of education.

The first moment (stimulation) is the sensory perception of the form, performed by the senses. External stimulation is the art, for example, of a painting. Only through contact realized initially can a child explore art, through the senses.

The second moment, elaboration, is the way in which sensory interferences are organized and constructed in such a way that they stimulate the person to have a reaction different from that which occurs trivially: that is, the painting is no longer a piece of cloth with a quantity of paint applied to it. "But when the observer interprets the cloth and paint as a representation of a man, an object or an action, the complex work of transformation of the painted cloth as a painting pertains entirely to the psyche of the receiver" (VIGOTSKI, 2010, p. 334).

The third moment, the response, is a "secondary creator synthesis", which requires the perceiver of a work of art to "combine as one and synthesis the disperse elements of artistic totality". Thus, "[...] if a melody says anything to our soul it is because we know how to arrange the sounds that come to us from the outside" (VIGOTSKI, 2010, p. 334).

In this way, aesthetic education requires mediated situations, which become lived experiences capable of enabling children to have these three moments. The relations established by the child with the stories of children's literature, for example, give rise to the possibility of appropriation of objectivized content in children's books and encourage the reinvention of these stories that frequently appear as arguments in moments of play. In these moments, access to knowledge that reality presents is revealed in imaginary ways in situations of play, such as the act of pretending (ELKONIN, 1998).

Through means of narratives, the child appropriates knowledge of the world and establishes relationships with the people around it. It is the necessity of reading that makes the child appropriate the reading and, in this process, the teacher assumes the fundamental roles of intervener and mediator of educational conditions for the development of new and humanizing child necessities.

In the understanding of Corsino (2010), three points weave together the work of literature with children: the conceptions of childhood, literature and reading mediations. It concerns the conception of children's literature as a complex object of human culture, art and the will of the person, and childhood as a moment to be lived by the child, as a human being, capable, rich in the possibility to learn. With this comprehension, it is possible to plan and organize rich opportunities for reading mediations.

In the emphasis that teacher mediation, effective in the creation of objective conditions for the child to enter in contact with the book material and gain the possibility of reading, the teacher enhances the process of forming reading attitudes. This mediation involves thinking, action, reflection and evaluation on the part of the teacher, that, directly or indirectly, encourages learning situations for children from a very early age. That is to say, such mediation is swift in its availability and accessibility to the literary material produced by humanity, by means of story narration or books being read aloud – with poems, stories, images, narratives, songs, for example – and also in the proposition of active relations of the child with the riches of reading in its materiality (SAMPAIO, 2016).

Upon creating and organizing these educational situations in which the final forms elaborated by humans throughout history become a source of learning and human development, the teacher makes intentional the teaching activity, with possibilities of directing effective conditions that encourage active participation on the part of the children. In this sense, there are different aspects of mediation, potential for an effective and promising work with literature from an early age. In the words of Corsino (2010, p. 188), “mediation begins in the selection from the collection and in the resources available and in the organization of the space to shelter this collection and promote reading”.

Educational policies, such as the ones materialized in the National School Library Program (PNBE), for example, are fundamental for schools to gain access to the concrete possibilities of working with literature. However, even when schools have literary collections, this doesn't always mean that mediation is guaranteed, because often times the books are kept stored and unavailable to children, and teachers are unfamiliar with the books and the possibilities of pedagogic work with these and other literary materials.

As stated by Grazioli and Debus (2017), the PNBE was created in 1997, but only considered Childhood Education in 2008 – the stage of education in which the Program participated in four editions: 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014. Such policies led to the use of more books that comprise the basic collection for institutions of Basic Education. In 2014, schools received a guide called “PNBE in school: literature outside of the box”, as a way of guiding teacher training.

To broaden these discussions, it is valid to highlight that the teacher, in general, infrequently relates to the literary books capable of elevating one's humanization process, considering the ethical character of these materials (GRAZIOLI; DEBUS, 2017). In current initial vocational education courses for teachers, this relation is hardly motivated and cultivated, and is only strengthened over the course of the training process of these professionals by means of continued training courses. This distancing of active participation on the part of teachers in situations of literary reading cultivates pedagogical practices that are also barely motivating in didactic organizations in which literature is the content, form and educational strategy aimed at the humanization of the children, from an early age. Thus are educational situations frequently organized in schools to teach a moral, content or simply a passion for reading, in which the literary texts are fragmented or read in a "more accessible" language for the children "to understand". For this reason, stories, poems and other literary texts are read starting in isolated passages and serve, in general, to guide the responses of the children and give a moral lesson.

