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ARTICLE

Social representations of reading:
ludic and educational functions of literary text

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ABSTRACT
The article aims to discuss processes of anchoring and objectifying the social representations of literary reading produced by public school teachers. Ninety four (94) teachers from the early years of elementary school participated in this qualitative research. The data analysis is referenced in the theory of social representations proposed by Moscovici (1978, 2015), who understands the representational process as a form of knowledge which functions as the elaborator of behaviors and communication. It was found that the teachers anchor literary reading in the playfulness of the text and in the possibility of using it to teach and educate children. Since pleasure is not the school's objective, teachers adhere to dramatization practices to give concreteness and materiality to the pleasure of reading.

KEYWORDS
social representations; literary reading; playfulness; children's literature.

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REPRESENTAÇÕES SOCIAIS DE LEITURA: O TEXTO LITERÁRIO EM SUA FUNÇÃO LÚDICA E EDUCATIVA

RESUMO

O artigo tem por objetivo discutir processos de ancoragem e objetivação das representações sociais de leitura literária produzidos por professoras da rede pública de ensino. Foi realizada pesquisa qualitativa, em que participaram 94 professoras dos anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental. A análise dos dados está referenciada na teoria das representações sociais proposta por Moscovici (1978, 2015), que entende o processo representacional como forma de conhecimento que tem por função a elaboração de comportamentos e a comunicação. Constatou-se que as professoras ancoram a leitura literária na ludicidade do texto e na possibilidade de utilizá-lo para ensinar e educar as crianças. Dado que o prazer não se constitua como objetivo da escola, as professoras fazem adesão às práticas de dramatização para conferir concretude e materialidade ao prazer de ler.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

representações sociais; leitura literária; ludicidade; literatura infantil.

REPRESENTACIONES SOCIALES DE LECTURA: EL TEXTO LITERARIO EN SU FUNCIÓN LÚDICA Y EDUCATIVA

RESUMEN

El artículo discute los procesos de anclaje y objetivación de las representaciones sociales de la lectura literaria producida por maestros de escuelas públicas. Se realizó una investigación cualitativa, en el que participaron 94 docentes de la escuela primaria. El análisis está referenciado en las representaciones sociales propuesta por Moscovici (1978, 2015), como forma de conocimiento cuya función es la elaboración de comportamientos y comunicación. Se descubrió que los maestros anclan la lectura literaria en lo placer del texto y en la posibilidad de usarlo para enseñar y educar a los niños. Dado que el placer no es el objetivo de la escuela, los maestros se adhieren a las prácticas de dramatización para dar concreción y materialidad al placer de la lectura.

PALABRAS CLAVE

representaciones sociales; lectura literaria; lúdico; literatura infantil.

INTRODUCTION

This study is located in the field of reading studies as it understands that this is a space where concerns emerge that create a need to comprehend the condition of those who have appropriated the abilities to read and write. The objective of the study was to discuss processes of anchoring and objectivation of the social representations of literary reading produced by public school teachers. By investigating representations of reading, we sought to understand the social context in which they were produced, the mechanisms engendered in their production, as well as the implications in the didactic processes of using literary texts in schools and in the practices of learning to read undertaken in the first years of elementary school.

The interlocutors of the study are a group of 94 teachers[1] at the level of what is known as *Fundamental I* [elementary or primary school], in public municipal schools in Montes Claros, Minas Gerais, Brazil. In this reference universe, we elected as subjects those who participate in children's literature classes, offered within the scope of the Teachers College at *Universidade Estadual de Montes Claros* (Unimontes). These teachers were important partners, providing essential elements needed to review their representations of literary reading, and to analyze and understand the reading practices conducted.

As a methodological tool for data collection, a questionnaire with open questions was issued to these teachers, through which they could freely express their conceptions and beliefs, values, experiences, and practices. The planning and execution of the activity, and the treatment and organization of data were rigorously and intentionally guided to guarantee obtaining the intended objective. The methodological option made it possible to understand the meanings produced by subjects, manifested in their discourse and daily actions. The choice was based on the knowledge produced in relation to qualitative studies and investigations of social representations, which indicate directions based on a vast literature.

We concur with Bogdan and Bicklen (1994) that, although qualitative investigation has a long and rich tradition in the field of education, it has only been widely recognized since the final decades of the twentieth century. It is important to highlight the primacy of comprehension as the founding principle of the production of knowledge, through a process in which complex relations are studied, without an intention to explain them with isolated variables, given that qualitative research is a subjective act of construction.

It can also be said that, in relation to social representation, recent decades have witnessed a large expansion in studies, discussions, and methodological paths. We understand social representations as complex, dynamic, and heterogeneous phenomena whose field of study is based on the conceptual definition proposed by Moscovici, who gained visibility with his book *La psychanalyse: son image et son public*, published in 1961. Moscovici (1978) formulated the concept of social

1 While the number of male teachers in early childhood and primary education in Brazil has grown, more than 95% of teachers are women.

representations following the direction of collective representations postulated by French sociologist Emile Durkheim. By using the expression collective representation, Durkheim wanted to designate the specificity of social thought in relation to individual thinking. In Durkheim's logic, collective representation is not reduced to the sum of the representations of individuals but involves the primacy of the social over the individual, the predominance of one over the other (Moscovici, 1978).

