

Literary links; between narrative, childhood and emotions

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“Listening to a story is an experience that can reach the soul and can be learned from, especially if the narrator does not use the story as a didactic tool, but as a work of art given to the listener”.
(Martínez, Eva. 2017, p. 31)

A clear memory of my childhood is the moment when my mother told me a bedtime story; the same one every night, because it was the text that I asked for over and over again. A simple story, with which I felt identified, the one that caused me some emotion. I had not experienced the story told, but coincided with the emotionality of the main character, the fear of abandonment, the desire to be free and the sadness that caused her to disobey her mother and father.

In the same way that occurs in the movie *Inside Out* (Pixar Animation Studios, 2015), emotions are in our central nervous system ready to react to certain situations, events or circumstances. Happiness, love, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust and fear are basic emotions that we can easily recognize in a story, internalize its main plot, empathize and identify with some of its characters, understand or talk about the thematic knot.

When we listen to a narrative, be it reality or fantasy, we can empathize with it from our life story, that is, we identify with what makes sense to us internally, the same happens with movies, series or songs on some occasions. Our favorite stories always talk about us, they represent our inner world, our emotions, experiences or deep ties. Sometimes, these stories allow us to understand each other and at the same time feel emotionally understood, -so I am not alone in this, nor do I feel alone-, because some character also lived or felt it with the same intensity.

Children's stories, novels or books in general connect us with our emotions, something happens to us internally when we feel Gabriela Mistral's love letters, enjoy Isabel Allende's novels or we read a text related to professional performance, of what we are passionate about. In such a way that a story can move us, we can make the most of it or we may not be able to "get hooked by its story."

As mentioned in the Curricular Bases of Early Childhood Education (hereinafter BCEP):

"Artistic languages constitute privileged instruments to externalize emotional experiences, develop creative thinking and enjoy cultural and artistic manifestations(MINEDUC, 2018, p.74)

The same happens with childhood, literary texts provoke multiple feelings and emotions in girls and boys, who identify, are disinterested or interested in their plots or feel joy, sadness, fear, anger or frustration towards any of the characters. It is evident that something will resonate internally and this something allows the adult to be very significant when mediating with the book, the object, with the words, the sound, the emotion.

Currently, the "way" of telling stories is being sought, the recipe to mediate that significant experience for the girl and the boy: the "way" is in each person, in their own childhood, in their own ways of enjoying themselves, its significance is about allowing the other to feel identified, contained, accompanied by/during the story.

The best experience for girls and boys is in the rescue of their interests, it is in offering a variety of stories and ways of telling them, generating an agreeable, pleasant and respectful environment towards literature. How many adults nowadays do not like to read because of bad experiences during their childhood? For these reasons, the BCEPs state:

The periodic telling of stories selected according to their literary value and children's interests is a good opportunity to meet, listen carefully, comment and promote motivation for reading. Likewise, it is valuable to encourage strategies such as "reading walks" through strolls and visits in which they have contact with written messages. (MINEDUC, 2018, p. 69)



The story as an experience of enjoyment that integrates the word, space and emotional containment.

Why do we tell stories? Many times in educational institutions we see the story as a moment of transition, while waiting for lunch, the next learning experience or when they come to pick up the girls and boys. Supervising students in practice I have had to experience narrative constructions with little significance, readings without logical order or interrupted by some unexpected event, with spaces and locations that are not very appropriate for concentration, conditions which obviously prevent the understanding and enjoyment of the story. From this perspective, it is understood that "A narrative is a work of art, the greatest service it can bring to the boy [and the girl] resides in its call to the eternal feeling of beauty" (Cone, 1995, p. 20)

In this sense, the BCEP (2018) propose Learning Objectives linked to pleasure or enjoyment, so that girls and boys can listen, manipulate or experiment freely, where it is unnecessary to limit literary texts to a teaching practice, methodology or a concrete moral since:

**"It is necessary to incorporate mediation strategies that enable toddlers to explore, discover, experience sensually, with everyday, simple and attractive resources that cause surprise and amazement".
(MINEDUC, 2018, p.75)**

Thus, with simple elements we can create stories for girls and boys, from a piece of cloth that turns into a bird, playing with the sounds caused by the materials in the room or home, finding characters in pencils, spoons, pans and boxes, among others.

Consequently, the story shelters us, transports us to imaginary worlds. Therefore, the invitation is to generate quality spaces for girls and boys during the moment of the story; just like us looking for a comfortable place to read. A place where we combine the sensory, the temperature, the smells and the silences. It is essential to offer suitable, loving and warm environments for reading, in light of the principles of well-being, uniqueness, meaning and identity distinguished in the current curricular framework.

**The stories should not serve to give lessons, they are not born of a didactic purpose, but their value resides in everything that they reflect on human complexity and that when heard or read resonate with something much deeper.
(Martínez, 2017, p.35).**



Artistic experiences linked to literature



A few days ago, while talking with other early-years educators, the reflection about whether children's literature should be called "children's" appeared. Why are texts infantilized? Is it possible to read a poem by Gabriela Mistral or an extract from a novel to girls and boys in order to inquire into their feelings, emotions and ideas? Why should we limit ourselves to reading children's texts? Is a verse very complex for childhood? Such as:

"If you do not love, you will not know the universe, because the tree, the sea and the night are not understood except by the lover" (Mistral, 2017, p. 17).