Given this reality, we recognize the value of solid and rigorous teacher education so that, intentionally and consciously, each teacher can create the richest and most diverse literary experiences for the children, starting at an early age. Such a context can impact educational actions with children's literature, capable of motivating the formation and development of specifically human capabilities, such as imagining, creating and better comprehending the world.

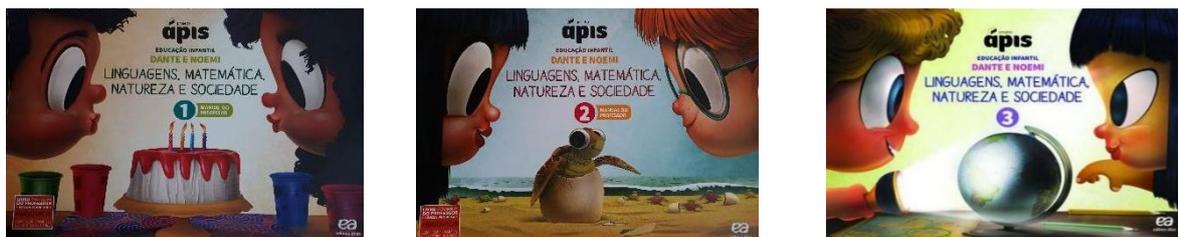
Given these findings, we highlight the critical and conscious use of textbooks and, bearing in mind the contemporary reality of our schools, we ask: what guidance is offered to teachers for the use of Early Childhood education textbooks in working with literature? What type of educational situations are proposed to children? Is there a concern about aesthetic education or the possibility of active performance on the part of teachers and children alike?

Based on these initial reflections, we weave together discussions concerning proposals for an Early Childhood education textbook, considering aspects of children's literature.

### **Textbooks and children's literature: the question of plenitude in the education of young children**

The integrated Ápis collection for Early Childhood education is organized into three volumes for children between the ages of three and five: volume 1 for 3 year old children, volume 2 for 4 year olds and volume 3 for 5 year olds. The collection is called integrated because it presents three areas: Languages, Mathematics and Nature and Society.

Figure 1. Book covers



Source: Dante and Bianchini (2017a; 2017b; 2017c).

Besides the three textbooks, there is also a notebook of letters and numbers that accompanies each of the three volumes. In addition, there are posters such as: GUI's Gang, Numbers 1 through 10, Numbers 1 through 20, Lia's Gang; there is also a CD with some stories and songs to accompany the three books, as well as a supporting material that comes inside each textbook, that includes: a moveable alphabet, an uppercase and lowercase alphabet, the names of common objects, plants and animals.

This exposition specifically presents the literature proposals of the integrated book from the Ápis collection, volume 3, for children ages 3 to 5 (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c). This book, bound in spiral, in passage format, comes in a size of twenty-nine by forty-two centimeters, containing one hundred and ninety-three pages. Most of the pages present colorful illustrations, as well as assignments in the areas of languages, mathematics, nature and society, complete with blank spaces to be filled out by the child.

In this article we specifically highlight and discuss the literary texts that appear in this volume, as they are denominated by the authors and so that they serve according to the proposal of the book. Proposed assignments in the book are analyzed as well, considering their own organization: the recurrence of available literary texts in the book; book suggestions and storytime.

In relation to available literary texts throughout the book, we found: 17 poems, 7 stories, 1 tongue-twister and 1 story in comic strip format. Of the total number of texts, more than 90% are available in a fragmented manner, with a defined purpose for the completion of each assignment revolving around a theme.

One example is the use of the poem "People's Names", by Pedro Bandeira (BANDEIRA, 2010 *apud* DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c). The ending of this poem fragment appears in the book and works on writing the child's name, as shown by the following:

Figure 2. Poem excerpt “People’s Names” by Pedro Bandeira

**MEU NOME PODERIA SER...**

NOSSOS NOMES GERALMENTE SÃO ESCOLHIDOS POR NOSSOS PAIS E, NA MAIORIA DAS VEZES, ANTES DO NASCIMENTO.