For Moscovici (2015), social representations are constituted as a system of values, ideas, and practices, individual constructions engendered collectively, and offer a path for grasping the concrete world with a dual function. On the one hand, social representations have the function of establishing an order, which guides people in their material and social world, and also allows them to control it. On the other hand, they provide a code for naming and classifying various aspects of their world and their individual and social history, so that communication is possible among members of a community (Moscovici, 2015). In other words, social representations are a modality of particular knowledge that seeks to elaborate behaviors and communication between individuals (Moscovici, 1978). "By being internalized, the representations come to express the relations of the subjects with the world that they know, and simultaneously situate them in this world" (Duveen, 1995, p. 267).

Social representations are forms of individual knowledge that are composed by socialized figures and expressions that concern a socially valued phenomenon. They are constituted as socially elaborated knowledge because, although they are produced through personal experiences, they are based on information, beliefs, values, models, expectations, and practices that are lived through educational processes and cultural traditions of social groups. "Social representations stem from the socialization process and are directly associated to collective identity" (Daniel, Antunes and Amaral, 2015, p. 291).

Social representations about a given phenomenon are not constituted as mere aggregates of individual meanings, thus their analysis should be based on the social mediation processes that engender them and confer them a peculiar structure. The representations are individual, as they are constructed by subjects through processes of social communication and mediation. They are social precisely because they do not refer to isolated individuals, but to interacting subjects.

This is how the investigation of social representations goes beyond a survey of individual constructions, by mapping the system of signification produced by subjects, in an effort to grasp the mediations by which these signs and meanings are constructed. This is an activity permeated by the subjectivity of the constructive processes of subjects and carries out a survey on the intelligibility that is socially produced in at a given time or by a certain human group.

In our study, the discourses issued by teachers are, therefore, a fundamental space for the understanding of the reading practices mediated, and of the cultural contents in circulation, of the desires and expectations, dreams, utopias, and hopes that these subjects nourish in relation to literary reading. The representations elaborated by teachers define the world and guarantee them their place in it, constituting their identity and belonging.

Therefore, in our study, in order to understand the representations of literary reading of elementary school teachers, we sought to go beyond the identification of individual meanings to understand the social mode of their constitution. After all, the representational activity is mediated by social processes, given that teachers are inserted in a context, which they both influence and are influenced by. To capture these influences, the study emphasized the communication processes mediated by language. Minayo (1995) understands that despite expressing fragmentary and often contradictory thinking, language is the privileged mediation for the study of social representations, which are manifest in words, feelings, and behavior, and can be analyzed through the understanding of the structures of social behavior.

> Communication and language are phenomena based on various types of tension between speakers and listeners that are essential for the concept of social representations. Representations are formed, maintained and changed in and by means of language and communication, and in the same way, the use of words and attributes linked to meanings transform social representations. (Marková, 2017, p. 363)

Interactions between groups are heterogeneous and their specific contexts produce a variety of styles of thinking and communication, some based on consensus, others on dissent and contradiction (Marková, 2017). In our study we found a large variety of contents and practices, in which the representations of literary reading produced by teachers can appear to be conflicting and confusing — they affirm the pleasure of reading, the love for books, the freedom of choice and aesthetic fruition, while their practices are focused on the functionality of text, on the teaching of curriculum contents and, above all, of moral values. Nevertheless, we believe that discourses are adjusted to the situation of interlocution, without this indicating a "lack of authenticity or a Machiavellian attitude destined to hide a 'true' opinion" (Moscovici, 1978, p. 50). For Moscovici, in these situations, only the usual process of interaction is involved and controls the use of language and codes that are best adjusted to the occasion. Subjects seek approval or hope that their responses can lead to satisfaction of an intellectual or personal order, while it is understood that, facing another interlocutor, or in other circumstances, their message would be different. It is important to highlight that discourses are not neutral but are inserted in strategies and practices of power and are associated to the interests and needs of those who produce them.

From this perspective, social representations can be manifested differently in discourses and actions, in an apparently contradictory movement. Nevertheless, Becker (1993) affirms that, in research, it is a mistake to consider one of these expressions as real and the other as a dissimulation. For Becker, the values of a social group are an ideal, to which real behavior can come close, but rarely completely be incorporated to.

The behaviors manifest by subjects are integrated into the content of their representations and, for this reason, discourses and practices cannot be separated and linked by a cause and effect relationship. For this reason, in our study, we consider

that the representations of teachers are present in their discourses and are also identified in the process of presenting literature in schools and in the resulting reading practices. The reading practices conducted by the teachers cannot be considered as a consequence of their representations but rather constitute another dimension in which their content is manifested.

In order to understand the representations of teachers, a study was conducted that emphasized the meanings produced and the interpretation of this signification system. The reading practices described by the teachers were understood as an instance of manifestation of the representations, and not as a consequence of the symbolic system produced by them. After all, "behavior and action are logically and necessarily connected to representational beliefs" (Wagner, 1995, p. 178).

Our study went beyond a survey of concepts and images about the object in question — literary reading — to understand the framework of references constructed by the teachers, when organizing their discourse and teaching. This was a process that required discernment and distancing, as we sought to recognize our own expectations and needs, our own habits and representations.

By mapping the representations about reading, it was possible to identify multiple perspectives on literature, from an approach that considers the determinations of a pedagogical-moralizing order, as well as those that conceive of text as a space of fruition and aesthetic experience. In this interval, other perspectives of understanding were identified — the representations compose a truly structured system, which reveals different meanings constructed over time. It was also possible to perceive that, by proposing a new form of understanding reading practices, the subjects do not discard previous practices — which leave a mark on the new processes.

