

STORYTELLING TO, WITH, AND BY CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes the analysis of narrative performances of young children produced in the playful workshop “Caixinha de guardar o tempo”, held in person in December 2021, in four public institutions of Early Childhood Education located in peripheral regions of the Distrito Federal. A dialogue is established among knowledge from Historical-Cultural Theory, Social Studies of Childhood and Performance Studies as a theoretical contribution, to discuss the power of storytelling by young children in childhood school, in a perspective of dialogic sharing. The methodological course was based on performative ethnography with artistic-pedagogical practices of mediation of reading and storytelling, opening space and time for the creation and materialization of narrative performances by young children, with audio recording, transcription and production of the work *Crianças Narradoras* (Children Narrators). The understanding of the unique ways in which small children create and (re)create, with authorship, the stories narrated in educational contexts stands out, which are evidenced as a performative practice of production of cultures in childhood.

Keywords: childhood; child education; performance; storytelling; aesthetic experience.

RESUMO

CONTAÇÃO DE HISTÓRIAS PARA, COM E POR CRIANÇAS NA ESCOLA DA INFÂNCIA

Este artigo propõe a análise de performances narrativas de crianças pequenas produzidas na oficina lúdica “Caixinha de guardar o tempo”, realizada presencialmente em dezembro de 2021, em quatro instituições públicas de Educação Infantil localizadas em regiões periféricas do Distrito Federal. Estabelece-se um diálogo entre saberes da Teoria Histórico-Cultural, dos Estudos Sociais da Infância e dos Estudos da Performance como aporte teórico, para discutir a potência da contação de histórias por crianças pequenas na escola da infância, em uma perspectiva de partilha dialógica. O percurso metodológico foi trilhado a partir da etnografia performativa com práticas artístico-pedagógicas

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de mediação de leitura e contação de histórias, abrindo espaço e tempo para a criação e materialização das performances narrativas das crianças pequenas, com a gravação em áudio, transcrição e produção da obra *Crianças Narradoras*. Destaca-se a compreensão das formas singulares como crianças pequenas criam e (re)criam, com autoria, as histórias narradas em contextos educativos, que se evidenciam como prática performativa de produção de culturas na infância. **Palavras-chave:** infância; educação infantil; performance; contação de histórias; experiência estética.

RESUMEN

CUENTOS PARA, CON Y POR NIÑOS EN LA ESCUELA DE INFANCIA

En este artículo propongo el análisis de performances narrativas de niños pequeños producidas en el taller lúdico “Caixinha de guardar o tempo”, realizado de manera presencial en diciembre de 2021, en cuatro instituciones públicas de Educación Infantil ubicadas en regiones periféricas del Distrito Federal. Establezco un diálogo entre saberes de Teoría Histórico-Cultural, Estudios Sociales de la Infancia y Estudios de Performance como aporte teórico, para discutir el poder de la narración de niños pequeños en la escuela infantil, en una perspectiva de compartir dialógica. El curso metodológico se basó en la etnografía performativa con prácticas artístico-pedagógicas de mediación de lectura y narración, abriendo espacio y tiempo para la creación y materialización de performances narrativas por parte de niños pequeños, con grabación de audio, transcripción y producción de la obra *Crianças Narradoras*. Destaco la comprensión de los modos singulares en que los niños pequeños crean y (re)crean, con autoría, los cuentos narrados en contextos educativos, que se evidencian como una práctica performativa de producción de culturas en la infancia.

Palabras clave: infancia; educación infantil; performance; cuentacuentos; experiencia estética.

Starting a Conversation¹

In addition to the content of the story, the stories and the voice are the pretext to keep loved ones literally trapped in this web of words that gives a view of the human odyssey inside the construction of meaning. (REYES, 2021, p. 16).

The title text², by Colombian writer Yolanda Reyes, highlights the plot of narrated and heard

words that constitute the narrative event of storytelling, evoking the ontological dimension of the process of language development, in being in the world, permeated by words. It is in the affectionate encounter with the people who tell stories that we constitute ourselves as storytellers, in this recursive and dialogic perspective of language.

