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LITERACY PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORICAL-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY AND HISTORICAL-CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this study is to present aspects of the literacy pedagogical practice based on the contributions of the periodization of development and the social construction of writing from authors of historical-cultural psychology, as well as to indicate its connection with theoretical-pedagogical and historical-critical bases. We understand that literacy stands out as a fundamental process for individuals to participate effectively in our society, acting on social transformations, and that the performance of literacy pedagogical practices depends on a systematized, intentional process aiming at maximum development of human beings. In this regard, education stands as a revolutionary process that contributes to a likewise revolutionary transformation in society. Thus, the role of education and, more specifically, of revolutionary education, go through the socialization of material and immaterial goods to all individuals. This is highlighted in historical-cultural psychology and historical-critical pedagogy, which should be translated into emancipatory educational practices of human beings.

Keywords: Educational psychology; education; pedagogical activity.

PRÁTICA PEDAGÓGICA ALFABETIZADORA À LUZ DA PSICOLOGIA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL E DA PEDAGOGIA HISTÓRICO-CRÍTICA

RESUMO. O objetivo deste trabalho é apresentar aspectos da prática pedagógica alfabetizadora com base nas contribuições sobre a periodização do desenvolvimento e a construção social da escrita a partir de autores da psicologia histórico-cultural, bem como assinalar sua relação com a base teórico-pedagógica histórico-crítica. Entendemos que a alfabetização desponta como processo fundamental para que os indivíduos participem de forma efetiva da sociedade, podendo atuar em suas transformações e que a realização da atividade pedagógica alfabetizadora depende de um projeto sistematizado, intencional e que vise o máximo desenvolvimento dos seres humanos. Nesse sentido, a educação se coloca como processo revolucionário que contribui na transformação também revolucionária da sociedade. Logo, o papel da educação e, mais especificamente, o papel de uma educação revolucionária, passa pela socialização dos bens materiais e imateriais a todos os indivíduos, como enfatizam a psicologia histórico-cultural e a pedagogia histórico-crítica, que deve ser traduzida para a prática educativa emancipadora dos seres humanos.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia educacional; educação; atividade pedagógica..

PRÁCTICA PEDAGÓGICA ALFABETIZADORA A LA LUZ DE LA PSICOLOGÍA HISTÓRICA-CULTURAL Y DE LA PEDAGOGÍA HISTÓRICA-CRÍTICA

RESUMEN. El objetivo del presente estudio es presentar aspectos de la práctica pedagógica alfabetizadora basado en las contribuciones sobre la periodización del desarrollo y la construcción social de la escritura a partir de autores de la psicología histórica-cultural, así como señalar su relación con la base teórica-pedagógica histórica-crítica. Entendemos que la alfabetización surge como proceso fundamental para que los individuos participen de forma efectiva de la sociedad; que puedan actuar en sus transformaciones y que la realización de la actividad pedagógica alfabetizadora depende de un proyecto sistematizado, intencional y que busque el máximo desarrollo de los seres humanos. En este

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sentido, la educación es un proceso revolucionario que contribuye en la transformación, también revolucionaria, de la sociedad. Por lo tanto, el papel de la educación y, más específicamente, el de una educación revolucionaria, pasa por la socialización de bienes materiales e inmateriales a todos los individuos, como enfatizan la psicología histórica-cultural y la pedagogía histórica-crítica, que deber ser traducida a la práctica educativa emancipadora de los seres humanos.

Palabras-clave: Psicología educacional; educación; actividad pedagógica.

Introduction

Schooling as something intentional, planned, which aims to give every individual the whole set of what humanity has ever produced (Saviani, 2013), lead us to consider the educational practice as a mediated process. It means we do not appropriate the human-generic heritage alone, we need intervention, the “psychic loan” (Martins, 2013b) of those who have already appropriated “... the humanity historically and collectively produce by all humans” (Saviani, 2013, p. 13). At school, this is the role of the teacher.

