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# How do children read children's literature books?<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.** Aiming to understand how the child reads the children's literary book, we interviewed students from the 4th grade of Elementary School (Caxias do Sul-RS). The interview was conducted based on 3 books – the picture, the prose and the verse categories –, as recommended by the School Library National Program –PNBE (2014). Interviews, built taking Bauer and Gaskell (2002) into consideration, took place in two moments, one designed to answer general questions about the reading and a more specific one which focused on the reading of each title. The data analysis was performed following parameters that were constructed basen on Ramos and Panozzo (2004) and Ramos (2010). This qualitative study is predominantly descriptive and analytical and points out that children build senses through their experiences and knowledge while interacting with different discursive modalities. It also shows that the emptiness inherent to the textual structure limit the realization of poetry, suggesting that the School Library National Program – PNBE, besides providing literary books, should also consider mediating actions so that literary reading can be performed.

**Keywords:** children's literature; reading; children's culture; repertoire.

## Como a criança lê o livro literário infantil?

**RESUMO.** Com o objetivo de compreender como a criança lê o livro literário infantil, foram entrevistados alunos do 4º ano do Ensino Fundamental (Caxias do Sul-RS). A entrevista pautou-se em 3 livros, categorias imagem, prosa e verso, previstas no Edital do Programa Nacional Biblioteca da Escola – PNBE (2014). O roteiro da conversa foi construído a partir de Bauer e Gaskell (2002) e a interação com os estudantes ocorreu em dois momentos, um destinado a responder perguntas gerais sobre leitura e outro, específico, focalizando a leitura de cada um dos títulos lidos. A análise dos dados foi realizada com parâmetros construídos a partir de Ramos e Panozzo (2004) e Ramos (2010). Este estudo qualitativo é, predominantemente, descritivo-analítico e aponta que o leitor infantil constrói sentidos por meio de suas vivências, interagindo com diferentes modalidades discursivas. Sinaliza ainda que os vazios inerentes à estrutura textual limitam a concretização da poesia, sugerindo que o Programa Nacional Biblioteca da Escola - PNBE, além de fornecer livros literários, deveria contemplar ações mediadoras para que a leitura literária se efetive.

**Palavras-chave:** literatura infantil; leitura; cultura infantil; repertório.

## ¿Cómo el niño lee el libro literario infantil?

**RESUMEN.** Con el objetivo de comprender cómo el niño lee el libro literario infantil, fueron entrevistados alumnos del 4º año de la Enseñanza Primaria (Caxias do Sul-RS-Brasil). La entrevista se basó en 3 libros, categorías imagen, prosa y verso, previstas en el Edicto del Programa Nacional Biblioteca de la Escuela – PNBE (2014). El guión de la conversa fue construido a partir de Bauer y Gaskell (2002) y la interacción con los estudiantes ocurrió en dos momentos, uno dirigido a responder preguntas generales sobre lectura y otro, específico, enfocando la lectura de cada uno de los títulos leídos. El análisis de los datos fue realizado con parámetros construidos a partir de Ramos y Panozzo (2004) y Ramos (2010). Este estudio cualitativo es, predominantemente, descriptivo-analítico y señala que el lector infantil construye sentidos por medio de sus experiencias, interaccionando con diferentes modalidades discursivas. Indica aun que los vacíos inherentes a la estructura textual limitan la materialización de la poesía, sugiriendo que el Programa Nacional Biblioteca de la Escuela - PNBE, además de proporcionar libros literarios, debería contemplar acciones mediadoras para que la lectura literaria sea llevada a cabo.

**Palabras-clave:** literatura infantil; lectura; cultura infantil; repertorio.

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## Introduction

One of the research project goals covered in this article<sup>2</sup> was to investigate the reception of works selected by the School Library National Program (PNBE<sup>3</sup>) for the early years of elementary school. Aspects related to the real reader are here discussed, based on studies, first, of literary picture, prose and verse category books and, subsequently, on the reading that students do of these works. Taking into account the description and the analysis of the data built in the investigation, recurring procedures in this practice are pointed out and, at the same time, gaps that need to be prioritized in literary reading practices are indicated. The methodology used for carrying out this research was predominantly qualitative, with emphasis on description and analysis in order to build the data and to record and interpret it, thus contributing to further studies in the field of literary education.

In order to accomplish the investigation, three children's literature books were selected, one from each of the categories suggested by the 2014 School Library National Program: *Chapeuzinho Redondo* (prose book) (2012), by Geoffroy de Pennart's; *A Visita* (picture book) (2013), by Lucia Hiratsuka; and *Jardim de menino poeta* (verse book) (2012), by Maria Valéria Rezende. The School Library National Program - PNBE (2014)<sup>4</sup>, created in 1997, was linked and put into effect by the Ministry of Education and aimed at encouraging reading practices, seeking to bring students as well as teachers closer to culture and information (School Library National Program, 2014). Therefore, the Program intended to qualify the collections of public-school libraries in order to contribute to the formation of competent readers.