In this article, I propose the analysis of narrative performances of young children produced in the playful workshop “Caixinha de guardar o tempo”, held in person in December 2021, in four public institutions of Early Childhood Education, located in peripheral regions of the

1 This research was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee for Human and Social Sciences of the University of Brasília (CEP/CHS - UnB), following the ethical research protocols with young children, such as the signing of an Informed Consent Form by family members and responsible for the children collaborating in the research and the Free and Informed Assent Term for the children collaborating in the research.

2 Article translated by Ana Maria Pereira Dionísio.

Federal District. I establish a dialogue among knowledge from Historical-Cultural Theory, Social Studies of Childhood and Performance Studies (BAUMAN, 2014; BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2006; GIRARDELLO, 2014, 2018; HARTMANN, 2021; HARTMANN; SOUSA; CASTRO, 2020; PINTO; SARMENTO, 1997; VIGOTSKI, 2003, 2018) as a theoretical contribution to discuss the power of storytelling by young children in childhood school in a perspective of dialogic sharing.

The methodological course was based on performative ethnography (HARTMANN, 2021), through artistic-pedagogical practices of reading and storytelling mediation, opening space and time for the creation and materialization of narrative performances by young children who collaborated in the research with the audio recording, transcription and the work production of *Crianças Narradoras*.

The article is divided into four sections: a) "Storytelling – aesthetic experience in childhood schools", where I discuss the potential of this art for the emergence of aesthetic experiences in educational contexts; b) "Narrative performance – a theoretical lens for the oral narratives of young children", in which I present a brief history and principles of the concept of narrative performance; c) "The methodological journey with young children – from listeners to storytellers", in which I place the scenarios, participants and instruments of empirical research; d) "Small children as authors of stories told in childhood schools", section in which I analyze three narrative performances by children who collaborated in the research, focusing on the narrated text and the context of the narrative event.

Storytelling - aesthetic experience in childhood school

Listening and telling stories are ancestral cultural activities, since humanity begins to operate with the word there is something to be told and that is heard by someone in their

community coexistence (ROGOFF, 2005). In line with the dialogic perspective that involves this practice, the storyteller Kiara Terra (2021) says that "a story told awakens the story of the other", that is, the practice of storytelling goes beyond the linguistic field and constitutes itself as a moment of meeting established by the emotionality and subjectivity of the people involved in this aesthetic experience. In this sense, I agree with Sonaly Torres Silva Gabriel (2021, p. 71), who conceptualizing storytelling, defines it as "a multisensory practice, which involves dynamic and simultaneous interactions among different corporal, sensorial, spatio-temporal powers, in order to create an expressive and emotive experience".

Children's language is a key element to reveal children's cultures, what they say and how they speak to interpret the references of reality, re-signify objects and concepts, re-elaborate experiences, read and act in the world. The children's speeches reveal their ways of being, thinking and acting. Through language, children shape the content of childhood experiences. (BRASIL, 2016, p. 62).

The lived experience offers the necessary elements to the narratives, so that they are passed on by word of mouth, and this type of narrative constitutes the source to which all the narrators resorted, as stated by Walter Benjamin (2012). In this sense, the narrator adds to these narrative elements of his experience, and the listeners' experience, and this narrative movement allows the narrator, or storyteller, to articulate his experiences and imagination in the narrative, which mobilizes attention of his viewers. "The narrator takes what he tells from his own experience: from his own experience or from that reported by others. And it in turn incorporates the listeners' experience into the things narrated." (BENJAMIN, 2012, p. 216).

It is relevant to differentiate the actions of reading and telling stories for children in childhood school, as Ana Neila Torquato (2022, p. 27) warns, because "[...] in storytelling, the presentation of the narrative happens through the orally, exposing stories that have been

transmitted from generation to generation or that have been read previously in some textual support". This author highlights memorization and improvisation as strategies for storytellers, who can also make use of different prosodic resources, gestures and objects to materialize the story told bodily. However, in the reading of stories "[...] the book appears in the center of attention, as the intention is to present the work according to its original language, in the author's words, and from there to explore the book object as a cultural asset that it holds the literature." (TORQUATO, 2022, p. 27).