But what binds the apprentice and “the more developed pair”, so called by Vigotskii (2006), Knowledge, which translates as signs and meanings. Therefore, education (and more specifically its school form) is an “... act mediated by sign[s] [that] causes profound transformations in human psyche, radically modifying the subject-object relationship, or the subject's response to stimuli of the environment” (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015, p. 21). For this reason, Martins (2013b) points out that the teacher is not the mediator, but the bearer of the signs that mediate the psychic development.

Since Vigotski (2001) indicated the word as the sign of signs, the development of language in its most elaborated forms is essential for the process of humanization of individuals. Given the language as: a means of existence (form of expression of the individual), of transmission of historical-cultural experience and of communication (Martins, 2013a), we can say that the word guides our actions, is a tool of thought and establishes itself in the relationship with the other. For this reason, Vygotski (2012, p. 150, own translation) presents as general genetic law of the cultural development of psyche that “... any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, that is, on two planes. Firstly among people as an inter-psychological category and then within the child as an intra-psychological category”. Relating to these categories, we have then the imminent development area and the level of effective development, which should organize the didactic work taking into account its form and content, i.e. the cultural elements that must be appropriated and the best way to incorporate them (Saviani, 2013).

According to Cheptulin (1982), the content reflects the set of processes of something and the form reflects the structure of the content (external and internal aspects). Form and content work organically, being the second determinant to the first, because the content characterizes a certain form, which changes, and changes in the content require a change in the form in order to ensure the continuity of the development of the content.

The selection and organization of school content and its form are related to the recipient (Martins, 2013b), who determines the degree of complexity of the content and conditions the performance of the educational work. This is why authors as Duarte (2013), Martins (2013b) and Saviani (2013) have been emphasizing that there is not “the” form of organization of educational work in the historical-critical pedagogy, and even less that this form comprises sequences of activities contained in educational planning for social practices, different ones for problematization, for instrumentalization and so on. The methodological approach of historical-critical pedagogy starts with the social practice and returns to it enhanced; goes from resistance to synthesis mediated by analysis, which is not a linear, impervious and/or compartmentalized process, because it is based philosophically on a logical foundation with dialectical-materialistic aspects.

The relationship between form and content, taken as dialectical categories, requires a dynamic and intertwined treatment that provides qualitative leaps of development. As explained by Cheptulin (1982, p. 268, [emphasis added]) and inserted as a goal of the schooling process according to historical-critical pedagogy:

Initially, the changes produced in content do not affect the relatively stable system of the connections of form; they are completely installed in its frame and therefore the content evolves quickly and imperiously. However, there is a point where the changes in content reach a level at which the frames of this correlation system become very narrow. The relatively stable system begins to hinder the development of the content, to repress it. In this stage of development of content, the form no longer corresponds to the content, unlike the first stage in which they corresponded and allowed the development. The non-correspondence with the new content, as it develops, becomes more severe and finally generates a conflict between content and form: the new content rejects the old form, destroys the relatively stable system of movement and, based on a new relatively stable system of movement (i.e. of the form) is transformed into a new qualitative level.

Thus, when we explain the process of development of writing (content) in children (recipient) and associate it with the necessary pedagogical mechanisms (form), we are meeting the principles of the dialectic historical materialism of historicity, movement and contradiction. Regarding the first category (historicity), writing has an historical character both as social construction and in what refers to the techniques used by the individuals, as well as they transform and overcome the process of appropriation of written language. This enabled Luria (2006) to call the conquest of writing – which treads a long path until the child actually learns how to write – prehistory of writing.

On the idea of movement, we need to consider the relationship between quantity and quality. Every little movement does not represent a qualitative leap; however, added and incorporated, these movements will allow the transformation. Hence the idea of transition from the simple to the complex, that is, the point of arrival (the transformation) depends on the cumulative and progressive changes that are in the process of developing. Nevertheless, if we do not have, at the starting point (simple), an established point of arrival (complex); if the point of arrival is not clear as the goal to be attained, the movements performed in the process will be diluted and will not result in the necessary progress. In the case of written language, it is the product of numerous tasks that are performed and, added, articulated and incorporated into the subjects as second nature (Saviani, 2013), provides them the mastery of writing.