In this article[2], to better understand the framework of reference constructed by the teachers, the content of their representations is organized in three sections. In the first, we address the processes of anchoring and objectivation of the categories of pleasure and functionality of literary reading; while in the second, we discuss reading practices mediated by teachers with the children. Finally, in the third section, reading experiences of teachers are analyzed.

ANCHORING AND OBJECTIVATION OF LITERARY READING

Social representations are defined as a mental component of the object and correspond to an act of thinking with which the subject refers to this object, given that it is important to understand its structuring process. "In reality, the structure of each representation appears opened up to us, it has two faces that can no more be separated than the front and back of a piece of paper; the figurative side and the

2 This article is based on a master's dissertation in education, conducted at the Faculdade de Educação of *Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais* (UFMG), which is revisited and resignified in the discussion presented here. The study had financing from the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Ensino Superior* (Capes).

symbolic side" (Moscovici, 1978, p. 65). Moscovici also affirms that in this structure, every figure corresponds to a meaning and every meaning to a figure. On the figurative side, the subject uses images constructed to make concrete and present the object represented; and on the symbolic side, there is a correspondence of a meaning to an image, integrating the object into its universe. The figurative nucleus is understood as a structural image that visibly reproduces a conceptual framework.

In our study, it was important to consider the structuring mechanisms of the figurative nucleus of the representations of reading of the teachers. This structure was established through conceptual elaborations and indicated that the teachers appropriate contents in circulation, incorporate knowledge and values, produce beliefs, and make representative, cognitive, and affective investments. In their elaborations, the object — literature book — was taken as an image around which the figurative nucleus of the representations of reading was structured. The other side of this image is the child reader, a subject who not only reads the books, but who likes to read and for whom reading is a tool for learning. Such image is constructed through the teachers' experiences with reading, and by their immersion in the daily life of classrooms, which places them before the challenge of teaching students to read and shaping readers. In this challenge, teachers are constituted as mediators between books and children, who seek to develop a taste for reading and influence reading and life trajectories. It is in this place that the teachers interviewed move and act, guided by the belief that reading is something good, that they produce strategies and tactics to carry out reading practices and promote books.

By considering reading from the logic of teachers, we perceive that the figurative nucleus of their representations is replete with words and meanings that define what they think and feel, hope for and practice, project and idealize. Book, reader, reading, learning, knowledge, ludicity, and work are expressions that integrate their cognitive elaborations through a movement in which the pleasure of reading is found imbricated in the utilitarian practices of literary reading, in which books are the central object.

By electing the literature book as a constitutive element of the figurative nucleus of their representations of reading, teachers construct the meaning of reading as a ludic opportunity, establishing a relationship of children with literary books as a process guided by pleasure. Nevertheless, in the work of teaching, leisure and pleasure are dissonant values in the teachers' frame of references. This is because the classroom is a space in which they guide activities and learnings, control times and spaces, and propose procedures for evaluation. That is, the school is a place of work and not of leisure; pleasure is not an objective to be reached in the teaching process.

Thus, going beyond these dissonances, the representations of teachers are expressed by discourses that are strongly guided by the pleasure of reading and attitudes steered by the functionality of literature, by a process in which the ludic characteristics of literary texts assure the encounter of children with books and the pedagogical approach of the work promotes the learning of scholastic contents. For this reason, literary reading is presented through a logic of work and not by the gratuitousness of the reader. Imbued with the need to guarantee the development of reading abilities and other school contents, teachers see the pleasure of reading

as a threat to their professional teaching identity. Pleasure is not the objective of the school, and the understanding that it is disturbs the teachers, who associate the pleasure of reading with a waste of time. The sense of threat and disturbance are enhanced by the Brazilian educational context and the reality of the children's learning experiences. If we consider the history of Brazil, we see that it has been marked by the non-democratization of educational opportunities and by a failure to guarantee that all children will learn to read.

Historically, our country placed in practice a restricted or gradual mode of diffusion of literacy, which transformed literacy into a chronic problem. It is estimated that in 1820, only 0.20% of the population was literate, a level that suffered gradual progressions in the twentieth century. In 1960, the percentage of literate people was 53.3%, this being the first time that the number of people who could read was greater than those who could not. In 2003, about 17% of the population could not read (UFMG, 2003). In 2015, 8% of people older than 15 were not able to read (IBGE, 2020).

Despite the progressive reduction in illiteracy, systemic evaluations indicate that reading proficiency among Brazilian students has still not reached recommended levels. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) identified gradual but still not satisfactory progress in reading by Brazilian students who are close to 15 years of age. In the first edition of the evaluation, applied in the year 2000, Brazil was in last place among 32 countries who participated in the process, and obtained only 396 points in reading abilities. In the subsequent editions, the results indicate that Brazil has improved, given that in the 2018 edition, in which 80 countries participated, Brazilian students attained 413 points, occupying 57th place in the ranking — a position that reveals that difficulties persist in the reading and comprehension of texts.

The study, *Retratos da Leitura no Brasil* [Portraits of Reading in Brazil], conducted in 2015 with 5,012 in-person interviews at respondents' homes with individuals representative of the Brazilian population older than 5, indicates that 57% of those interviewed consider themselves readers, while 43% claim they were not. "This is a study in which someone who says they had read an entire book, or parts of a book in the three months prior to the study are considered a READER, while a NON-READER is someone who did not read a whole book or parts of a book in the same period" (Lajolo, 2016, p. 117, emphasis from the original). The study is in its 4th edition and reveals that the number of readers increased, since 2007, but the challenge of educating readers and developing good reading habits persists. Upon analyzing the data, Lajolo (2016) finds that the absence of a mediator figure in the path to reading of a considerable contingent of readers is curious — 55% of those interviewees said that they learned to read alone, without anyone influencing their reading practice.