To answer the question that guides this article (announced in the title), in mid-November 2014, 38 interviews were conducted with students from the 4th grade of a public school (one subject did not participate in one of the meetings). The school, which has students from the 1st to the 9th grade of the elementary school, is located in a neighborhood near Caxias do Sul downtown area, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The students selected to participate in the project belonged to one of the two 4th grade groups from this school. According to information taken from *Projeto Político Pedagógico da Escola Estadual de Ensino Fundamental Matteo Gianella Matteo* (2014), the students came from the neighborhood where the school is located, from nearby communities and even from nearby rural locations. In general, they were children of traders, manufacturers, self-employed workers, factory workers and farmers. The predominant race of the participants was white.

The head teacher of one of the groups welcomed the research and indicated 13 children aged 9 to 10, who agreed to be interviewed. The families of these students authorized the participation of the children in the investigation, an attitude expressed by the signing of a 'Free and Informed Consent Form'. The meetings were aimed at investigating how children read the children's literary book. For three days, the conversations took place individually in the school, but not in the conventional classroom, and each day contemplated one of the indicated titles. On the first day, besides the specific talk about the referred book, questions were asked about the student's relationship with reading.

The interviews were recorded in audio and were later transcribed and analyzed. The answers were arranged in tables in order to facilitate the analysis of the data, discussed in this article, which is divided into three parts: the first one discusses the general conversation that took place with the participants and brings aspects about the relationship of children with reading; the second one discusses the interview results in relation to each of the selected books; and, finally, the third part points out general results from the reading sessions.

## Relation of the students with reading in general

In the initial meeting with each student, the theme was reading and everyone declared that they like reading. In relation to what everyone prefers, most participants showed appreciation for adventure and fiction narrative. As an example, the book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* was mentioned as well as the author Paula Pimenta. This is

<sup>2</sup> Study carried out at Universidade de Caxias do Sul with the support of CNPq – National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (No 311541/2013-5 Process and No 43/2013 MCTI/CNPq/MEC/CAPES Notice).

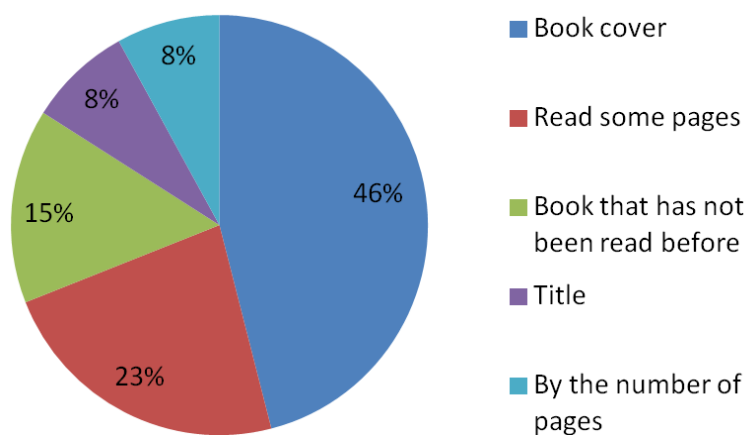
<sup>3</sup> In Portuguese, PNBE stands for Programa Nacional Biblioteca da Escola.

<sup>4</sup> PNBE was in effect until 2014 and, since then, the Federal Government has been silent about this policy.

justified by the interviewees for being titles that generate curiosity and are fun. One participant argued that *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* is interesting because there are others that come in a sequence. Another subject indicated authors John Green and Paula Pimenta: “Because they know how to write very complete sentences and their books are interesting. They have really cool sentences very creative stories” (Interviewee A3). As for the preference for fiction narrative books, one student added: “Because they are interesting! The fictional ones tell me things that I didn't know, that are interesting, that I like” (Interviewee A4).

Concerning the general taste for reading, another subject mentions: “[...] stories that have a lot of things, as when you can enter the book” (Interviewee A6). There was only one interviewee who cited comic books as a favorite reading: “Comic Book! Because I think there is less to read and it's more fun” (Interviewee A5).

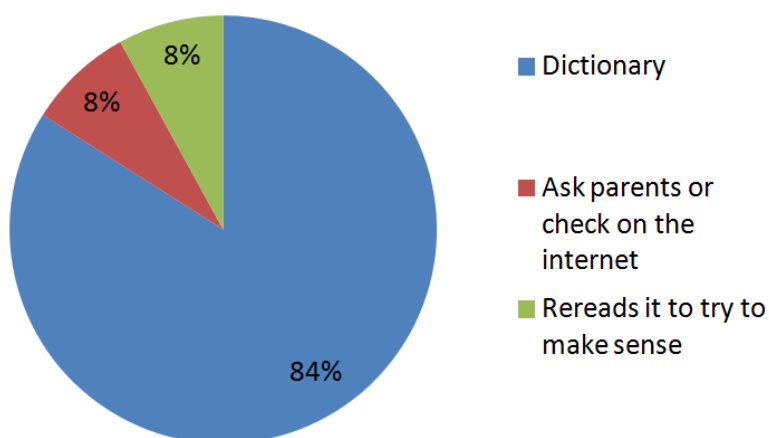
When asked about how they choose a book, six of the 13 children answered that they first look at the cover. One claimed: “I see the cover, if it's interesting, I read on the back about the book” (Interviewee A7). Three reported that they try to look and to read some of the pages, as identified in this comment: “I take a look. I don't go by the cover, I look at the pages, read them a little bit. I don't just take the book because of its cover” (Interviewee A8). Two point out that they seek for books they have never read. The systematization of the data is expressed by Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** How is a book chosen?