**NOME DA GENTE**  
[...]  
EU NÃO GOSTO DO MEU NOME, NÃO FUI EU QUEM ESCOLHEU. EU NÃO SEI POR QUE SE METEM COM UM NOME QUE É SÓ MEU!  
[...]

**SE VOCÊ PUDESSE ESCOLHER OUTRO NOME, QUAL SERIA? ESCREVA-O NO QUADRO E CONTE PARA OS COLEGAS POR QUE GOSTA DELE.**

Source: Dante and Bianchini (2017c, p. 15).

It is solicited in the book’s instructions that teachers read the poem excerpt and discuss the topic in question. In our understanding, the focus is not children’s literature but its use as a pretext for the discussion and writing of names. Among the many objectives of the assignment is one concerning literature: “increasing linguistic repertoire – textual genre: poems” (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 15), however, no other literature but the poem excerpt is proposed to be completed. Assignments such as these cannot guarantee that the child fully comprehends the aesthetic qualities of a poem, its true support, the poem in its entirety, nor the differences from other texts. The majority of texts mentioned throughout the book carry this same logic: a poetry passage, for example, and an assignment, usually concerning written words, letters or numbers.

Aside from the literary texts that appear in a fragmented or complete manner, there are 21 recommendations for literature books throughout the textbook. Such suggestions apparently use thematic units as a criterion for the selection of books. In the analyzed book there are four units: “The World in Which We Live is the One We Have...”; “Everything Has a Story”; “On Planet Earth We Have...” and “Our Culture” (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 5).

In each unit, the book suggestions appear on the lower right hand side of the page, containing the written “book suggestion”, an image of the book cover and the catalog listing. Besides mentioning the book, in some proposals there is a short excerpt of the story, or an indication of the assignment with words taken from the book, as is the case with the book suggestions “What a Garden”, by Tatiana Belinky, apparently directed towards the perception of how words are formed with the intention of “systemizing the study of phonemes and graphemes” (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 9). We glean from this proposition that the focus is not in the appreciation of literature as art but in its use as a means of precocious literacy through the repetition and memorization of phonemes and graphemes.

Figure 3. Book suggestion “What a Garden” by Tatiana Belinky

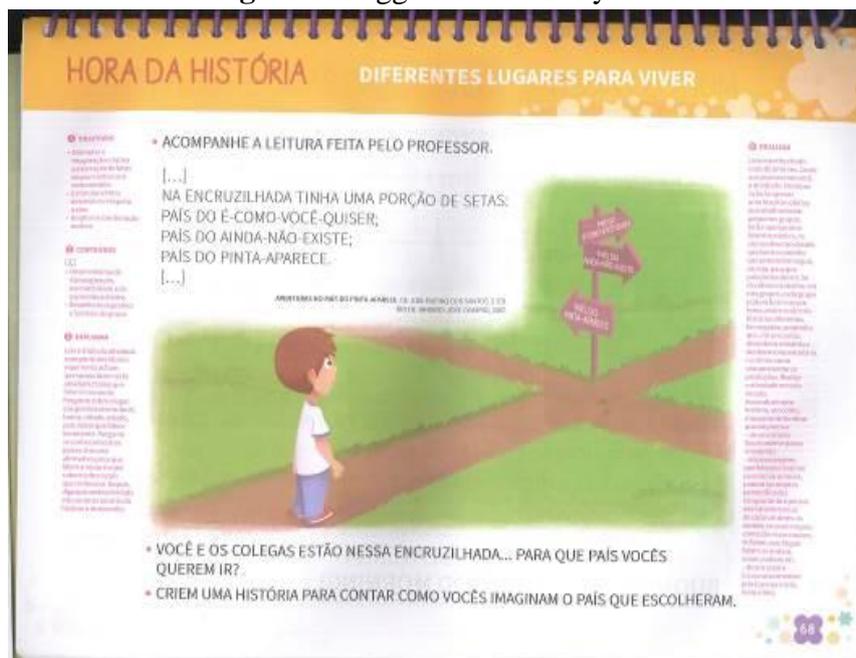


Source: Dante and Bianchini (2017c, p. 103).