In the study, only 10% of readers said that their mediator was a teacher. This is data that produces curiosity and is threatening, particularly for education professionals, whose primary task is to teach reading, influence readers, and produce the immersion of children in the universe of written culture. The strangeness increases

if we think, as does Kleiman (1995), that the school is the main agent of literacy, is the main agency responsible for reading.

This reality of exclusion of part of the Brazilian population from an education that allows access to cultural goods codified by writing, leads us to discuss the processes of anchoring and objectivation of the representations of literary reading produced by the teachers who participated in our study. To overcome the threat and the strangeness in relation to the pleasure of reading and the gratuitousness of the literature, teachers anchor fruition in utilitarian practices of reading — a possibility to use literary texts to educate and teach school contents. The representations are constituted by a strong adhesion to literature, adhesion which is perceptible in the desire manifested by teachers, "that schools come to adopt children's literature books to substitute didactic books" (P32[3]).

According to Moscovici (1978), one of the purposes of social representations is to make familiar something that is foreign and threatening, that is, to classify, categorize and name new events and ideas with which one did not have previous contact, thus allowing the comprehension and manipulation of these new events and elements through pre-existing and internalized ideas, values and theories, which are already widely accepted by society. To bring a non-familiar element into the field of familiarity, two fundamental dialectic processes are used, namely anchoring and objectivation.

To anchor, for Moscovici (2015), means to classify and give name to something. This is because things that do not have a name are strange and threatening. Anchoring captures and fixes strange ideas, reducing them to common categories and images, placing them in a context familiar to the individual. Meanwhile, the task of the second process of formation of the social representations is to externalize the abstracted knowledge. This means that, through objectivation, a subject transforms something abstract into something that is nearly concrete, transferring what is in the mind to something that exists in the physical world. Thus, abstract notions are transformed into something concrete, nearly tangible.

In our study, the representations of teachers indicate the centrality of the pleasure and aesthetic fruition of language, while the practice is marked by the functionality of the text in the education of children. Analyzing the discourses produced and the practices undertaken, it was possible to identify the content of the representations, which reveal a diversity but also a consensus. Among the consensual ideas is the unanimous tendency to consider literature in its educational finality, in which the dimensions of pleasure and functionality are intertwined in the constitution of pedagogical processes for literature in schools.

When presenting 5 adjectives that best qualify literary reading, the 94 teachers who participated in the study used 439 adjectival expressions, which compose the figurative nucleus of their representations. Of these, 375 (85.42%) highlight

3 When citiing their statements, the teachers [professoras] who participated in the studied were identifed by the letter P, followed by a number, used in sequence (P1, P2, P3 ... P94), to maintain their anonymity.

the pleasurable and ludic practices of reading and indicate the construction of the literary work in its vitality and dynamic nature — characteristics that are capable of promoting the adhesion of readers to a book. These descriptions point to the fruitive finality of literature and reveal the power of a literary text to seduce readers, encourage their entry into the imaginary world and their involvement with the author's proposal. A lower percentage of responses (64 or 14.58%) place the aesthetic experience on a secondary plane, conferring attention to aspects related to the use of literature as an instrument specifically dedicated to scholastic educational purposes — for teaching language, and socially recommendable values and attitudes. These data indicate that the semantic universe constructed around literature is mostly focused on the aesthetic experience and pleasure of readers.

Nevertheless, by presenting the criteria that guide the choice and indication of books for students to read, there is an inversion in this perspective. The 94 teachers who participated in the study enumerated 198 criteria, of which 115 (58.08%) emphasize functionality and 83 (41.91%) consider pleasure in the relationship between readers and text. We found that, moved by the desire to form children who read, teachers support their work with literary reading. But, beyond the pleasure of reading, there is an expectation that students will access school knowledge and appropriate it. For this reason, teachers turn to children's literature, with support from consensual representations that consider reading to be something good. The teachers widely support the naturalized idea that those who read develop competence to understand the texts read, write well, improve their spelling and punctuation, expand their vocabulary, and improve their language skills.

Thus, literature is articulated with interests and competencies that schools consider to be their prerogative, with a guaranteed presence in the school space, in different formats available in the editorial market that, due to multiple commercial interests, respond immediately to demands of the educational system. In other words, in their representational universe, teachers anchor fruitive reading in practices of teaching and education, while objectivation takes place through activities with dramatization. Among the activities proposed, dramatizing a text has strong centrality, a near unanimity. Of the 94 participants in the study, 92 (97.87%) affirm that they work with dramatization of stories. Although they consider the pleasure in performing so, it was possible to realize that the proposal of dramatizing did not appear as a search for the ludic aspect of the text. In classrooms, reading is not conceived as an activity separate from learning.

By this logic, for students, dramatization is a way to interpret the text read, presenting results, thus making visible the reading conducted. Dramatization is inserted in the teaching practice and assumes a function similar to that performed by an exercise — a form of controlling students' activity, allowing the evaluation of performances and showing that the school has fulfilled its function. Seeking to attain the principle of "ludicity", dramatizing stories gains a utilitarian component. To value creativity through enacting stories can seem like a didactic innovation, which combines with the renovative ideas of enjoyment of reading and interest of students. However, these activities, when supported by pragmatic objectives, do not consider reading as an aesthetic experience.