Finally, the category of contradiction is expressed in conjunction with the former ones, but it is worth emphasizing what was mentioned about the “simple” and the “complex”. Learning (“simple”) is a possibility that moves in different degrees and depends on the teaching (“complex”) offered, which, in turn, will provide the conditions that enable the process of learning to become a reality in the direct proportion of the complexity in which the contents of the different fields of knowledge are organized. In short, teaching and learning are internally contradictory processes that move from possibility to reality in an ascending spiral.

Considering the dialectic base of teaching and learning that supports the idea of the triad content-form-recipient (Martins, 2013b), we present the ideas of historical-cultural psychology on how the appropriation of writing happens and how, according to historical-critical pedagogy, it must be handled in the literacy process.

Literacy according to historical-cultural psychology and historical-critical pedagogy

First we must emphasize that literacy begins, as stated by Luria (2006, p. 143), “... long before the first time a teacher puts a pencil in your hand and shows you how to form letters”. Primitive writing techniques, developed before school literacy, represent important moments, so that writing can be developed as a system of culturally elaborated signs. Therefore, this process begins with oral language, because the written language is rooted in it, and it also does not start when the child begins to speak, but when “... the objects given to sensory uptake gain the possibility of representation in the form of words” (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015, p. 43), which are not verbalized by the children themselves, but by the persons who name them, and in the perspective of the children, the names of the objects become another of their properties.

In this stage (prelinguistic), which goes from noises and whispers to functional equivalents of words, occurs a social modeling that will allow the uptake of language as something with internal connection

between sign and meaning, initially inexistent, with word and object being connected externally. Not incidentally, this stage corresponds (in typical conditions of development), to the Guide Activity of Direct Emotional Communication, which belongs to the affective-emotional sphere (in which the predominant relationship is child-social adult) (Elkonin, 1987; Facci, 2004; Pasqualini, 2013).

Before continuing, we must clarify the meaning of Guide Activity. The concept is based on the social-historical construction of Activity, through which the individual relates to reality. It is not about the activity the individual practices most of the time, and is characterized by the presence of three attributes: the Guide Activity leads to other activities, specific psychological processes are molded by it and the individual's personality is formed by means of the Guide Activity. The transition from a given Guide Activity to another is directly related to the conditions of life and education of the individuals; hence, it is not a linear succession of natural stages. For this reason, we emphasize in our study the aspect of the "typical/appropriate conditions for development".

Returning to the Guide Activity of babies (Direct emotional communication), the challenge is that the educational work enables "... the word to, gradually, no longer be a mere extension of the property of an object and, overcoming the direct connection object-designation, promotes the conversion of the image of the object into a sign" (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015, p. 44). To do so, the child must be taught how to speak, which is not limited to the mere repetition of words, but comprises the presentation of the world to the child, so that the baby has the cultural stimulation required to relate objects, phenomena, sounds and meanings (Martins, 2012). This explains why automatization (Saviani, 2013) is not, in this case, a mere mnemonic mechanism of reproduction of words, but rather the result of numerous associations and appropriations performed in the process.

For the image of an object to become a sign, the child must learn that "chair" is not only "one" chair. In this way, the processes of generalization of thought come into action, enabling the child to approach the social function of objects and consequently of the signs that represent them in an abstract way, enabling the primary domain of language, which is characteristic of the second year of life and extends the vocabulary the child can decode and pronounce (Martins, 2012).

At this point, the Guide Activity of development is Object-manipulative and belongs to the intellectual-cognitive sphere (in which prevails the relationship child-social object) (Elkonin, 1987; Facci, 2004; Pasqualini, 2013). The Object-manipulative Activity, as indicated by its name, is related to intense manipulation of objects in order to analyze their characteristics (weight, smell, taste, colors, sounds, temperature, texture etc.), but especially because through the manipulation the child appropriates the social function of objects. Therefore, pedagogical actions should guide this manipulation. First, because sensory and perceptual manipulation of objects is insufficient. The child must name (language), assign meaning (thought), pay attention and memorize voluntarily, and these actions require non-natural behaviors that must be guided. The second reason (related to the first) why the manipulation of objects must be intentionally planned and promoted is related to the quality of the manipulations. If the child does not have voluntary attention yet, a myriad of stimuli (many toys, spaces, sounds, colors etc.), when not properly oriented, may not be beneficial to the development.