Besides book suggestions, in the discussed textbook there is a proposal characterized as “storytime”. In this volume of the textbook, there are four proposals with this designation (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c). The first, entitled “Little Yellow Riding Hood”, proposes to the teacher for the children to relate Chico Buarque’s story with the traditional Little Red Riding Hood story, before finally watching the Little Yellow Riding Hood story available on YouTube, to accomplish the task proposed in the book of creating words to transfigure fear, as Chico Buarque did in his story. There is yet another proposal, although the children’s book lacks sufficient space for completion, for the child to create a new story based on one they already know, and suggests for the teacher to take the children to the library for them to choose a book and recreate the story, sharing their creations after as they wish: on a stage, in a circle, or in front of the class. As a follow-up they can get to know more about Chico Buarque, and finally end this assignment with a written activity using the moveable letters taken from the Chico Buarque text.

Another suggestion for storytime is called “Different Places to Live” (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 68). Beginning with the book excerpt “Adventures in the Country of the Appearing Spot”, the proposal is that the students create, in groups (with the entire class or in smaller groups), a story, by means of drawings that represent a logical and creative sequence. According to the book's instructions, the teacher should help the students so that they take into consideration the important elements for writing a story: setting, characters and plot, in accordance with the textbook’s instructions.

Figure 4. Suggestion for Storytime



Source: Dante and Bianchini (2017c, p. 68).

Some aspects are capable of being analyzed in this assignment proposal. Firstly, the indication is that the children produce a story, but the previous proposals in the book do not present diversified stories, and in no circumstance is a reflection about them made (the structure, characteristics, etc). One of the objectives of the assignment is to “stimulate creative imagination and the narration of sequenced facts with a certain meaning” (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 68). As such, the teacher starts with the reading of the chapter title “Different Places To Live”, and is guided to ask: “what do you think we are going to do for this activity?”. After receiving the replies, the teacher reads again for the children the book passage “Adventures in the Country of the Appearing Spot”.

[...] at the crossroads was a set of arrows:  
The country of whatever-you-want;  
The country that doesn't yet exist;  
The country of the appearing spot (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 68).

The proposal for textual production starts with a small passage from a book that the children aren't necessarily familiar with. The proposal is seemingly decontextualized, with no relation to childhood experiences, but with a belief that creativity is innate, since there are such few other elements that are as critical to the effectiveness of creation. In contrast to this proposal, Vigotski (2014, p. 55) explains: “it is much easier to develop a taste for literature in children, and greater success is had when the child is invited to write about a theme that it comprehends, that moves it emotionally, and above all stimulates it to express its inner world with words”.

The third “storytime”, entitled “The Rooster and the Precious Stone”, is a fable that the children should listen to on CD (a material available to the teacher) and later discuss the content and some aspects of the fable genre. The proposal is a painting of a drawing about the

fable and a phrase to complete: “the \_\_\_\_\_ found the \_\_\_\_\_”. The image of this proposition is as follows:

Figure 5. Storytime “The Rooster and the Precious Stone”



Source: Dante and Bianchini (2017c, p. 119).

The fourth and final moment destined for storytime is called “Ubuntu” and contains a proposal to listen to the story on CD, discuss the content and think of some situations in which the teacher and children can work together to make the world a better place. The assignment proposed in the book is for the children to unscramble the letters of the word “Ubuntu” that appear scrambled.

According to the teacher guidelines, “storytime” “contains stories to hear, discuss, interpret and retell” (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 13), with the objectives of “incentivizing the appreciation of and taste for narrated text; learning to become silent in order to hear and imagine the features of the characters, setting, sequence of events, to later narrate them with clarity and observation of the temporal sequence” (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 13).

As such, the teacher may prepare a comfortable environment, with cushions, a carpet, or even beneath a tree; ask the children to bring their favorite books; designate the creation and maintenance of a class library, complete with donated books so that the children can choose one to borrow and read at home.

Given these guidelines, it is possible to consider that the textbook in question presents the value of literature when inserted into Early Childhood education. However, the encounter with culture is weakened, so that specificities in childhood learning appear to be disregarded when the proposals are of fragmented stories, with the objective of completing a written, reading or drawing assignment. Rather than this, the literature stories in school are given in their materiality, entirety and plentitude, chosen, told and read with and for the children in a manner that values their aesthetic qualities in order to promote situations that potentialize humanization in the early years of life.