Source: Graph created by the authors.

The respondents were also asked about what they do when they do not understand a word in the text. Eleven of them said they usually look for the meaning of the word in the dictionary, totaling 84% for this attitude, as shown in Figure 2. Out of the 13 interviewees, 8% answered that they ask their parents or seek for help on the internet. One replied, “I try to understand the word. I try to reread it to try to make sense [...]” (Interviewee A7), revealing some autonomy in using the strategy for trying to construct the meaning of the unknown term with the help of other textual elements.



**Figure 2.** Procedure employed when a word from the book is not understood

Source: Graph created by the authors.

Regarding the importance of knowing who the author and / or the illustrator of the book is (Figure 3), the children's answers indicate that: 62% of them think it is important to know who the author and / or illustrator is, 23% said it is not important and 15% reported that it depends on the situation. In relation to this, the answers were:

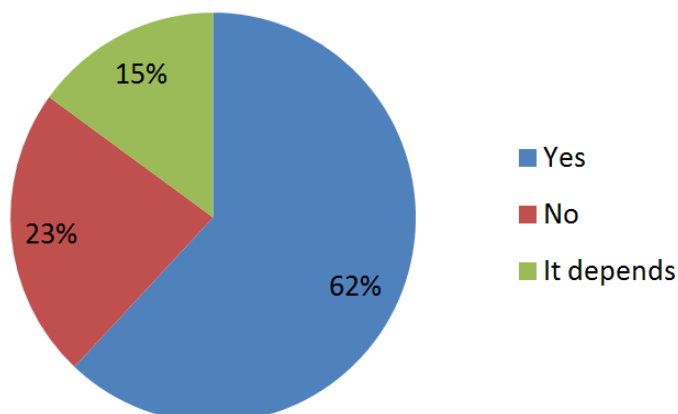
A1 - Yes, to get other books from the same author / illustrator. Because they did a good job.

A2 - Yes, because we then know who wrote it and, if we like this book, you can choose other ones that this person has written.

A3 - Not so important, just a little bit. So that we are curious to learn more, but it is not so important.

A4 - Yes, because I can get interested in the books of the same author. And because I buy books online by the author's name and so I can find out other titles written by them. As for the illustrator, this may be different.

A5 - No, I only see if it is very nice (referring to the book).



**Figure 3.** Do you think it's importante to know who the author/Illustrator is?

Source: Graph created by the authors.

Based on the data from the interviews, it is understood that children are not used to reading paratexts, seeking for information about the author and / or illustrator of the book (catalog card) or even the synopsis of the book. Beginning readers, when deciding on a title to read, ignore paratextual elements and go directly into the core of the book. This indicates the importance of investing in the orientation of children so that these resources contribute to qualify the reading of the work.

## Students' perceptions about the selected books

Before starting the interview, each book was placed on a table and the participant was asked to read it as they pleased. During this exploration period and prior to the specific interview about the book, some of the participants' reactions were observed and notes were taken down.

In general, all of the interviewees read the work quietly and seriously. Few of them showed any kind of emotion during the reading session, and some did so through a smile at times. Part of the subjects made lip movements while reading *Chapeuzinho Redondo* (Pennart, 2012) and *Jardim de menino poeta* (Rezende, 2012), but did not make any sounds. Most of the children set the book on the table, lightly touching it, and some touched it just when turning the pages. As for the verse and prose book, they tried to read the written text first and then looked at the illustration on each page.

## Revisiting a certain Little Red Hiding Hood

*Chapeuzinho Redondo*, by Geoffroy de Pennart (2012), was originally published in France in 2004 under the title *Chapeau rond rouge* and translated into Portuguese by Gilda de Aquino. The copy used in this investigation has 36 pages, is 25x18 cm large and was printed on *couché* paper.

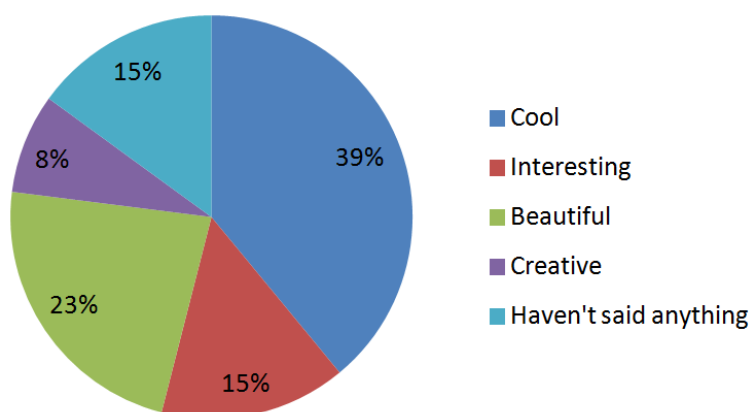
After reading this book, all of the participants orally reported the story they had read, eventually, with some minor changes. One interviewee quoted that Chapeuzinho had killed the wolf. Another one said that Chapeuzinho had become a nurse instead of a veterinarian. There was also a student who got confused and called Chapeuzinho the Little Red Riding Hood. When asked if they had ever heard or read a similar story, 10 out of 13 children mentioned the *Little Red Riding Hood* story and only one, besides referring to the *Little Red Riding Hood*, also mentioned *Chapeuzinho amarelo*, by Chico Buarque.