This author warns that it is not about making a mechanical reading, without emotion or the use of different voice intonations in the reading mediation processes with children, but staying faithful to the text written by those who created the work, because listening to the Reading is a symbolic activity that is expanded with the children's aesthetic experience in front of the illustrations in the literature book. The document of the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular - Educação Infantil*³ (BRASIL, 2017) recommends that teachers consider discursive practices in their daily lives to be fundamental in the organization of pedagogical work in Early Childhood Education, according to the field of experiences "Listen, speak, think and imagination":

In Early Childhood Education, it is important to promote experiences in which children can speak and listen, enhancing their participation in oral culture, as it is in listening to stories, participating in conversations, in descriptions, in narratives prepared individually or in groups and in the implications with the multiple languages that the child is actively constituted as a singular subject and belonging to a social group. (BRASIL, 2017).

In this sense, the childhood school, as a relational space, is a privileged environment for listening and telling stories. However, still

[...] an engagement of education professionals is necessary so that it organizes itself as a gen-

uine narrative community, enhancing authentic dialogic practices between children and adults, which overcome the procedures of docilization children's bodies and silencing their voices in everyday life of Early Childhood Education. (VIEIRA, 2022, p. 83).

The narrative community is "a group of people who share stories orally, whether they are stories of their life and important experiences, or even stories present in children's literature books" (OLIVEIRA, P., 2016, p. 68). And so the stories told by the young children of the ad regions of Cidade Estrutural, Planaltina, Recanto das Emas and Riacho Fundo 2 created a gestures circularity, voices and events that constituted a narrative community, occupying the times and spaces possible in the childhood school, without disregarding the tensions inherent to the empirical process, especially in a pandemic period.

Telling and listening to stories in a circle is not a sharing only in terms of language, it is also an exchange that takes place through the very air that is breathed, through the shared breath in which the voice of the speaker vibrates in the ear of the listener, through the physical heat generated by the gestures of those who tell and those who react, by the involuntary motor vibration – shivers, sighs, frights – caused by the emotions that the story unleashes. The narrative sharing that takes place there is a breathing together, intimate and unrepeatable, a kind of conspiracy. (GIRARDELLO, 2014, p. 69).

When telling their invented, retold and lived stories sitting in a circle, young children assume the leading role and express themselves with authorship through their voices and their bodies, as a production of children's cultures. This constitutes a challenge in the daily life of Early Childhood Education, as Regina Jodely Rodrigues Campos Aguiar (2020, p. 128) ponders when she problematizes that childhood school teachers "[...] know the importance of listening to children, but they end up limiting themselves to predictability, to what is set, either because it is more comfortable or because the hope of the new is dormant". Thus,

³ National Common Curricular Base - Early Childhood Education.

it is essential that Early Childhood Education professionals organize the pedagogical work in order to contemplate spaces and times for the telling of shared stories between adults and children, described by the author Gilka Girardello (2014) as a clearing in the woods.

In this way, I emphasize that these moments of listening to stories in childhood school are understood as spaces of unique aesthetic experiences for the children and adults involved, because as Jorge Larossa Bondía (2002, p. 21) states, based on the writings of Walter Benjamin, “experience is passes through us, what happens to us, what touches us”, highlighting the character of subjectivities and meaning of subjects in the face of everyday events, and aesthetic experiences. Lev Vygotsky (2003) shows that aesthetic experiences create a very sensitive state for later actions and leave marks on human behavior, so that art reverberates in the existence of subjects in a unique way.

Narrative performance – a theoretical lens for young children’s oral narratives

In this article I start from Richard Bauman’s (2014, p. 8) performance perspective as a skillful communication, delimited by the author in the poetics of performance, “with a special emphasis about the relationships that link linguistic form, social function and cultural meaning.” from oral language. This author explains that the concept of performance emerged as a conceptual organizing principle in the ethnography of speech in the 1960s, being used as an alternative term for discursive practice. However, as discussions and theoretical constructions advanced, performance was also understood as a creative and practical achievement. However, Bauman (2014, p. 733) is attentive to the reciprocal position evoked by the narrative performance.

That is, the person performing the performance, by invoking the frame of the performance,

adopts a certain reflexive posture, or alignment, for his act of expressing himself, assuming responsibility for an exhibition of communicative skill and effectiveness. Each community will have its own metapragmatic guiding frameworks through which an individual can project himself to the public.