Considering a planned didactic work, aiming at the enrichment of the training of individuals according to a conception of the world² and that takes into account the objective conditions of performance of the educational work, the enrichment of the appropriations of the child is expected and, as result, after the third year of age, the typical stage observed in language development is the domain of the grammatical structure of language. In this stage, children express themselves through sentences (at first) with few words, though they already express their childish thought (Martins, 2012). To materialize this domain, it is not enough that children simply "speak". They need educational actions involving: vocabulary expansion (knowledge of the language's lexicon) – planned readings that are rich in signs and meanings; improvement of diction (phonetic aspects of the language) – intonation of

² Duarte (2015) explains that the formation of the conception of world is not apart from the educational content, translated in school by school knowledge, which must be arranged by assuming a position in the ideological struggle that marks the class struggle. Thus, for this author, the school must substantiate the teaching in the materialistic, historical and dialectical conception of the world. Obviously, in the case of young children, these contents are not transmitted directly, but, as stated by Martins (2012), their operational training is decisive for the theoretical training that increasingly takes place in school education.

songs, nursery rhymes and tongue twisters that make children exercise their verbal articulation abilities; recognition of grammatical rules of the language, which regulate speech and writing – games that require comprehension of commands (rules) and allow the reflection on the organization of speech (both in sentences and in their structure – beginning, middle and end).

These examples do not prevent a game from presenting signs and meanings, as well as a song from containing elements that allow children to learn the grammar of the language. It is necessary to point out that, without understanding what is lexicon, grammar, phonetics and so on, we are prevented from organizing an intentional work that has as goal the maximum development of individuals. We are referring to what Saviani (2013) and Martins (2013b) already explained and was previously mentioned, about the triad content-form-recipient, and emphasizing the relevance of a substantial teacher training.

Considering precisely the development of language of the recipients, who in this stage (under appropriate conditions of development) already understand the social function of objects by the mediation of words, it is important to note that children enter a new Guide Activity, called Role Game, which belongs to the affective-emotional sphere (Elkonin, 1987; Facci, 2004; Pasqualini, 2013). During this period, the driving developmental Activity of children is the playful reproduction of social relations with which they make contact. Therefore, it is not by chance that in the first stage of writing development cited by Luria (2006), called by him “Pre-instrumental”, children imitate adults by writing (inter-psychological relations) using the techniques they mastered by the time of such task (intra-psychological relations) (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015).

What is the effective development of children in the pre-instrumental phase? 1) their understanding that people use writing; 2) their ability to write; 3) the knowledge of a set of objects, situations and relationships with certain social functions and meanings. But the use of writing by children, as indicated, is imitative, external, an act in itself, related to the pleasure of manipulating objects (Martins, 2012), as pens, brushes, sponges and pencils. For this reason, it is important to offer different supports and writing instruments (which will be mentioned below).

The effective development, previously characterized, allows the teacher to act in the area of imminent development to overcome this imitation “... making graphic records to be used as a means, i.e., that writing helps the remembrance of something, thus assuming the function of a psychological operation” (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015, p. 47).

To illustrate the concept, we will consider the reading of the book “Olivia and the missing toy”³ (Falconer, 2012). After reading, ask the children to reproduce objects and characters of the story (camel, green shirt, rag doll, rug, sofa, cat, piano, dog etc.). In each production, apply different techniques (such as modeling, collage, folding, painting) using different materials, such clay, plaster, fabric, sisal, cotton, paper (crape, laminated, suede, cellophane etc.), string, colored glue, sticks, colored pencils and crayons; different formats (cylindrical, triangular, rectangular), sizes and thickness (larger, smaller, thick, thin); gouache, watercolor, brushes, sponges... The list of possibilities is immense! Thus, each object or character represented will have its “mark”, allowing the children to remember every part of the story or, with multiple stories, each material used will help remembering to each story a given record is related.