We must offer multiple learning experiences at this stage of life, which implies addressing all types of texts. For example, from a poem we can generate artistic experiences for girls and boys, from the observation of images, a melody accompanied by reading or a corporal interpretation, among others. Where being the protagonist or spectator during the narrative construction is played indiscriminately. Different ways of telling and expressing can be born from a story; reading, kamishibai, shadow theater, acting or oral narration. Various experiences that are born from the story and that can generate a significant aesthetic experience. As mentioned by the BCEP (2018), creating a simple story with puppets or various elements can be both a game and an occasion for theatrical expression.

The right to hear stories; literature and emotions

Telling a story out loud is a gift, an act of love, an experience that links and nurtures. Everything else, if given, is a precious tip. (Martínez, 2017, p.36)

In the workshops I do on how to tell stories, I always start by saying that we all know how to tell, the form is what differentiates us. I begin by asking them about their childhood, since I believe that there are the key answers on how to share a story. What stories did you like them to tell you? How did you like to listen? Did you like to be looked at? What were the pauses and voice changes like? Before being read or narrated, the story must pass through our souls and through the memories of our childhood, as Eva Martínez (2017) mentions, telling a story is an act of love and every experience linked to it must be born from love.

Stories take us to imaginary worlds that - somehow come close to our reality - since everyone at some point in our lives recognized ourselves as a character or we saw ourselves reflected in their values and emotions. This is, in the jealousy of Cinderella's stepsisters, in the anger of some of Snow White dwarfs, in the fear of Hansel and Gretel, in Pinocchio's way of lying, in the disobedience of Little Red Riding Hood and so on with various characters.

Each boy or girl, within their identity experiences, will have a different encounter with each story told, it is difficult to predict if a story will teach them this or that subject or if they will learn certain concepts, we must read a book or tell a story as a gift, accepting the different ways of receiving it. In this regard, Eva Martínez mentions:

Under the skin of the evil wolf there is something that belongs to us all, a powerful force capable of transforming us forever, a hidden piece of ourselves. (2017, p.46)

Loris Malaguzzi (2005) tells us in his poem of the hundred languages that girls and boys have 100 ways of expressing, 100 ways of listening, surprising and loving-, but the adult world takes away 99. As adults and adults we must be guarantors of the rights of girls and boys, which means safeguarding Human Rights and the Rights of the Child. Which are related to culture, aesthetics, imagination, creation and listening to stories.



The perfect book

On many occasions, we are asked what is the perfect book to work on an emotion? Who are the best authors and publishers? Which is the appropriate book for each age or which one helps with toilet training or facing grief? The perfect book does not exist because its excellence and grace is given by the experience between the reader and the text. As mentioned by the Center for the Study and Promotion of Children's and Young People's Books: Which book? For what age?

Experiences with groups of boys [and girls] tell us that there are notable differences between the children. At the same age, there are differences in their interests, skills and reading experiences that are related to personality, taste, environment and other factors. (1999, p.3)

Therefore, as adults responsible for the existential and emotional well-being of girls and boys, we must offer them a diversity of literary or narrative proposals, being observant of their expectations, needs and interests.

I enjoy going to bookstores just to look at the children's literature section, I know that at some point I will find a book that I love because of its story, illustration or form. Finding the perfect book for me goes beyond those recommended by the authors, it is that love at first sight between the book and me, that invites me to look for ways to tell it. If we make an act of love, let it be from the love that is felt for it.

Literary links

Mar Benegas (2013) points out in her workshops that the first thing a baby hears is a poem, the palpitations in the mother's womb are the first rhymes and from there we create a link with literature, words, voices, prose. So the first readings are sensory, starting with

our own body and the baby's body, where hugs, gestures, facial expressions, melodies, rhymes and words predominate. In this sense, Yolanda Reyes (2014) points out "Babies read with their ears, with their skin and their heart; and adults are for him or her bodies that sing and write the most endearing and meaningful poetry in their memory"(p.3).

We prepare a comfortable space for girls, boys and their families, where everyone can see the book, the adult who narrates and the objects that accompany the reading or narration. There are several factors that are considered when telling stories; the tone of voice, the visual contact that is generated with the spectators, the pauses and silences, playing with the voices and their volume or the body movements. Telling a story to the girls and boys is playing with expression, creativity and enjoyment.

If I remember my first narrative experiences, I take a trip back to my childhood, I see my cousins gathered in a circle, listening to the stories that one of our uncles told us. It was a ritual at every family party, asking him to tell us stories, sometimes in his room, other times on top of a truck, the

narratives always had something of suspense, something that caught our attention.

As time passed I began to appreciate family stories, I remember enjoying the childhood memories of my grandfather and how he met my grandmother. In my classroom experience, being an educator of girls and boys from 3 to 5 years old, I observed how the most significant stories for them and them were those of their own lives. So we asked the families to write a book with their family history that we then read with all the girls and boys. This experience was very enriching because they were the protagonists of a fantasy and real story at the same time. As Xavier Guix (2009) mentions, we are narrative beings and we need to relate our experiences, anecdotes and adventures so that they regain their meaning.



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