With such material the teacher may become a mere executor of others' planned ideas, without the possibility of making the selective and conscious choices of the wealth of literature for the children to have rich encounters with fables, stories, poems and other literature genres, as mobilizing learning opportunities for the development of aesthetic feelings and other typically human capacities. When a barely active participation on the part of adults and children is forged, the document distances them from the humanizing potential of literature.

Thus far, several proposals were presented that involve literary texts for an Early Childhood education textbook (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c) in which the literary excerpts are designated in a fragmented form, which makes it impossible to get to know the genre, content, ideas and form as they were conceived by the author. Few practical propositions exist in the material for literary experiences, revealing aspects of understanding that learning the written technique is sufficient to know and appropriate literature, or, moreover, that this does not have any other purpose but to help with the acquisition of reading and writing skills, serving as a pretext to teach content or announce a topic. We also found assignments in the textbook that were seemingly made solely to occupy the time of teachers and children in their schooldays, with few conditions for active development for these subjects. Thus, aesthetic education seems to be disregarded and not encouraged in the proposed textbook assignments for children.

In the proposals analyzed above, the guidelines offered to the teacher about the work concerning literature are not made explicit, in what refers to the comprehension of literature as art, and the possibility of aesthetic experiences. Educational situations concern teaching students to write and perceive written words. Although there are a number of examples of literary works throughout the textbook, there are no suggestions for possible ways to use or explore the materials. Moments of aesthetic experience for stimulation, elaboration and response do not appear to be taken into consideration.

Based on the previous exposition, it is possible to question: through the propositions in the *Ápis* collection book, for what purpose does literature serve? The meaning of explicit and implicit literature in the material barely articulates Todorov's (2012) assertions about the value of this art form in human education, when he argues that this training encourages us to imagine, broadening the universe and new ways of conceiving it.

In order for this art form to allow each person to become more and more human, there are necessary conditions that must be concrete, objective and subjective with respect to life and education, in educational processes intentionally planned in which there are both interventive and mediative action on the part of teachers, so that each and every child tries and appropriates new learning necessities. In this sense, literature may be conceived as a right for each child to be guaranteed in social relations organized by the school, in an intentional manner directed to the plentitude of humanization in childhood.

According to the DCNEI's (BRASIL, 2009), in a society in which mass reproduction smothers one's view and extinguishes singularities, the pedagogical work of schools in Early Childhood education, by returning to a sensibility that values creative acts and the construction by children of singular responses, guarantees them participation in diverse

experiences that promote relationships and interactions with diverse manifestations in music, plastic and graphic arts, film, photography, dance, theater, poetry and literature.

This proposition demonstrates the value of creating effective conditions for diverse experiences with different art forms, from play – in particular the act of pretending, for being that which most drives learning experiences through possibilities of expression, creation, imitation and interpretive reproduction of life during childhood (ELKONIN, 1998).

In further agreement with the DCNEI's (BRASIL, 2009), the education of children younger than six years old should be guided by political, ethical and aesthetic principles. Specifically, aesthetic principles are realized in educational experiences starting with the valorization of sensibility, creativity, playfulness and diversity of artistic and cultural manifestations.

In this perspective, the right to literature is made evident in the letter of the law starting with the DCNEI's (2009), and is presented in another document; proposed by the Ministry of Education: "Criteria for service in daycare centers that respects the fundamental rights of the children" (CAMPOS; ROSEMBERG, 2009). According to the document, one of the fundamental rights of young children is the one that "[...] develops curiosity, imagination and capacity for expression" (CAMPOS; ROSEMBERG, 2009, p. 13; p. 21-22).

In line with these legal principles, scholars of the Historical-Cultural Theory such as Elkonin (1998) and Vigotski (2014) argue that sensibility, creativity and playfulness are not innate in human beings, but rather typically human qualities that are learned through social relations with others. With this understanding, the child becomes human by appropriating human characteristics through means of educational situations intentionally forged so that the child learns to appreciate and create literary texts.

To amplify these reflections, Vigotski (2010, p. 324) argues:

It is assumed that a work of art has a good or bad effect, though it be indirectly moral [...] Children's libraries are organized so that children take from the books illustrative moral examples and constructive lessons; the dull moral of routine and the falsely constructive sermons become a sort of obligatory style of false literature.