When asked about something that had called their attention when reading this book, the answers varied. One student indicated that Chapeuzinho and the grandma thought the wolf was a dog. The participants also commented that the protagonist was not the Little Red Riding Hood, but Chapeuzinho Redondo. The children also pointed out that the grandmother ran over the wolf. And, finally, the most outstanding information: the wolf in the story was not bad, it was good.

Subsequently, each interviewee was asked if the book elicited any particular feelings. Some said it did not, others reported a number of feelings such as friendship, sadness, happiness and sorrow. One subject summarized:

[...] even bad people can become a good person. Another one added: Sadness because I also thought the wolf was dead, before turning the page. And happiness after learning that he was alive and well and did nothing else, like that (Interviewee A1).

Students were also questioned about the cover of the book, but their perceptions were restricted, showing that they did not notice any elements that belong to it. Out of the 13 children, 5 said the cover was cool; 2, interesting; 3, beautiful; 1, creative and 2 did not make any comments, as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Opinion on the cover of *Chapeuzinho Redondo*.

Source: Graph created by the authors

When giving further explanations about their perceptions, they concluded:

A1 - Cool, because all the characters but the vet are there.

A2 - I found it very cool, very colorful and very well drawn.

A3 - Cool because you can understand what the book will tell you.

A4 - Interesting because it shows Little Red Riding Hood, the Grandma and the wolf and so it provides us with some mystery before we read it, so I get curious because it is usually the Little Red Riding Hood and now it's Chapeuzinho Redondo.

A5 - Cool! Because it shows the characters and then you can have an idea about what the book will be like.

Most children approved the illustrations, but two comments were more specific. One interviewee reported that the images were cool; however, he / she did not like the colors much, because, on the cover, Chapeuzinho Redondo's dress and hat were red, but on the following pages, especially on the first ones, they were orange. Another student argued: "Quite cool. Sometimes the illustrator shows too many things in the picture that do not make much sense, such as the one with the little rats, for instance. They are fun, some are dancing, others are doing something else [...]" (Interviewee A2). It appears, based on the children's observations, that the illustrations repeat what is in the verbal text, as we can see in the following comments:

A1 - I thought it explained well what was written, and they were very beautiful too.

A2 - Because every part like that, which goes on the pages, shows the drawing of what she was doing.

A3 - ... was well illustrated based on the words they wrote under it, it shows as if it was Chapeuzinho talking, scared to death, shows his grandmother who, here it is written huh "exclaimed the grandma, when arriving with the vet" and she arrives with the vet to see the wolf and in the other stories that I've read, they are more or less similar to this kind of stories. Before placing the right picture, they put another, about something else I read, like they put it here and the picture came here, it won't make much sense.

The children suggest that the illustrations should repeat the word, claiming that this was really happening and, in this case, was helping them to understand what was written. Readers are attentive to the colors that were used, and insist that the same shade should be used on every page, considering chromatic changes as being negative - as in the case of Chapeuzinho's dress, which was red on the book cover and orange on the first few pages, and then red again on the last pages. Regarding the relationship between word and illustration, Ramos (2010) advises that, in literary books, languages (verbal and visual) should complement each other, so that the illustration is not restricted to repeating what is written, but rather to broaden the intended meaning posed by the verbal text.

Out of the 13 interviewees, 12 rated the book as being easy to read because it has easy words, few pages and because the illustrations help to understand what is written. Besides that, 8 participants found that reading it once was enough to understand it, while 5 others would read it again to better understand it. One subject pointed out that it was difficult to understand the word 'candelabro'<sup>5</sup> (Pennart, 2012, p. 27). Another one indicated that he / she did not understand it when, in the beginning of the narrative, the mother told Chapeuzinho to go through the countryside, but that she could also go through the forest (found it confusing, which shows he /she did not relate it to Perrault's original story). From the children's observations, it can be pointed out that they still do not understand that the literary text has a playful purpose which presupposes dubious meanings.

As for the part they liked the most, several answers were given, such as:

A1 - I liked that Chapeuzinho Redondo has heard this story, so she was not afraid of the wolf.

A2- I liked that she took care of the wolf and that she called the vet to take care of the wolf (referring to Chapeuzinho Redondo's grandmother).

A3 - Grandma tried to help even though she knew it was a wolf.

A4 - When Chapeuzinho thinks it's a dog.

A5 - I liked Chapeuzinho's basket because there was a lot of cake in it.

A6 - I liked the end ... she became a nurse.