For teachers, dramatizing a literary text is a familiar practice, which confers a concrete materiality to pleasurable reading, and is simultaneously an opportunity to use a literary text for the purpose of teaching and educating. For schools — a space founded in work — it is strange to promote pleasure and entertainment for children. For this reason, through dramatization, teachers transform the distant quality of pleasure into something familiar.

The teachers assume an idealistic position by qualifying the literature, but prove to be realistic in enacting the teaching function and indicating readings for their students. In the indication of criteria for choosing works, the responses shift from pleasure — which was central in the adjectives used to describe the literature — to a concept that has literature as a resource for teaching, an object that attends educational purposes.

THE PLACE OF LITERATURE IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WHO READ

Discussing representations of reading and the place of literature in the formation of child readers involves investigating the practices of reading in daily life and those found in practices mediated by schools. It is important to note that, in Brazil, which is influenced by discussions about reading practices and the power of writing, literacy gains centrality as do methods and materials for teaching reading and writing. Since the last decades of the twentieth century, discussions have been raised about literacy, which is understood by Soares (1999, p. 18) as the "result of the action of teaching or learning to read and write: the state or the condition that a social group or individual acquires as a consequence of having appropriated writing". Under this logic, there is a distancing between an individual who is "alphabetized", that is someone who knows how to read and write, and the literate, one who is immersed in social practices, and is able to adequately respond to social demands with reading and writing.

According to Kleiman (1995), as the main agent of literacy, schools are concerned only with one type of literacy — that which is related to the reading and writing competencies of students. And, by focusing on the individual process of acquisition of the alphabetic writing system, schools no longer consider its use by different social groups and in different discursive situations. By discussing literacy, it is considered that multiple purposes can be associated to reading, in which reading can be a tool for survival and work, as a process of integration and social participation. Reading can also involve an aesthetic enjoyment of language, an unbiased practice, in which readers are not guided by immediate purposes, but turn to books as spaces of pleasure that can be used for the development of sensibility and humanity.

The later perspective is that which approximates to the idea of literary reading. Cosson (2019) understands that literary reading is a dynamic process of appropriation of literature and the construction of meanings. For this author, the singularity of literary construction of meanings comes from a unique and intense verbal interaction with a world made of words, and also from the experience of a

world that the literary text concentrates and makes available and for which there are no temporal or spatial limits. In this direction, Lajolo (2001b, p. 44) understands that

> Literature is a door for various worlds that are born from various readings that are made of it. The worlds that it creates are not undone on the last page of the book, in the last line of the song, in the last line recited or in the final screen of the hypertext. They remain in the reader, incorporated as experience, marks of the history of reading of each one.

Literary reading presents itself as a process capable of developing our sensibility and humanity, expanding cultural horizons and developing in readers a critical sense toward what they see, hear, and read. Literary reading is "the exercise of the liberty that makes us human. It is through this libertarian force that literature always participated in human communities" (Cosson, 2019, p. 25).

The literary way of conducting reading requires a differentiated reader who has the ability to question truths; a reader who gets involved with the text, is enchanted with the unpredictable and bold, who prefers transgressive texts to those that present reality in a linear and closed manner. A reader who constructs this type of relationship with literature "learns to read what is hidden, discover the transgression" (Leite, 1995, p. 53).

Despite the various arguments in defense of literary reading, Zilberman affirms that books are objects that are "becoming strange in the school environment" (Zilberman, 1990, p. 20). For Lajolo (2001a), the relationship between students, teachers, and literature must be discussed, given that:

> The lack of connection between literature and youth that explodes in school appears to be a mere symptom of a greater disconnection, which we – teachers – also experience. Students do not read, neither do we; students write poorly and we do too. But, unlike us, the students are not responsible for this (Lajolo, 2001a, p. 16).

In school spaces, children and youth still do not construct a relationship based on pleasure with the book object, do not develop the skills needed for the literary production of meanings, they see reading as an obligation. In our study, teachers produce a representation in which literature is considered as a tool that is capable of reverting trajectories and steering a successful school history for students. In its system of significations, the representations are highly favorable to the presence of literature, considering its effectiveness in promoting reading and educating student-readers. By speaking of the results of their pedagogical action, teachers demonstrate their dissatisfaction — students do not like to read, do not see reading as an engaging and pleasant activity, their reading practices and abilities do not present the proficiency desired from them. Books are seen as redeeming tools, but the connection between readers and books has yet to be established.

However, this unsatisfactory performance is not attributed to literature that, in the representations constructed, is seen to have the capacity to promote reading

and enchant readers. That is, reading is good, it is an objective to be pursued, and literature is a resource capable of expanding the competencies of readers — if it does not, it is because the conditions are not favorable. The context is used to anchor the anguish caused by the failure of schools to promote reading. But, when searching for explanations for the lack of connection between readers and books, elements are preserved that compose the figurative nucleus of the representations — literature is something good that should be part of students' lives. In this process, different causes are identified for the problem of non-reading, which is blamed on the omissions of schools, in the scarcity of books, deficiencies of libraries and reading spaces, the lack of investments in early education, and in the professional development of teachers.