In another article, in partnership with Charles L. Briggs (BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2006, p. 189), the authors state that performance studies can contribute to a critical reflection about the communicative processes, as a performance is linked to several events of speech that precede and follow it, so that the analysis of a performance “so requires ethnographic studies sensitive to how its form and meaning are indices of a wider range of types of discourse, some of which are not framed as performance”.

Faced with the challenge of performance analysis cited by these authors, there is a divergence in the literature about the emphasis on text and context, and the dimensions and limitations in a dichotomous analytical perspective, however there is a movement of shifting emphasis on context:

To avoid reifying ‘the context’ it is necessary to study the textual details that illuminate the way participants collectively construct the world around them. On the other hand, attempts to identify the meaning of texts, performances or entire genres in terms of purely symbolic and context-independent content overlook the multiplicity of indexical connections that allow verbal art to transform, not simply reflect, social life. To claim that researchers must choose among analyzes of poetic patterns, social interaction, or broader social and cultural contexts is to reify each of these elements and preclude an adequate analysis of any one of them. (BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2006, p. 201).

There is permeability between children’s narratives, so that stories told by children materialize stories told to children, highlighting that children’s cultures are constantly produced from an adult centric narrative bias. In other words, literary books, films, cartoons and TV shows are created by adults and aimed at children, as highlighted by Guilherme Fians

(2015). I emphasize that the social context plays an essential role in the psychological mechanism of imagination and creative activity to which discursive practices are related, understanding that this mechanism can be understood from the link between elements of fantasy and reality of children materialized in their narratives, as stated by Paula Oliveira (2016).

Corroborating with the authors and the authors cited, I will consider the two dimensions (textual and contextual) of the narrative performances of young children, mainly because I agree with Paul Zumthor (2018, p. 62, emphasis added) that the performance “[...] it is an act of presence in the world and in itself. In it the world is present”. The recursive character of performance is also present in Dell Hymes’ approach, commented on by Zumthor (2018, p. 31), in which performance is situated in a cultural and situational context, because “[...] it appears as an ‘emergency’; a phenomenon that leaves this context at the same time that it finds a place in it”.

Narrative performance articulates two planes dialectically, that of the storyteller who creates by narrating the story with his voice, presence and imagination, and the plane of the audience, which creates by producing meanings about the aesthetic experience lived in listening to the narrated story. Thus, narrating is not restricted to linguistic, cognitive, mental aspects, nor only to productions that constitute sociocultural values of a group of people. Narrating as a lived performance involves the active symbolic-emotional production of those who live this experience and produce individually to make it their own.

The methodological journey with young children – from listeners to storytellers

Researching the narratives of young children in schooling spaces has been part of my

experience as a Basic Education teacher and researcher of/with childhoods. However, the Covid-19 pandemic, social isolation and remote, hybrid and face-to-face teaching in this historical period put me in touch with a new childhood school and the numerous epistemological research challenges that emerged in this context. In this article, I present part of the doctoral thesis in progress at the Postgraduate Program in Performing Arts at the University of Brasília, which investigates the perceptions of young children of their social contexts, through their own narratives, in educational institutions of Early Childhood Education in Brazil. Federal District.

By living this experience together with the children and fellow teachers from the four schools surveyed (Ipê Amarelo, Ipê Roxo, Ipê Rosa and Ipê Branco)⁴, I was affected in a unique way, as the times and spaces of Early Childhood Education were reconfigured, as well as the teaching practices and the action of young children in educational contexts. In such a way that much of what was “known” about being a teacher in the childhood school was replaced by the new material and objective conditions, explaining the weaknesses of educational care for young children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The empirical research was carried out with four 2nd period classes, composed of children aged between 5 and 6 years, in four public school units of Early Childhood Education located in peripheral regions of the Federal District: Cidade Estrutural, Planaltina, Recanto das Emas and Riacho Fundo 2, during the months of May to December 2021, outlined in a performative ethnographic approach (HARTMANN; SOUSA; CASTRO, 2020) through artistic-pedagogical practices of reading mediation and storytelling in a virtual and face-to-face context.

The expansion of children’s rights to participation cannot ignore the **diversity of contexts in which children live**; they cannot have a character of universality; they must consider **real**

⁴ Fictitious names.

children, in their daily lives, with **their daily life experiences full of conflicts and contradictions**. (OLIVEIRA, F., 2015, p. 15, emphasis added).