The answer given by A6 shows that he / she mistook veterinarian for nurse.

Many respondents didn't say anything related to what they least liked about the book, but the position of a student who explicitly puts him/herself in the storstands out:

And what I liked the least about the story was, and it wasn't a good thing, was that Chapeuzinho Redondo scared the wolf, as if it was a trick, and most people don't like it and there are some kids, just like me, who can easily and are impulsive and have attention deficit, which makes their behavior impossible, they speak even if the person has asked them to stop (Interviewee A4).

The participants were able to satisfactorily narrate the story they read, except for some minor changes caused by intertextuality, by their reading experience or simply by inattention. The children found out that the wolf in this story was not bad, thus breaking with the stereotype conveyed by classical narratives. The information generates surprise among them, due to their previous knowledge of similar narratives. In short, the readers' feeling of strangeness before the plot indicates that the book has achieved its literary purpose - to enable readers to approach the work and interpret it according to their experience.

### Visiting and reading images

A *Visita*, by Lúcia Hiratsuka (2013), edited in 2011, is a 31-page picture book printed on *couché* paper which is 20.5x21 cm large. The reading of the title by the participants was done in a serious and silent way. One of the children stopped right in the beginning and asked the interviewer if the book was only illustrated. Once the question was answered, he / she continued reading. No student showed any kind of emotion while reading and, subsequently, each one talked about what they read in the title, showing their understanding of the narrative. When asked what most called their attention in the title, some answers were rather specific:

A1 - That he was afraid. The boy was afraid of the man, so he kept spying him.

A2 - That, in the end, he [the boy] found out that he was a painter, but then, when he [the boy] decided to show him that he [the boy] was encouraged, he [the painter] had already gone.

A3 - There are some white [black and white] parts and some colorful ones.

<sup>5</sup> "Candelabro" could be translated into English using two words (candle holder), not just one.

A4 - I think the little boy got scared and was trying to find out what the man liked or what he did and then, at the end, he found out that they both liked doing the same thing, which was to paint, the tree.

A5 - That the little boy ... he was afraid of the painter.

Each interviewee interpreted the book their own way, based on their experience, since it is made up of verbal elements that identify it – title, authorship, as well as its materiality and, finally, its visuality. Fear seems to be the aspect most detected by the children from the interaction with the book.

When asked if they had ever read or heard any similar story, only one of the participants mentioned a book about a mother and her son, and that the son was afraid because his mother was angry. He also warned that, unlike this book, the other one was written with words, and that the boy/character ended up liking his mother. The child does not remember the title of the book. The association, in this case, was initially by theme and, subsequently, by the way the stories are made – verbally and visually.

When being questioned about the feelings elicited by the title, four of the interviewees denied having felt anything special. The other ones pointed out:

A1 - That appearances can be deceiving.

A2 - Yes, first we need to know what people will do, before acting.

A3 - Doubtful, because I thought the man was an uncle or his father who he didn't know.

A4 - I think that, even the little boy, he didn't like the man much, because the man was tall, mean, had a beard like that, and then he started, I think, to like him because he saw that he really had the talent for painting. I don't think we can judge others by the skin, by the face, we have to judge what is inside, the heart, the feeling.

A5 - Yes, Fear. He was afraid, and then he saw that everything was fine!

To continue on the same theme of the previous question, students were asked if the book brought back any memory. Out of the 13 respondents, 9 said they could not recall anything. However, some considered:

A1 - Sometimes it does, when a relative of mine arrives and I don't even know who they are and I feel a little strange about them. This reminds me of my first-grade books which had no words.

A2 - I, once I, came an uncle, he is not my uncle, but I call him uncle, but he is not related to me, he came to my house and I was kind of scared of him because he was very tall and so I got scared. But then, I started to like him a lot.

A3 - I don't think so, I just got a little scared of a person who stayed at my place one day, but not so much like this one.

The feelings reported by each of the participants, as well as reports about something they had remembered when interacting with the book, show the influence of people's life story on the construction of meaning, providing reflections about real situations as in the case of A4's answer related to the feeling that was arisen when reading this piece of work.

Later, the interviewees' attentions were drawn to the book cover. Out of these participants, 11 agreed that the cover, composed by the title and the illustration, announces the story. One of the subjects argued: "Look! It is a title that makes you want to know what is written inside the book, so it calls the attention" (Interviewee A6). Another one summarized: "The title really has to do with the book because the man went there to visit and the title of the book is 'A Visita' and the cover is beautiful, there is nothing to explain about it, it's just the boy looking from behind the tree, it also has to do with the story" (Interviewee A7).

Participants reported having enjoyed the illustrations, and as for the fact that colorful as well as black and white scenes are mixed in the book, they noted:

A1 - The colors are very bright, when there are colors, which are not white, right? And the illustrations are well drawn. The colorful part like that, to highlight I guess, something like that.

A2 - Good and the colors like that, well colored. They didn't color some parts to leave it as a detail in the book.

A3 - Good, because it looks realistic. The colors more or less because not everything was painted. But I like it anyway. You can even imagine the colors.