Students face substantial difficulties, and teachers who use literature to develop readers' competencies are deeply anguished, they feel impotent and confused by the difficulties they face in daily professional activities: "Usually students who are in the habit of reading are well developed at school. They improve in oral reading and in interpretation" (P1); "I know that the act of reading is of essential importance, but what can you do so that your students are interested in reading and do it, when they claim they don't like to read?" (P42).

In this situation of uncertainty, teachers seek to mark a position, investing in children's literature, giving it a privileged status: that of a tool for promoting the habit of reading, to constitute reading practices and thus, to produce the immersion of children in the world of written culture. The anguishes and frustrations are anchored in literature, seen as a possibility for developing new skills. In order to make professional practice more fun and interesting, literature is selected as a resource to revert the lack of disconnection between children and books. The discourses reveal an attitude favorable to the insertion of literature in the life of children, but indicate an urgent need to improve the individual and school conditions:

> I think that literature is very important in life, mainly that of children who are being educated, but the school is not concerned with this matter and is more attached to learning Portuguese and mathematics and winds up not giving an opportunity for teachers to work more with literature in the classroom. Or it does not encourage the teacher in the value that children's literature has. (P85)

"Today I work with [literature] with my students, because I think it's very important to awaken in students a taste for and the pleasure in reading. Because I know that this taste was not worked with in me in childhood and I feel that I missed out a lot with it" (P64).

In the system of signification produced by teachers, there is a consensus that considers children's literature as a cultural production essential to the formation of children. However, for it to serve education, literature must have qualities that make it a special type of text: "It should be engaging, interesting, have positive messages, an interesting plot, etc." (P12); "Reading that gives you pleasure, that awakens the sensibility, creativity, critical sense, which brings out feelings of joy or sadness" (P45); "The adjectives that best qualify literary reading are those that

address sensibility, emotion, pleasure, and creativity and also develop a critical sensibility in the reader" (P35).

This centrality of literature occurs not only by improving the conditions of insertion in the universe of literacy. The text is considered a resource capable of creating opportunities for other learning, for the assimilation of curricular contents, moral and ethical values, for positioning readers in relation to the broader reality. In the representations of teachers: "The act of reading deserves special attention from the school, because when readers acquire the habit of reading they comprehend and understand the world around them. Why not revive the practice of reading in our students?" (P58); "I always work with literary reading because I consider it very important. Even with little material that can guide me better, students do not lack this participation" (P31).

To promote reading and the taste for a good book, literature is seen as a safe haven, anchoring desires, hopes, and expectations. In the process of its elaboration, the figurative nucleus of the representations was solidly constructed based on books, considering their dimensions of pleasure and functionality. The teachers associate literature to pragmatic aspects of education, and their discourses are guided by a ludic perspective, as a form of promoting adhesion to their public, while simultaneously creating opportunities to access knowledge.

The presence of pleasure and functionality in the representations of teachers does not imply an equal status of these two dimensions of analysis. In their discourses, teachers prioritize the former, placing pragmatic questions in the background, because "literature is a pleasurable form of knowledge and not knowledge about how to do something" (P35). If this discourse prioritizes a ludic nature of reading, the practices mediated reveal an inverted perspective — the utility of literature assumes strong centrality, and pleasure becomes a mere support for reading. Focusing their efforts on working with curricular contents, teachers do not find time to conciliate the demands of teaching with enjoyment. For teachers, "school time is too short for us to develop the entire program needed for learning and the pleasure of students" (P41).

The school is an agent of literacy, a privileged space for the encounter between readers and books, and teachers are responsible for this mediation. Barthes (1987, p. 43) affirmed, "there is a profound and irreducible antinomy between literature as practice and literature as teaching. This antinomy is grave because it is related to the problem that is perhaps now more burning, which is the problem of transmission of knowledge" (Barthes, 1987, p. 43). For Barthes (1987), the large structures of economic alienation have already been revealed, but the structures of alienation of knowledge have not. This is where the fundamental problem for resolving this antinomy resides. Understanding that literature can be compatible with education, he believes that the way it is used in school must be modified, corrected so that teachers are capable of maintaining a discourse, without impositions, "because what can be oppressive in teaching is not ultimately the knowledge that it promotes, but the discursive forms through which it is proposed" (Barthes, 1987, p. 43).

In Barthes (1987) opinion, three points should be immediately corrected when teaching literature. The first consists in inverting the classic-centrism, that

is, to break with the linearity in which the students are required to study literature through a chronological sequence of without relation to the current situation. The second principle seeks to substitute the author, the school, and the movement by the text. Text, in our schools, is treated as an object of explanation, when it should be considered as a space of language, which is invested in a certain number of codes of knowledge. The third principle intends to guide teaching literature so that in each occasion and instant, it can develop a polysemic practice of reading of texts, opening them to symbolism.

The construction of teaching that has these characteristics depends on the redimensioning of practices, overcoming antagonisms present in school activities and in academic discourses, which, at times emphasize pedagogical issues, and at times aesthetic issues when addressing literature.

BOOKS AND READING IN REPRESENTATIONS OF TEACHERS

In the process of production of representations, not only experiences come into play, but above all, the discourse that legitimates and institutes literature as a cultural practice. Thus, when analyzing the systems of signification produced, it is important to comprehend the discourses of teachers in their interlocution with other contents presented by society, given that it is in this dialog that representations are produced.

To understand this complex situation that composes the representations of literary reading leads us to the social context in which they were constituted. "If the activity of the subject is central to theory, no less central is the reality of the world" (Guareschi and Jovchelovitch, 1995, p. 19). Expressed in another manner, social representations are expressed at the interface between the individual and the social; they are constituted as a cognitive activity and occur in a social space, suffering interference from contents produced in different historical short, medium, and long term periods.