In line with the principles listed by this author, I tried to develop a methodological approach that broadened the participation of children in the empirical process. In this sense, I chose to base myself on performative ethnography (HARTMANN; SOUSA; CASTRO, 2020), which advocates the expansion of observation and participation in traditional ethnography, in which the artistic (performative) dimension is engendered in the production of collaborating subjects of research, in this case young children, in the epistemological movement in performance. For these authors, performance is “[...] as something that occurs in human interaction and that is capable of generating transformations in those who perform it and in those who observe it [...]” (HARTMANN; SOUSA; CASTRO, 2020, p. 258). It is in the encounter of the researcher triad, collaborating subjects and aesthetic experience lived in the empirical process that performative ethnography advances towards an active and living epistemology in the research scenario, in which it is possible to access multiple symbolic dimensions of the research collaborating children.

In our case, we believe that the investigation through aesthetic, playful and performative practices allows us to collectively verify how certain behaviors, actions and discourses are generated and transmitted, giving the actors involved a perception in relation to their own social situation. (HARTMANN; SOUSA; CASTRO, 2020, p. 258).

As mentioned before, the empirical research took place in this epistemological perspective, in which I tried to break with the hegemonically constituted intergenerational hierarchies, thus maintaining the present and constant dialogic movement, favoring the establishment of less asymmetrical relationships between the researcher and the small children, who are research collaborators, in which they could

collectively give their opinion, choose and review methodological strategies. The following instruments were used during the investigation process: a) participant observation; b) conversational dynamics; c) story workshops; d) recreational activities workshops; e) written, pictorial and audiovisual records of young children’s narrative production. I sought to build a theoretical-methodological unit with the inseparability between theory and practice in the dialogic processes of the research, in which the participation of young children was markedly present in the research, constituting them as co-researchers of stories narrated in childhood school.

In this article I will address three stories told by children in the workshop “*Caixinha de guardar o tempo*”, held in December 2021. At the beginning of the workshop I asked the young children if they would like to produce a book with the stories narrated by them, and the proposal was well accepted by all. I explained how the book production process would be and informed that at the end of the *Crianças Narradoras* project we would plant together a seedling of the Ipê tree of the color referring to the school, and that would be identified in the research as a celebration for the completion of the work, and we would present the school with a copy of the book.

The playful activity carried out with young children from reading the literature book *Caixinha de guardar o tempo*, written by the author Alessandra Roscoe (2012), which narrates the story of Sofia, who kept her memories in a box, was inspired by the game of lemon⁵. For the narrative dynamics to flow, the small children were sitting in a circle on the floor of the reference room, a wooden box was passed from

5 Lemon game: to the sound of the song “The lemon entered the circle, it passes from hand to hand, It goes, it comes, It still hasn’t arrived, And in the middle of the way, The person caught it!”, a lemon passes from hand to hand and whoever has the lemon in their hand at the end of the song tells a story. Teacher Luciana Hartmann uses this playful activity in story circles with children and adults and learned the game from teacher Gilka Girardello (HARTMANN, 2021, p. 156).

hand to hand to the sound of a song chosen and sung by the children, and when it was over, the child with the box in hand was invited to tell the story she wanted to the young children in her class.

The stories narrated by the young children were audio-recorded, transcribed and revised by me for the preparation of the book *Crianças Narradoras*, which also had illustrations made by the children, photos and some personal information about them. A total of 57 stories told by children in the four educational institutions surveyed were compiled. The work was printed in a printing shop, divided into four volumes, one for each school. Copies from each school were distributed to small authors at the end of the empirical research, concomitantly with the end of the 2021 school year.