In relation to art and the study of reality, Vigotski (2010, p. 329) makes explicit that "A work of art never reflects reality in all its plenitude and real truth, but is the wholly complex product of the elaboration of the elements of reality and incorporating into this reality a series of elements entirely foreign to it".

In addition, in reference to another misconception regarding literary education, Vigotski (2010, p. 331) emphasizes that it is a reduction of "aesthetics to the feeling of that which is pleasant, the pleasure of the work of art and seeing within it an objective in itself [...] reduces all feeling of aesthetic emotions to the immediate feeling of pleasure and joy that they bring to the child".

In Early Childhood education practices, observed in our guiding actions of Supervised Internship in initial teacher training courses, are common pedagogical practices that bring literature as a pretext to teach behavior and proper morals.

Regarding the textbook now presented and discussed, the proposals appear to be based on the second misconception, considering literature as a pretext to teach a content of reality. Although we can learn behaviors, know realities and enjoy a literary experience, it is a fallacy to believe that these aspects reside in aesthetic education or in literary purpose. Vigotski (2010) proposes an education that broadens the child's contact with the broader spheres of already accumulated social experience, so it is essential for contact with real supports and literary books and that the experiences are intentionally directed to involve and insert themselves into social relations with culture socially and historically elaborated in diverse ways, with mediations by teachers, family members and other, more experienced subjects.

An aesthetic education presupposes that adults and children are active, and, in a collaborative and intention way, the teacher organizes, with and for the children, spaces, times, materials and motivating situations for active child participation. Thus, it is worth emphasizing another fundamental criterion for service in daycare centers that respects the right of the child (CAMPOS; ROSEMBERG, 2009, p. 21-22), so that “[...] [we value] our children when they try to express their thoughts, fantasies and memories”.

In an education based on children's expressions, for example, the teacher actively listens (RINALDI, 2016) to the children's voices in different situations: in conversation circles; in the proposals of expression through painting, sculpture, cutting and pasting, musical compositions, among many other artistic possibilities. This means that they have space to speak without being judged, and their creations are not redone by the teacher, because one of the principles of pedagogical action is that the process is more valuable than the product. In this sense, the valorization of child expression creates possibilities for the amplification of situations in which fantasizing, remembering, elaborating and objectifying thoughts – qualities necessary for literary education, and, above all, for the training of the human within us – are motivated and cultivated in the space of Early Childhood education schools.

We agree with Vigotski (2010) that the mastery of aesthetic education comprehends the refined knowledge of the laws of art, the feeling of style, the talent to compose and taste. Contrary to this theoretical perspective, the textbook seems to use literature to teach writing technique and begin the literary process. As presented in the beginning of the book, “In the language axis, one of the objectives is to initiate the literary process” (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c, p. 5). In the material we did not find any explicit objective that considers literature and aesthetic education in its richness and possibilities.

Vigotski (2010, p. 351) believes that in the education of young children: “The teaching of technique for each art should be introduced in certain limits, kept to a minimum, and, above all, combined with: the child's own upbringing and the culture of its artistic perceptions”. This means that it is not sufficient to teach writing and reading technique for aesthetic education to be realized and literature experienced in its richness and potentiality. As Vigotski (2010, p. 351) himself complements, “it is only useful that teaching of technique that goes beyond this technique and administers a creative learning: either to create or to perceive”.

With this understanding, the organization of an aesthetic education becomes essential, beginning with the same premise as the general system of social education, as Vigotski (2010, p. 351-352) proposes:

The general system of social education aims to broaden the scope of personal and limited experience, establish contact between the child's psyche and the broadest spheres of accumulated social experience, such as including the child in the widest possible network in life. These general purposes entirely determine as well the paths of aesthetic education [...] Therefore, when discussing aesthetic education in the general education system, one should always keep in mind this incorporation of the child into the aesthetic experience of human society [...]. Herein lies the key to the most important task of aesthetic education: to introduce aesthetic education into one's own life. Art transfigures reality not just in constructions of fantasy but also in the real elaboration of objects and situations.