Note that all this activity, in order to make children use the montage with a mnemonic function, does not act exclusively on this objective. The entire psyche must act to: feel and perceive different textures, colors and shapes and fit them to the productions; pay attention to the plot, commands and sequences built (besides the concentration in the activity itself); memorize the story, characters and objects and relate them to the elaborated record; name the objects and characters represented; perform generalizations and associations between the images (complex thoughts); create representations of reality, being able to use creativity (it is not required that the cat presents fur in the representation, but before the availability of different supports and instruments, the one that better suits the purpose may

³ Olivia is a little pig. Her story begins when she was dreaming of riding a camel in Egypt. Her mother wakes her up to play **soccer** with a **green** uniform that she did not like, because it was similar to the others. She has a favorite toy (a rag doll) that disappears, and she looks for it under the **rug**, the **sofa**, the **cat**, she asks her brothers, then in a **dark night**, while she was playing the **piano**, Olivia hears a frightening noise and follows it, until she finds her toy destroyed by the **dog**. Her father promises to get her another one, but that was her favorite. She ends up sewing the toy.

be recognized, even if it is green, a color that is not found in real cats); get satisfaction (pleasure) in performing the task, translating into joy, happiness, or deal with frustrations that are expressed in sadness, disappointment etc.

What is being done in an action like this? We are instrumentalizing the children with a set of knowledge that is necessary to the mastery of writing. There is no need, therefore, to conduct a class on social practices with the students presenting writing as the most advanced form of record of human production. We also do not need a class (or a sequence of classes – didactic sequence) that problematize the implication of the absence of the mastery of writing for human beings. However, these issues cannot escape the attention of the teacher, who, when selecting certain contents, features, procedures and evaluation strategies, has already considered these elements in the planning, thus guiding its execution.

Based on this organization, the teacher will elect this or that content required to the process of literacy, attributing its classical sense, as stated by Saviani (2013). Literacy is classic. This is practically a consensus! But how to proceed? What are the contents that lead to the appropriation of the mastery of written language? In affirming that we must work with vocabulary (content), there is also a criterion to be applied in the selection of materials (books, games, music etc.): those that are richer, and therefore more advanced, which are the most indicated to certain procedures proposed, given the available resources (form) to certain students (recipient).

Following the route of the “Prehistory of writing”, Luria (2006) indicates that between four and five years old children already use graphic records to remember a dictated sentence. He calls this stage “Differentiated graphic activity”, in which children begin to use their own “scribbles” to remember (externally – at first, there is no significant difference in relation to the previous stage). In this way, the scribbles now have a specific function (auxiliary of the sign), demonstrating an improvement compared to the previous stage.

The effective development presented is, therefore, the attribution of meanings to the marks created (mnemonic function); then, the imminent development by which we may guide ourselves is the need to overcome the mnemonic record, making it express an specific content.

To attend the need of a more elaborated form of record, children must understand elements of mathematics, such as quantities, sizes, shapes, thickness etc., thus allowing them to represent a relation between sign and meaning. Returning to the story “Olivia and the missing toy” (Falconer, 2012), if we ask the children that, only with their drawings, they represent a cat and a piano, their knowledge about the size of the objects will influence their representation. Similarly, if we ask them to draw two soccer shirts and a ball, their notions of quantity will be essential for the record. However, the children must not know how to draw shirts, pianos, cats or soccer balls. They will only approximate certain elements to certain standards to remember their intentions while drawing (a circle – soccer ball; two marks – shirts; a small and a big mark – cat and piano). Then we ask: who gave the commands and made you think on these elements? In other words, who determined the intention of the task? The teacher. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to ensure knowledge in mathematics (counting, quantities, geometric forms, magnitude and measures) that will serve both the logical-mathematical development and the development of writing (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015).