A4 - I liked it, because there are some parts that are colored and some that are black and white. And the black and white ones mean it's not to pay much attention, because the colored ones emphasize whatever is most important.

A5 - I found the colors happy and the illustrations very pretty, it looks as if they were made with crayons, crayons, it looks as if they were colored with crayons. I had not noticed there were parts with and without colors. I think it was done this way to show what the boy was thinking about what the others were doing.

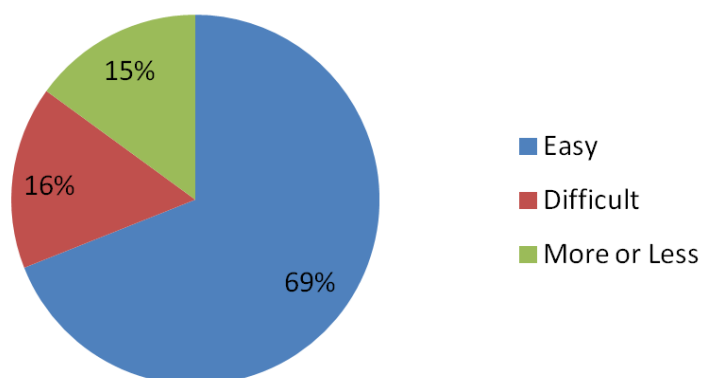
The children raise hypotheses about the use or not of colors. They understand that colors highlight scenes so that we should pay more attention to the colored ones. Something else to be pointed out is that students consider the illustration 'good' because it is realistic, signaling the importance of recovering from what is traced the represented being. Only one child notices the way the illustration is made - "[...] it looks

as if they were made with crayons, crayons, it looks as if they were colored with crayons [...]” (Interviewee A5), referring to the material employed in the illustration.

Some children did not notice anything special in the illustrations; they did not notice or question about the represented beings, the scenery or even the presence or not of colors. Regarding the materiality of the paper used in the book, they regarded it as having good quality, evidencing that the weight is appropriate for handling:

- A1 - Good as it is easy to turn (the pages)
- A2 - Good too, it is smoth and feels good to touch it.
- A3 - Good because it is difficult to tear.
- A4 - I think it is good, not too thin nor too thick.

Out of the 13 students interviewed, 9 considered the book as being difficult to read because it had no words (Figure 5). They pointed out that when they are wordless, things need to be imagined; this demands more reasoning and requires going back to the picture more often so that they are understood, while when there are words the understanding is more guided. When asked if the book had been easy or difficult to read, one participant considered: “It’s not really reading, it’s understanding the images” (Interviewee A7). And another one continued: “There is nothing to read, just on the back. There is reading just here on the back [...]” (Interviewee A9), referring to the book back cover. Only two students rated the title as easy. However, about half of the readers said that they would read the book again, indicating that the vagueness of the narrative would imply a keener look. The other half said they would read the book only once. It’s pointed out the children’s misunderstanding that the picture book would not be a book for reading because it is wordless. In this case, reading is just associated to the word.



**Figure 5.** *A Visita* book: easy or difficult?

Source: Graph created by the authors

In relation to the difficulties in reading an image, they referred to the information on pages 24 and 25: ‘I don’t know what he is looking at’ (Figure 6); On page 4-5, some children did not realize that the protagonist was opening a gate to welcome the guest (Figure 7); on page 11, they hesitated when looking at two separated images of the character against a white background (Figure 8); and, on pages 14 and 15, when the protagonist sees the guest’s attitude of fear and then hides from this unknown person (Figure 9).



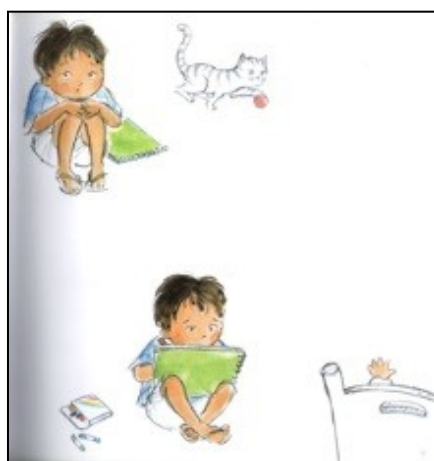
**Figure 6.** The protagonist’s astonishment.

Source: Hiratsuka (2012, p. 24-25).



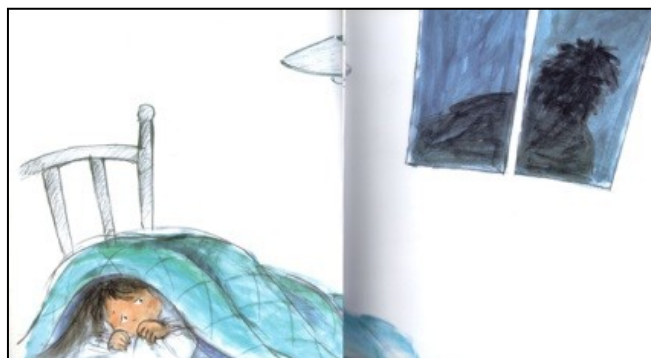
**Figure 7.** Guest's arrival.