These theoretical principles form the base of the argument that, from an early age, literature is a source of experiences to be forged in the social relations established in schools of Early Childhood education, considering two fundamental aspects: literature itself and other children's activities, especially the playful activity of pretending and involvement with the other arts.

In the words of Vigotski (2010), school is the place for presentation and access to culture in its final forms. This means that to give the child a diversity of children's literature books (hence the additional importance of not only using textbooks as a carrier of literary texts); contact between children and the books' authors and illustrators; contact with the book itself, although they may not know how to read conventionally; the valorization of narratives, both real and literary, made by children, parents and teachers; the inclusion in educational proposals of pop culture literature, among other rich possibilities.

Mediating intervention by teachers is realized through planning, organization and availability of situations in which the child can manipulate and relate to the book object, from the point of view of its physical (size, colors, textures) as well as literary qualities (which also involves illustration). This process of accessibility to the materiality of literature in school can be driven by means of books that are already present there – such as those offered through public policies. In this process, the child appreciates art (not just literary), when the environment is favorable.

According to Vigotski (2014, p. 82), children experience the different arts in a syncretic way:

The child draws and speaks at the same time about what is being drawn. The child represents a character and composes the text for that character. This syncretism points to the common root from which all genres of children's art are separated. This common root is represented by children's play, which serves as a preparatory stage for artistic creativity. But even when, from this common root of general syncretic play, independent forms are differentiated, more or less autonomously, from children's upbringing, such as the drawing and dramatization of written composition, and, even in these cases, each of the forms is not completely independent from the others, but actively absorbs and assimilates the elements of the other forms.

Considering that, from the point of view of psychological and pedagogical science, play is conceived as a principal activity of children between the ages of three and six, it is configured as an interpretive activity of reality and through its realization, the child appropriates culture, is transformed and also transforms it (LEONTIEV, 1978; ELKONIN, 1998; BRASIL, 2009).

In this educational process in which play is a privileged form of appropriation and objectification of knowledge, literature can be a source of content for play activities such as the act of pretending. Thus, during play it is possible for the occurrence of the genesis of literary creations as well as the other arts. We therefore ratify the need for Early Childhood education to be the moment of experiencing different forms of art, exploration, knowledge and expression of human culture.

## Final considerations

The previous pages have summarized our effort to weave together reflections about literature in textbooks to use in Early Childhood education classes, with the argument that children's literature is a source of lessons and human development in childhood, which requires discussions regarding its materiality and potential for the emancipation of adults and children in school.

In line with these ideas, we have presented and discussed some educational proposals from a textbook for Early Childhood education (DANTE; BIANCHINI, 2017c), specifically considering aspects of the literature portrayed in it. The results of our analyses reveal the existence, in this book, of fragmented children's literature texts proposed for working with, for example, technical aspects of writing and reading, distancing itself from the possibility of literary wealth to form the base of an aesthetic education in Early Childhood education.

The guidelines offered to the teacher in the textbook do little to subsidize teacher mediation for aesthetic experience, since educational situations favor other proposals, such as the acquisition of writing, as well as other content. Instead, the guidelines for teacher activity could be to listen to the children, get to know them and, at the same time, instigate the magnification of the teacher's artistic experiences so that they can also propose activities to the children that purposely favor the syncretism of the arts with play, the aesthetic experience with literature.

To have aesthetic education at its core activity means to have the intention to stimulate the senses of children so that they can elaborate and respond (in the sense of recreating art, understanding its style, taste). To carry out this process, schools can become places of literary reading through teachers and children. Through public policies such as PNBE, for example, these spaces can be inhabited by literature books, accessible to adults and children who venture to know and relate to them.

From this perspective, we conclude this exposition by affirming the value of both initial and continuous teacher education, that allows the teacher to consciously reflect on the material with which they work, favoring cultural choices that promote children's encounters

with literary wealth and plentitude in school, through an aesthetic education that humanizes and empowers human creation from the beginning of life.

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## Notas

<sup>i</sup> Translated by: Corey Barchat.

<sup>ii</sup> Translated by: Rosa Maria Martinez Salinas.

<sup>iii</sup> The spelling of the name Vigotski/Vigotsky, throughout this article, will respect that of the reference used. A grafia do nome Vigotski/Vigotsky, ao longo deste artigo, respeitará a da referência utilizada.

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