Young children as storytellers told in childhood school

The authorship conception presents in this research is anchored in the dialogic dimension of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), because “[...] the meaning of stories told orally is not only in the plot, nor in the narrator, nor in the listener, but in the spark of the encounter that takes place in the unique event of each performance” (GIRARDELLO, 2018, p. 80). In this sense, authorship, which “[...] for a long time was disregarded when dealing with oral forms, regains space, because it is as authors that these child-performers, when encouraged, appropriate different strategies of narration, revealing themselves and identifying themselves through them in front of the group” (HARTMANN, 2021, p. 84). The participation of adults as interlocutors for young children is fundamental in the initial process of developing narrative discourse. The counting game (PERRONI, 1992), which is constituted from inducing questions from adults to children, works as an intergenerational dialogic strategy in narrative production. However, I

consider the availability to listen to children by adults crucial to enhance children’s symbolic productions. “In the first sketches of the child’s narrative and make-believe, the adult’s attentive listening works as an incentive and support, until the child takes the floor, summons the adult to dialogue and, through the word, creates imaginary situations.” (BRAZIL, 2016, p. 89).

As an adult listening to children’s stories⁶, I selected three stories told by young children in the *Crianças Narradoras* project for an analysis exercise that accommodates the double textual and contextual dimension of the narrative event (BAUMAN, 2014). I understand that creative activity is “[...] the one in which something new is created. It matters little if what is created is some object from the external world or a construction of the mind or feeling, known only by the person in which this construction inhabits and manifests itself” (VIGOTSKI, 2018, p. 13), being historically and culturally situated as the production of children’s cultures, and materializes plural childhoods, constituted by social markers such as class, race and gender, which intersect with the generational category.

Ariel

Once upon a time there was a princess named Ariel. And she was so alone. She was left without her parents. Then one day she saw a lot of dragons. And they killed her. But one day she was very happy because she had a father, mother, brothers, princess and a little doll. And there was a day when something really bad happened to her. Her mother left her alone. And her mother was at the market. Then she looked for her everywhere. She disappeared. Then one day, Snow White saw her, who was crying. Then Snow White said, ‘Where’s your mother?’ and she said, ‘I don’t know where she is.’ Then one day something happened to her. The doors of her house all closed and she didn’t go out with her friends. And end. (NICOLLY, 5 years old, Ipê Amarelo School).

⁶ Expression used by teacher and researcher Ivete Manguiera.

Nicolly is a black girl, resident of Riacho Fundo 2, who is communicative with adults and children in her childhood school. She developed a close relationship with me during the period of face-to-face empirical research, in which we talked about various subjects based on conversational dynamics. She always liked to remember that she didn't live in Riacho Fundo 2, but in Jardim Ingá⁷, and that she was "spending time at her godmother's house". When telling her story to me and the children, she uses different suprasegmental resources such as pauses, changes in the timbre of the voice to characterize the characters, evoking the presence of her listeners through eye contact.

Nicolly's narrative presents syncretic elements of fairy tales and everyday situations experienced by young children and is divided into three parts: a) Princess Ariel was alone, without a family and was attacked and killed by dragons; b) Ariel was happy because she had a family and a doll, but her mother left her home alone; c) Ariel was stuck at home without being able to go out and see other people. The absence, loneliness and abandonment of the family are part of Ariel's trajectory, which despite having the name of a princess and a friend called Snow White, is far from the happy ending, marked by the famous phrase "And they lived happily ever after", experienced in fairy tales. The disappearance of her mother puts Ariel in search of possibilities of meeting her, however this meeting does not materialize and the end of the story is marked by the impossibility of meeting other people, due to the doors of the house that were closed. Ariel starts and ends the story alone, and loneliness is configured as something negative by author Nicolly.

Fantastic elements in the narrative such as dragons and magic doors bring suffering to Princess Ariel with death and imprisonment, as well as everyday elements such as the moth-

er leaving a child alone at home to go to the market, especially in times of social isolation. Like an invented story, Nicolly's imaginative processes are materialized in performance when creating this narrative, which engenders elements of the reality experienced by young children in the pandemic period, such as death, loneliness, abandonment and social isolation. In this sense, I reiterate the narrative authorship of young children in childhood school as a possibility of dialogue between adults and children, reducing intergenerational hierarchies by bringing them closer to the contexts experienced in childhood.

The invented stories by young children are rooted in the imaginative processes that constitute their narrative performances, in the inseparability among emotional and intellectual dimensions and in the material basis of such processes. The themes addressed by the storytelling children in their narrative performances were diverse, involving characters from children's culture, animals and people from their communities, and they present a symbolic panorama of the researched childhoods.