Source: Hiratsuka (2012, p. 3-4).



**Figure 8.** Boy's withdrawal.

Source: Hiratsuka (2012, p. 11).



**Figura 9.** Expression of fear.

Source: Hiratsuka (2012, p. 14-15).

Regarding what they liked the most when reading *A visita* (Hiratsuka, 2013), 2 subjects alluded to the illustrations, 2 others mentioned everything, without being specific, 7 didn't say anything and 1 subject just summarized: "That he [referring to the protagonist] ] took courage to talk to him [the visitor]", and another stated: "That part that he's in his brother's room I guess, I think it is his brother's, that's what I liked the most" (Interviewee A2). What the last child says reveals understanding that is not so accurate; however, the interviewee did not go back to the book to make sure his/her observation was right.

In short, the respondents did not reveal intimacy with the picture book. They even question the possibility of reading images, indicating the need for mediating actions that would help them become autonomous readers when building meaning out of images.

### Getting to know *Um jardim e poesia*

*Jardim de menino poeta* (2012), written by Maria Valéria Rezende and illustrated by Maurício Veneza, is a 32-page book that is 28x21 cm large. As for the interaction with this book, the interviewees did the reading

in a serious and silent way, only one subject smiled in some verses. Soon after reading it individually, they were asked about the category it belongs to, and one participant reported that it was a rhyming book. Most of the children talked a little about what they read and only one didn't say a word about it. Everyone classified it as a book of poems or poetry and said they had already read a book of poems, but not like this one.

Concerning what had called their attention the most, the children indicated the colors of the illustrations:

A1 - That part when she's looking at the water and then a fish eats something, something like that.

A2 - There are only some realities and some that are not. As when they say that if you put your finger in the water of the sleepy blue butterfly, you get the theory of the blue, that doesn't happen. And then they say that when the sky star falls onto the sand, the starfish goes up to the sky, this is not reality either.

A3 - The pictures. It seems they were glued here like this.

A4 - That sometimes he said that poetry was a lie, but sometimes it was true. He could make rhymes like this.

Based on the children's voice, this reading did not generate any feelings or specific sensations. Only one child indicated that the book had brought him happiness and another one mentioned joy. Regarding the composition of the cover, most of them reported that it is in line with the theme of the poems:

A1 - The title calls the attention a lot because *Jardim de menino poeta*, you can already see that it is a garden and you want to know what is written and so on. And the cover is very beautiful, it has several details. This calls the attention too.

A2 - I liked it! Because it's about a poet boy, so he talks about his garden through a poem. It's very cool! And the drawings too! I liked them!

A3 - Before I started reading, it didn't make much of a sense, but as I started reading the book, I realized it's a poetry book. I thought it was just the title really. I expected the boy to be in a garden, but he was at the beach. It didn't make so much sense. It looks like a child's drawing on the cover.

A4 - The title is interesting. I thought it was going to be a boy who had the talent of a great poet, but when I read it, it was different. I couldn't tell it was a poem book.

Most of the interviewees liked the illustrations and mentioned that the images help them understand the written text. One subject observed that the illustrations seem to be glued to the pages, another one said they have many details. One child noticed that the drawings have 'small lines': "I thought it was a little different because the drawing has traces, small traces in the middle, shaded ones" (Interviewee A5). The possible presence of recycled paper in the drawings and the fact that they look like cut fabric were identified by the children.

Regarding the type of paper used in the book, 8 children rated it as good, different from the paper of the other books they handled during the survey. One participant said he had nothing to complain about; another one explained that the page was soft, while another one described it as rough and easy to tear.

Six out of the 13 respondents commented that they would read the book again to better understand it, perhaps not the whole book, but some parts. The others reported that once was enough to understand it, ignoring the polysemic nature of the poems. One child declared: "Depending on the poetry. There are some words that are a little difficult to read, so I would read it as many times as needed to understand it" (Interviewee A3). Another student said: "If I had to make a summary, I'd read it more times to pay more attention. But I think once is fine" (Interviewee A7). The children's statements show that they do not establish a playful relation with the book. This may be due to the fact that it is difficult for the students to consider themselves as co-authors in the process of building children's poetry meaning. In this regard, Ramos and Panozzo (2004) alert that the presence of poetry in pedagogical practices experienced at school tend to be rather limited.

The participants, however, state that the book is easy to read, claiming that it has easy words and 'not so much reading', referring to the length of the poems. One subject said: "Easy, because it has all the words and so it is easier to understand the poem like this" (Interviewee A3). One child suggested that the book was a little difficult because there were words he/she did not understand. The word '*seixo*' (pebble) on page 16 (Rezende, 2012) was the word most often mentioned as being difficult to understand. But '*carambola*' (star fruit) (Rezende, 2012, p. 21), '*náufrago*' (castaway) (Rezende, 2012, p. 20), '*borborema*' (deserted place) (Rezende, 2012, p. 27), '*merendo*' (eat) (Rezende, 2012, p. 21) were also mentioned. One subject claimed (Interviewee A8) that the poem on page 23 - "One thing I envy / is the stork's beak ... / its kiss comes first"

(Rezende, 2012, p. 23) – made no sense; it was not possible to understand that the stork's kiss would arrive first. However, the other participants understood it, as they considered the length of the bird's beak.