The Role Game remains as Guide Activity (up to about six years old), but it becomes more complex, increasingly performing a faithful reproduction of reality in the pursuit of a comprehension of social relations. It is worth emphasizing two observations on Guide Activities and their role in the development.

First, the actual experiences of children are not the only ones that allow their reflection and action on/with the social roles. Thus, they do not need to live with a physician or a mason to play doctor or construction. In fact, allowing the particular experiences of children to be the only ones that drive their appropriation of knowledge contradicts the statements of the historical-critical pedagogy. In this sense, literature is essential to enable the children to contact characters, historical times and contexts that enable the playful reproduction of various situations that enrich their repertoire.

Second, a Guide Activity is always “engendered” in its predecessor. Thus, when the child goes from the Role Game Activity to the Study Activity, the latter is managed inside the former. The Guide Activity is more developmental in a given moment, but loses strength while the other assumes its place. Since it

does not happen naturally, games with rules, production activities, sports etc. must be encouraged, provided and organized in order to assume a prominent place in the development, incurring in an insufficiency (crisis) of an activity that will be overcome by another.

In the case of writing, production activities are decisive for this course, because, as explained by Davidov (1988), teaching a language must start with phonetics, which gives it regularity. Knowing the letters (graphemes) and associating them to its phonemes, the child will begin to associate record and speech (word!). But record of what? Of concrete nouns, drawn, painted, modeled, clipped, which receive a name and present regularity inscribed in their graphemes and phonemes. Returning to the example of the story by Ian Falconer (2012), we observe in it several concrete nouns (ball, shirt, rug, camel etc.), but also some abstract ones, as well as adjectives and verbs (Olivia did not like her uniform; she heard a frightening noise in a dark night; father told her not to be upset because the dog torn the toy apart, and to fix it, she sewed the toy).

Therefore, asking children to draw like, upset, sew etc. will not be appropriate requirements of someone who "... is still elaborating the ability to draw and needs concrete references to do so" (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015, p. 53). However, working with concrete nouns does not mean to limit the students' repertoire. In another example, we can use the song "Soup" (Tatit & Peres, 2004). It lists different ingredients that can be used in a soup (spinach, tomatoes, beans, watercress, flour, noodles, radish, eggplant, yucca, leeks, cabbage, palm hearts). But the song also brings foods that are not used in a soup (candy, ice cream, persimmon, lollipop), other ingredients that are not food (truck, pot, worm, foot odor, soap, lice) and two animals that in our culture are not usually used as food (alligator and wild boar). Do children know all these elements? Are they able to categorize them and make generalizations? And: have they eaten all the food listed in the song? Thus, there are several options to work with, which go beyond the universe known by the children (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015).

Around five to six years old, we have the "Pictographic writing". The drawings of children continue developing, being expressed more elaborately and used as a form of mnemonic record (effective development), but still without association with an auxiliary writing tool (imminent development). It calls our attention to the need to guide children's drawing so they can overcome its use as a writing technique, being substituted by symbolic writing (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015).

Martins (2013a, p. 80), discussing the proposition of production activities, states that they must become more complex so they do not lose sense, and their planning must consider

... activities as a concrete model, at first, and then, through plane images (drawings, photographs etc.); without a model, providing objectives and materials to be used; of their own creation, from ideas and materials selected by the children.

Note that these stages are linked to what was previously presented about the use of numerous features and procedures for drawing, modeling, clipping, painting etc. When we ask children to make a "free drawing", it will be extremely difficult and frustrating if they do not possess the knowledge of techniques and materials, in addition to signs and meanings.

This can also be said about writing. Initially, we need materiality (concrete nouns) and models (which provide objectivity to the representation) to make graphic marks. Then, the children will be challenged to record according to certain material objectives (the sequence of a story or song – "open" model), advancing to complex reproductions (abstract nouns, verbs, adjectives etc.), until they are able to write using only letters and finally making sentences, clauses, periods and their own texts.