Maleficent

Once upon a time there was a king and a queen who had a daughter, until Maleficent was coming to their kingdom and everyone had to abandon their daughter. Then Maleficent decided to make a potion for all her subjects to drink, until she destroyed her beautiful baby's kingdom. Until she grew up and became a very beautiful woman. She danced with the princes in a very beautiful forest, with rivers and waters. And also she went to the castle in her Maleficent and got her voice back, because she took her voice. She fell asleep. The prince kissed her, of true love and the two lived happily forever. (SOPHIA, 5 years old, Ipê Amarelo School).

Sophia is a white girl, resident of Riacho Fundo 2, extremely communicative with adults and children in her childhood school. When telling her story to me and the children, she also uses different suprasegmental resources such as pauses, changes in the timbre of the voice to characterize the dazzling of the facts

⁷ Jardim do Ingá is a district in the Goiás municipality of Luziânia, located 34 km from Brasília.

narrated in the story, evoking the presence of her listeners through gestures and different facial expressions.

Sophia's narrative is an oral retelling, understood here as "a complex activity, which involves three distinct psychological processes (emotion, memory and imagination) in an articulated way that are expressed in unity in the child's narrative production" (VIEIRA, 2021, p. 176). In this sense, I realized that the oral retellings carried out by the children who collaborated in the research were based on other cultural productions such as fairy tales, and on products of the audiovisual industry such as Disney films, Netflix series and video games. The children creatively reworked the plots, and the characters, in their narrative performances by retelling stories in their childhood school.

Sophia presents a mastery of the plot of the film *Maleficent* (2014)⁸, starring American actress Angelina Jolie, which presents a new version of the facts of the story of the classic story *Sleeping Beauty* (Brothers Grimm) through the lens of the witch, the main character's antagonist. By choosing to tell this story to her colleagues and to be part of the book, it is possible to infer that the film is an important cultural reference for the girl, as well as the world of fairy tales, as can be seen through her vocabulary, such as the words: "kingdom", "subjects" and the expressions: "Once upon a time", "true love's kiss" and "they lived happily forever".

The fairy tale constitutes an object of expression of emotionality, it is a facilitator in the organization of feelings and is the constant coming and going in what awakens enchantment, which touches the essence of being with a force that moves us in this fantastic world, which only experiences the one who allows himself to experience the imagination. (SILVA; VIEIRA, 2018, p. 87).

As in the original text of the classic tale, in Sophia's story it is the enchanted sleep that

brings the princess closer to the meeting with her prince, the kiss and the "happily ever after" so awaited in the universe of fairy tales. However, the conflict of the spell of taking the princess's voice by Maleficent is resolved by the princess herself, who recovers it on the way to the castle. That is, the attitude of the princess is demarcated in the story told by the girl, opposing the passive representation of Sleeping Beauty in the classic tale. Sophia's choice for the oral retelling of the film *Maleficent* (2014) can be understood as the child's preference for plots in which the dichotomous logic of character of fairy tale characters is blurred by the complexity, perceived in the drama of Sleeping Beauty, which has his life transformed by the action of the witch Maleficent. The princess breaks with passivity and her antagonist is humanized by having her suffering and affections represented in the film.

My little dog Caio

I was playing with my little dog. Then my dog fell from the ceiling. He fell into the water in the well, in the river. He fell in there and sank. And he couldn't breathe. Then he went to the dog doctor and he said he couldn't do anything for the dog. Then he threw the dog in the trash. My dog's name was Caio. (ANA VITÓRIA, 5 years old, Escola Ipê Rosa).

Ana Vitória is a white girl, resident of Cidade Estrutural, a little shy in interacting with adults and children at her childhood school. When telling her story to me and the children, she uses a continuous flow to narrate the facts of her dog Caio's tragic story, in a low voice tone, so that her storytelling resembles a sharing of a sad secret, which is revealed to me and her classmates, who remain attentive to her narrative performance. The story told in a synthetic way by Ana Vitória is divided into three parts: a) the game with the dog Caio; b) the fall and drowning of the dog Caio; c) veterinary care and the death of the dog Caio.