Concerning what they liked the most in the book, 5 subjects cited some verses, others just said they liked the rhymes and the drawings. The poems indicated by the children were those on page 11, 17, 23 (quoted above) and 25: "Flying makes it tired/ the duck has taken a vacation / now dances [...]" (Rezende, 2012, p. 11); "The August wind / deviates my goal kick. / what a pity!" (Rezende, 2012, p. 17) and "That swan doesn't even know / that we think it is / a lot prettier than the goose" (Rezende, 2012, p. 25).

From the interaction with the children, it can be deduced that, in general, they recognize the poem, claiming the presence of rhymes as a characteristic. No participant, however, cited vagueness, symbolism or sonority as features of this genre. Possibly, the subjects have not yet been allowed by the school to act on the poetic text, since "[...] in poetry, the imagination is at play, not the rationality, and in the field of the imagination the limits are wide" (Ramos, 2010, p. 48).

According to the respondents, since it is a book in verse, with little verbal text and with illustrations for each of the poems, it becomes easy to read. Some words were brought because the subjects did not understand their meaning, showing that the children's repertoire was restricted, but that a text with unfamiliar words could broaden it if unknown terms were explored.

Finally, the difficulty in understanding some of the poems is possibly due to the difficulty children have in placing themselves as co-authors. The interviewees couldn't act on the poetic images, on the poems' silences and no relation to Henriqueta Lisboa's *O menino poeta* (2008) was pointed out. Summing up, the teacher or a more experienced reader needs to intervene in the formation of this reader, aiming at literary education.

## Final considerations

The interviewees' first comments about reading and the type of books they enjoy indicate that the children read some kind of book or textual genre; however, the chosen genres are not always according to what the school classifies as ideal reading and may not be according to the classroom *praxis*, which advocates didactic action of reading practices. In other words, the reading of books, sometimes becomes an excuse for other activities, generating rejection of literary reading by the students.

Children literature readers are able to read and understand books of different genres, such as prose and picture books, and to retell the story, paraphrasing it and pointing out key points. They also identify intertextual aspects of the text due to previous readings. However, the book in verse proved to be more difficult for respondents. The meaning that the readers build is based on their repertoire and probably these students are not introduced to this genre in educational practices. The poetic text that was read in this investigation is more schematic than the books which show explicit narrative thread thus, favoring the implementation of the discursive proposal presented. In poetry, the schematic feature of the text and its inherent extent usually make the discursive proposal more demanding for the child reader. The children's voices indicate that the interaction with the poetry book tends to demand more from the reader, which emphasises the need for intentional mediation when dealing with this genre, especially in the school environment.

The paratexts of these books were not considered by the children, although they state that it is important to know their authors and illustrators. This data points out, once again, that students should be taught about the book's structure and, consequently, about the importance of the information that is part of it.

The interviews indicate that the readers, although being children, are attentive and demanding, and that they perceive, for example, color differences in the pages inside the book as compared to the cover, as in *Chapeuzinho Redondo* (Pennart, 2012). They also notice the quality of the paper used in the books, pointing out, based on the density, whether they are good to handle and whether they can be easily torn.

Regarding the picture book, one participant indicated that the book was not to be read, suggesting, again, the need for mediation and training on literary reading in the context of the narrative with images. Picture books have text, which is visual, and visuality needs to have meaning. This respondent considers reading only as understanding the verbal code. Furthermore, there were participants who proposed that books which have no words are difficult to read, because it is necessary to think to be able to understand the illustrations and to relate them to one another, emphasizing, once again, the need for reading mediation.

This study shows several times the need for teacher mediation. Besides not understanding paratextual elements, some students do not understand visuality as a code to be read. Students very often do not

understand certain words from the text and, although they emphasize that they look them up at the dictionary, ask more experienced readers or search the internet, few of them in fact do it, ignoring the meanings constructed for the comprehension of the book they read.

In general, the books selected in this study pleased the respondents. This evidences that the School Library National Program - PNBE (2014) would achieve its goal in promoting reading practices, as it favors the inclusion of students in literate culture, broadens their repertoire in the literate world and allows for their appropriation of literary reading. Therefore, the School Library National Program (PNBE) (2014) was beginning to achieve its purpose as a public reading policy, although it still lacked the direct or indirect partnership of educators (teacher, librarian, pedagogical advisor, management team, and education secretary managers).

This study also reveals that the child reader reads different genre literary books and builds meanings through their experiences. However, the data discussed here indicates that the existence of public policies and programs such as the School Library National Program - PNBE (2014) is important. The books selected by the Program contributed to broaden the students' repertoire and allowed reading to take place as an autonomous student action, respecting the nature of this symbolic language.

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## NOTE:

We herewith declare that the authors Flávia Brocchetto Ramos and Melina Sauer Giacomini were responsible for the conception, analyses and interpretation of the data as well as for the writing and critical review of the manuscript content and for the approval of the final version to be published.