In pictographic writing, considering the requirement to overcome the "mixture" between drawing and letters, proposing tasks that require the use of abstract nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. will be relevant to the appropriation of writing. It is also interesting to work with collective writing (the teacher serves as a scribe), because it reveals how writing is organized and make children reflect on the different types of existing texts. This is the moment to ask the students to draw Olivia unhappy with her green shirt; upset because the dog ruined her toy; sewing the rag doll; hearing a frightening noise in a dark night etc.

In addition, it is necessary to know the alphabet (grapheme – phoneme) so the children can face the challenge of writing the words they pronounce. When performing this exercise, the students assume

the condition of converting a word into another, considering its new sense, or the loss of it (Daviđov, 1988).

Ruth Rocha (1999, p. 9), in the story “Marcelo, Marmelo, Martelo” (Marcel, Quince, Hammer) helps us to discuss the problem with the children. Marcel asks the adults many “why” questions (why does the rain fall, why doesn’t the sea spill, why do dogs have four legs?). But he also asks the name of things, starting with his own name:

- Mommy, why is my name Marcel?
- Well, Marcel, this was the name your father and I chose.
- And why haven’t you chosen hammer?
- Well, son, hammer is not a person’s name! It’s a tool’s name...
- Why haven’t you chosen Quince?
- Because quince is a fruit’s name, boy!
- And couldn’t the fruit be called Marcel, and I, quince?⁴

The dialogue between Marcel and his mother reveals the child’s understanding that different words mean different things (therefore, different records). It increments the linguistic repertoire and allows to understand that writing represents speech, which has universal (social) significance, hence supra-individual (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015).

Around six to seven years old, the phase of “Symbolic writing” begins – given that in the previous stages, the development of children have been conducted to produce abstract jumps and to enrich their ability to elaborate more complex generalizations. First as an external act that must become objective, but considering the paths treaded so far, to assimilate the mechanisms of this cultural instrument, internalization occurs by overcoming the use of random graphic marks or drawing, leading children to the exclusive use of the alphabetic system (effective development). It must be improved through the learning of contents such as verbal and nonverbal agreement, gender, number and degree, accentuation, punctuation, word classes examined morphologically and syntactic analysis (imminent development).

In the story “Olivia and the missing toy” (Falconer, 2012) we find several of these contents, and it uses visual aids that support their learning. For example: the font size of much of the book is smaller than some words emphasized by Olivia in certain excerpts (WHERE is my toy? – uses both larger font and capitalizes the adverb; THE DOG! – exclamation when the character finds out who took her toy (concrete noun); use of indent in dialogues; use of word “rhythm” associated with images⁵.

When using words in certain contexts and for certain purposes, “... the development of language is questioned both in its phonetics and semantics” (Martins & Marsiglia, 2015, p. 63). In the first case, the child deals with the word according to its sound, external aspects, while the semantic phase expresses its meaning in the sentence, clause or period. Returning to the story “Marcelo, marmelo, martelo” (Rocha, 1999), we observe that when Marcel mixes up the names (dog – barker) he is relating the word only to its material representation, in a primary, phonetic way (which has its importance because it allows the individual to operate with objects in their absence). However, the symbolic function of the word (semantic aspect) is jeopardized, because it limits generalizations, categorizations and abstractions. The function of the word to serve as a means of formation of concepts will not succeed, because the word has the role to allow “... the reflection on the world with more depth than our

⁴ Though we recognize the value of the story used in the example, we disagree with the end given by the author, because when Marcel faces a situation he cannot explain appropriately (the dog house is on fire and Marcel tells his father “the housing of the Barker fired up”), Ruth Rocha solves the dilemma by making the parents adapt to his use of words, with subjective meaning (only Marcel understands them) instead of emphasizing, as moral background, the importance of the supra-subjective meaning.

⁵ Olivia waits while her mother sews her soccer shirt. She asks her mother if it is ready, and she says it is not. Then Olivia waited (image of the little pig standing up), waited (she appears sitting) and waited (she is lying down, with spread arms and legs), until she got tired of waiting (Olivia goes away, with an annoyed expression).

perception does... This is why the word not only means an image but also includes the object in the rich system of connections and relationships in which it finds herself" (Luria, 1979, p. 35).