The constitution of schools as institutions responsible for formal education highlights their role in supporting the social and cultural development of children. Thus, schools use various strategies and materials, with literature being a source that is always present. According to Arroyo (1990), since the origins of children's literature and in all the countries in which it has become a reality, there has always been a concern for technical-pedagogical relations that permeate its entrance and use in schools. In the nineteenth century, it developed an important role due to its connection to didactic objectives, also "revealing and preparing, awakening and cultivating the habit of reading among children of the time" (Arroyo, 1990, p. 98).

Zilberman (1991) maintains that to justify the presence of literature in classrooms, schools are supported by the importance of needing to know about the history of a nation's literature, its traditions and illustrious members. Literature also serves grammatical purposes, as a model for use of the national language and issues of a moral order, in the cases in which fiction assumes a pedagogical orientation and comes to link socially accepted values and rules. Lajolo and Zilberman (1984) highlight the strong perfectionist concern for language, whose function as

a model is assumed by the literature produced for children, which in addition to providing examples of qualities, feelings, attitudes, and values, manifest the correction of language, promoting a solid and chauvinistic representation of the country — knowledge that schools are responsible for promoting. Thus, the development of literature in Brazil accompanied the rhythm of schools, and asserted itself as a cultural production through the organization of Brazilian schools and had its boom in the 1970s, with the massive entrance of children into the educational system (Soares, 1999).

Literature has thus entered schools to serve educational interests. Arroyo (1990) understands that it was not always possible to establish a clear separation between books that are purely entertaining and those for reading to acquire knowledge and for study. Children's literature books in particular originated in schoolbooks, in useful and functional books that served didactic objectives.

Nevertheless, beyond this pragmatic perspective adopted by schools, Bettelheim (1980), Abramovich (1997), Cosson (2019), Wolf (2019), and other authors affirm that literary texts favor the development of our humanity, by connecting us with the other, which allows accessing the experience of the other, to feel pain and sadness or happiness and joy, among many other feelings, through narratives. The ability to empathize or to assume the perspectives and feelings of others, is, according to Wolf (2019), one of the most profound and insufficiently announced contributions of profound reading, of the experience of reading literary texts and transporting readers to different worlds, without having left ones' own private worlds. "To assume a perspective not only connects our empathy with what we have just read, but also expands our interiorized knowledge of the world. They are learned capacities that help make us more human" (Wolf, 2019, p. 59).

Benjamin (2012) believes that the literature book has great formative potential, precisely for presenting children the reality of human types. For Benjamin (2012, p. 265), "the child perfectly comprehends serious things, even the most abstract and heavy, as long as they come honestly and spontaneously from the heart, and for this reason, something can be said in favor of those old texts".

In our study, we found that teachers feel responsible for educating children and improving their access to socially legitimated knowledge. With this argument, children's literature finds broad support in their representations. The pleasure of reading literature, which allows the development of sensibility, is not understood as part of the educational process. To educate about meanings, perception, sensibility, and to favor making connections with the other and develop our humanity is not presented as the objective of schools. For teachers, the involvement of readers with literature was anchored in two distinct forms of comprehension: it is a strategy that promotes adhesion of children to books and allows the interpretation of texts and other activities; or is associated to leisure, and for this reason does not find space in school times, in which curriculum demands become priorities.

Based on this reasoning, it is possible to comprehend the following statement, in which a teacher makes her representation clear — reading must serve a purpose, reach curricular objectives: "Educators believe that reading is the best solution for our students. Of course, not reading only for the sake of reading. But to always seek

to deepen within the capacity of students, constantly motivating, creating, recreating" (P33); "I work a lot with emotion and always try to revive the twinkle in the eye of my students, explaining to them that it is not just the cover or illustration that makes the book, but the story itself, its message" (P62).

In this perspective, reading can be a desired activity, but not a gratuitous experience. Reading itself is not an objective, it must be at the service of another purpose. The pleasure is associated to educational activities. These representations are constituted through contents in circulation, which establish educational purposes for reading literature and nourish the reference universe of teachers. Cosson (2019, p. 14) affirms that the presence of literature in schools is inscribed in a tradition that dates back to the Greeks. "This tradition consists in the pedagogical use of literature as a means and end for an educational process, in which literary texts serve firstly as an instrument for accessing the world of writing, and later come to be an object of knowledge" (Cosson, 2019, p. 14). The author considers that this alliance between school and literature was mutually beneficial. On the one hand, schools cared for the preservation and transmission of texts considered to be important, at the same time schools developed competent readers who could consume them. On the other hand, literature had the function of providing functional texts for student readers and culturally complex texts for already educated readers (Cosson, 2019).

For the teachers who participated in our study, pleasure and functionality are found interlinked in a complementary perspective — literary reading is a pleasurable activity, which serves the purpose of contributing to the education of children. That is, one does not read only to appreciate the graphic design, cover and illustrations, as a book has contents and implicit educational possibilities. For this reason, it can be affirmed that pleasure and functionality are not exclusionary approaches. Pleasure has a function — that of promoting the fundamental encounter with education.