The lived stories narrated by the children aim to maintain a viable balance between two planes: the past and the present. And these

⁸ *Maleficent* is an American adventure, drama and fantasy film. Trailer available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvRHliTyqjc>

autobiographical narratives offer materiality to the memories of young children evoked via memory, emotion and imagination, because “[...] that no longer belong to the present” (VIEIRA; MADEIRA COELHO, 2018, p. 23). In this way, it is their lives, their encounters, joys and sorrows that also constitute this story told by Ana Vitória, which differs from the others because it is not fictional. The author Barbara Rogoff (2005, p. 240) indicates that the narration that of childhood stories is an action that constitutes a community experience, because “[...] children learn to use the preferred narrative format in their community to narrate events”.

In this sense, I reiterate that the childhood school is a narrative community par excellence, and that young children need to be assured of the times and spaces in the routine of Early Childhood Education to tell their own stories, share their experiences, even addressing fracturing themes such as mourning, as Ana Vitória did when she expressed, through words, her sadness at the loss of her little dog. By choosing to share this tragic event lived instead of reporting happy episodes or retelling her favorite stories, the girl shows us that suffering also deserves to be told and registered through words.

In addition, the study of children from the point of view of themselves allows us to discover another social reality, which is the one that emerges from children’s interpretations of their respective life worlds. The children’s gaze allows revealing social phenomena that the adults’ gaze leaves in the shadows or completely obscures. Thus, interpreting children’s social representations can be not only a means of accessing childhood as a social category, but also the very structures and social dynamics that are uncovered in children’s discourse. (PINTO; SARMENTO, 1997, p. 8).

When telling the story to me and her colleagues, Ana Vitória relives the difficult emotions, as a creative re-elaboration through orality. Unlike the other authors, she does not work with signs from children’s cultures and fantasy, but with her own experience. The

vet’s speech, called by her a “dog doctor”, who “couldn’t do anything for the dog”, already announces the tragic end of Caio’s story. With the option to end the story by naming the animal, after the report of the dead dog’s body being thrown in the trash can, the image of the disposal of that beloved being was created, of which she was a witness, in an impactful way for the listeners.

Not to complete

When analyzing the narrative performances of Nicolly, Sophia and Ana Vitória as storytellers in the childhood school, I notice that the three girls used different performative resources through their voices, their bodies and their presence in the circle of stories, as well as in the experience unique aesthetic of young children when listening to the stories told. Considering the notion of agency in childhood, “[...] it is possible to reposition children in their relationships with adults, understanding that they create their own symbolic system and make their interpretations of the world” (HARTMANN, 2021, p. 130). Whether the stories are invented, retold or lived, they constitute a symbolic universe of words, characters and plots that make up the daily lives of oral narratives in Early Childhood Education.

I consider it is important to highlight that discursive practices in childhood schools play a fundamental role in the narrative constitution of young children, which takes place in the social relationships established in collaboration with their peers and with the adults of this educational space. Listening to stories is a component of forming a sense of belonging in a cultural community, giving it an identity. It is not just telling stories that we become narrators, but also listening to other people tell stories, because listening to their voices opens up the possibility of imagining and recreating the story mentally.

The development of the narrative capacities of the mind, the immediate use of metaphor, its

integration between the cognitive and the affective, its construction of meaning and meaning, are educationally important, as these capacities are fundamental to our ability to make sense of experience. (EGAN, 2007, p. 23).

When approaching the social isolation of Princess Ariel, the journey of overcoming Sleeping Beauty and the death of the puppy Caio, the girls operated through the words narrated with different cultural references and with their particular experiences, the creative re-elaboration of reality. Thinking about this theme is also thinking about the peripheral territories in which the researched educational institutions are inserted, in how young children, especially in a historical period marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, aesthetically produce unique meanings about their social contexts through their own narratives.

I agree with Lev Vygotsky (2003, p. 233) when he states that “[...] art is not a complement to life, but the result of what exceeds life in human beings”, because in the art of storytelling, the aesthetic experience lived by the listeners allows access to multiple realities, contexts and cultures through the words heard, imagined and that become embodied at the moment of encounter in the narrative event. I emphasize the understanding of the unique ways in which young children create and (re) create with authorship the stories narrated in educational contexts, in a complex amalgamation of dimensions of human development, of which emotion, memory and imagination are an essential part, not dissociated from the character intellectual and corporal that is evidenced as a performative practice of production of cultures in childhood in peripheral contexts.

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