The development of writing goes on, changing the place of collective writing, because now (in possession of complex cultural instruments) children can write individually, which is a necessary task, since each individual must appropriate the knowledge produced historically and it is only possible with the actions of each individual in the process of humanization. The quality of the writing (form and content) depends on the contents of the language available to the students regarding grammar and genres (literary or not).

Between six/seven and ten years old (corresponding to the first years of primary education), when literacy is systematized and consolidated, Study is the Guide Activity, attending the intellectual-cognitive sphere (Elkonin, 1987; Facci, 2004; Pasqualini, 2013). The centrality of this activity, turning to the relationship child-social object, has knowledge (object) as the key element. Unlike the previous phase (Role Game), in which the process of playing was the important factor for the development of children, and not the result itself, in Study the actions are guided by a product, which is mastering the knowledge of adults, in order to stop making playful reproductions of their actions and share with them the experiences and information gathered throughout history that configure the generic human heritage.

For this reason, in Study, in terms of appropriation of writing, from entering a new type of school (from early childhood education to elementary school), passing by a greater systematization of contents, to the form of organization of groups (the collective of children), everything is relevant and influences the literacy process.

To ensure that the years comprised by Study are productive, the teacher must plan the educational work in order to create conditions so that children learn to behave in different situations required by the school: listen to explanations, elaborate summaries, produce records, expose ideas, work individually and collectively etc. The degree of complexity of the content required in these tasks must be programmed by the educator in such a way that it they do not lack meaning, as previously mentioned. Low requirement (simple content, without psychological "provocations") leads to demotivation, lack of interest and discipline, and hinders the process of learning. Sophisticated, challenging contents, properly dosed, will contribute categorically to the humanization of individuals (Saviani, 2013) and, specifically, the written language will play a decisive role in the formation of theoretical concepts, crucial for enhancing their ability of thought.

Final considerations

This exhibition aimed to present the main features of the stages in the development of written language, which has its roots in oral language, surpassing it in form and content. In this process, their links with effective/imminent development and their connections with the periodization of development (Elkonin, 1987) were also pointed out. Thus, we intended to emphasize the importance of school education in this progression and what literacy represents for human development in its maximum possibilities.

As we know, the relationship of the individual with the human race is based on work and its objectivations (Duarte, 2013). Therefore, the objectivation is also established inside the individual, and this individuality, in turn, participates in the development of humankind. The development in the relation individual-humankind might not express the true humanization of individuals (that would be the way of development of humanity), becoming something "in itself", because it would be poorly identified with the immediate development of the subjects.

In the case of school education, the students who attend school will reach certain developments. It would be unrealistic to claim that they apprehend nothing in their process of schooling. However, what is this development and to what extent is it manifested? Daily life provides us with means of survival. But surviving, with the minimum objective and subjective conditions, is entirely different from living fully and ultimately. The more the school rushes the formation of individuals, the more it breaks down the contents and disqualifies the role of education in the humanization of human beings, and the more it

ensures survival, and not life. The pedagogy of “learning to learn” (Duarte, 2006), which deepens increasingly in the capitalist society, meets perfectly an alienating and fetishized role in the formation of individuals. And, of course, these are not the required conditions for a more advanced development of humankind, but those that meet the neoliberal premises of flexibility, multiple abilities, adaptive capacities etc. that inhabit school education disguised as freedom, diversity, respect and multiculturalism.

The relevance of literacy stands out as essential for the development of free and universal individuality (Duarte, 2013), required in the process of overcoming capitalism. In this sense, education stands as a revolutionary process that contributes to the transformation of an also revolutionary society. Therefore, the role of education, and more specifically the role of a revolutionary education, passes through the socialization of material and immaterial goods to all individuals, as emphasized by historical-cultural psychology and historical-critical pedagogy, which should be translated into the educational emancipatory practice of human beings.

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