In this view, which conceives of literature as an educational tool par excellence, an intricate structure composes the framework of the qualities and characteristics that should be contemplated. A text should present characteristics that make viable "the ludic, the fantasy, the possibilities for extrapolating ideas and critical opinions" (P40). Considering that the dimensions of pleasure and functionality are interlinked in the representations and practices of teachers, the books most indicated are those: "Suitable to the reality of the student to facilitate understanding" (P05); "Which awake the interest and creativity of students, leading them to be participative and critical, which gives space to reading the world" (P20); "That have a good plot and that awake the interest of students" (P84); "That can be worked with in a multidisciplinary manner with an issue in question. An enjoyable plot" (P01); "That explores the attitudinal concepts and propitiates moments of pleasure upon hearing and reading a story" (P09); "Which carries a good message and can be utilized by students. That awakes critical sensibility. Books that are involving and that allow children to travel through the story read" (P12).

According to the teachers' representations, a book should engage students, offer moments of pleasure, but also be suitable to the reality, create conditions for the formation of concepts and attitudes, stimulate a reflexive process, and promote critical and creative insertion in the world. Reading is marked by multiple interests,

generated by the desire and involvement of readers with the work, without losing sight of the curricular contents and socially legitimated values. Without pleasure, it is not possible to attain the objectives of appropriation of contents.

For teachers, literature has undeniable importance in the education of children. In the teachers' representations, the dimensions of pleasure and functionality are engendered in the establishment of an attitude favorable to the presence of literary texts. When speaking about the modalities of texts that they most like to work with with their students, the teachers present arguments that point to literature and pleasure-reading. However, the texts must also allow learning and this possibility is a characteristic of the informative texts:

> I think that more informative texts should be worked with in schools, because children's books are good (some of them), but often a news article, a magazine report, a recipe can be much more significant to students, even in the early grades, as in my case, that I work with the 2nd grade, my students love news articles (of course I am careful with these news reports). (P53)

One teacher expressed her fear in relation to "exaggerations" of a literature that promotes distancing from reality. When speaking of the criteria that she uses to choose and indicate books, she affirms: "The third criteria is if the story presented in the book can lead my students to awake their sensibility and love for reading without too many exaggerations that completely escape reality" (P76).

The positions of the teachers allow us to perceive the presence of different elements that are found interlinked, conferring a meaning to the social reality lived by the subjects and to the demands imposed by the classroom. Although, in their practices, the functional dimension is implicit, in their discourses the teachers affirm the centrality of the dimension of pleasure.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The representations of literary reading do not express effectively lived practices, but the way that teachers grasp this reality and confer it meanings. The practices integrate the representations, which are also expressed by means of beliefs, expectations, opinions, and images constructed along the trajectories of their lives.

By being associated to the function of representation, the social representations can bring to awareness something that is absent, they can be influenced by other meanings that are not expressed in the discourse but constructed during the trajectory of the subjects. By speaking about reading, the teachers express their understanding about the phenomenon and project expectations, presenting an idealized relationship with books, in which socially legitimated values and concepts are delineated. However, by speaking of their practices and didactic interventions in classrooms, it is possible to perceive another dimension present in their universe of signification, which associates books to practical purposes, aimed at the teaching of the knowledge that is formally required by the educational system.

The social representations concern cognition, feelings, affects and emotions, as well as social relations engendered by the teachers, and their experiences as readers and mediators of school reading practices, and of social contents that circulate and nourish their production. The representations of literary reading, a historically constructed and socially valued object, are constituted in the articulation of ideas, concepts, beliefs and utopias. The meanings produced configure a complex social interaction, which we denominate social representations of literary reading of teachers in the municipal school system of Montes Claros, which as a whole, guide actions and contribute, positively or negatively, to the adhesion of children to books.

We consider that, both the practices of reading that are mediated, as well as the reasons that the teachers select to explain the phenomenon of reading, or of non-reading, are guided by their system of significations. When studying these representations, it is essential to consider the practices in which they are inserted, the contents in circulation about literary reading, but, above all, the activity of appropriation and interpretation carried out by teachers.

The representations of the teachers are associated to pre-existing ideas and interests, reflecting the different foci that educational contexts have conferred to literature. When schools promote changes in their educational action, literature also takes on different contours. This is how, in the representations of the teachers, a large variety of beliefs, values, expectations and practices are present. However, they maintain, as their central core, the idea that literature is good, educates and should be disseminated by ludic processes of interaction of readers with texts. For the teachers, reading practices must be instilled, or schools may be accused of not caring for something that is so important to modernity — the formation of readers.

Through this path of comprehension, we identify idealist positions, which promote the adhesion of teachers to the contents socially promoted and legitimated, as well as realist postures, ways by which the idealized is materialized in possible practices. And thus, given the demands imposed and the nature of the function of teaching, which imposes teaching, work, evaluation and control, the teachers propose various activities for children to learn.

In other words, teachers believe in the enjoyability of literature, which is seen as the fundamental link between children and this cultural object, a pleasure that is capable of promoting their adhesion and access to knowledge. By assuming the discourse that the relationship of readers and books is gratuitous, the teachers legitimate their position and the presence of literature in schools, although, due to the urgencies imposed by daily life, this relationship is not easily constructed. In a space where the desire and aesthetic experience of readers is preached, processes of mediation are produced that emphasize the functionality of literature, the possibilities for its use to teach curricular contents, attitudes and values.

The discourse that gives priority to aesthetics, by materializing in processes of mediation between readers and books, takes on new contours, with an inversion taking place in the understanding of the social role of literature. In classrooms, reading practices establish a priority commitment with pedagogy and not with art.

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