ON THE USE OF CHILDREN’S LITERATURE IN FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: TEACHING CHILDREN IN AN EXOLINGUE CONTEXT

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Abstract: This article aims to identify literary texts that may be used in the teaching of the French language to children in an exolingue context. The research was developed in three axes. The first concerned a bibliographic study following Poslaniec (2002), Vanthier (2009), Sumiya, Gotti and Rochebois (2013), Rocha (2007), Silva (2013) and Pinheiro-Mariz (2007), attempting to deepen our knowledge of the theme under investigation. The second axis consisted of an exploratory documentary research, which sought to identify literary texts for the teaching of the French language to children. Finally, the last phase of the research shed light on elements of the literary aesthetics in the selected texts. Through this research, we have identified ten literary texts that could contribute not only to literary reading enjoyment, but also to a better development of the child. The results have proved that a literary text can be an important component/auxiliary in the teaching-learning process of French as a Foreign Language (FLE), allowing the FLE teacher to present the French language to the students in a pleasant way.

Keywords: Literary reading; enjoyment; FLE; children.

SOBRE LITERATURA INFANO-JUVENIL NO ENSINO DA LÍNGUA FRANCESA PARA CRIANÇAS EM CONTEXTO EXOLINGUE

Resumo: O presente artigo tem como objetivo geral identificar textos literários que podem ser abordados no ensino de língua francesa para crianças em um contexto exolíngue. A pesquisa foi realizada por meio de três eixos. O primeiro diz respeito ao estudo bibliográfico em que autores/pesquisadores como Poslaniec (2002), Vanthier (2009), Sumiya, Gotti e Rochebois (2013), Rocha (2007), Silva (2013), Pinheiro-Mariz (2015) foram necessários para nosso aprofundamento do tema estudado. O segundo eixo consistiu-se em uma pesquisa documental exploratória que buscou identificar textos literários para o ensino de língua francesa para crianças; e, por fim, o terceiro momento da pesquisa apontou elementos da estética literária nos textos seleccionados. Assim, através desta investigação, identificamos dez textos literários que podem contribuir para uma leitura-literária-fruição, além de um melhor desenvolvimento da criança na sua integralidade. Os resultados evidenciam que o texto literário pode ser um importante componente/auxiliar no processo de ensino-aprendizagem do Francês como Língua Estrangeira (FLE) e, através dele, o professor de FLE pode levar os seus aprendizes à língua francesa de uma forma prazerosa.

Palavras-chave: Leitura literária; Fruição; FLE para crianças.

1. INTRODUCTION

The growing need to learn a foreign language since childhood has been proved by various researches recently (ROCHA; TONELLI; SILVA, 2010; ARAÚJO; COSTA, 2016; LIRA; PINHEIRO-MARIZ, 2016). We have observed that textbooks for children between four and
eight years old contain few literary texts despite the importance of reading enjoyment for their development (SILVA; PINHEIRO-MARIZ, 2013). This finding has awakened us to the interest of identifying literary texts that assist the French as a Foreign Language (FLE) teacher in the process towards the little apprentice’s full development. In this sense, this research has been guided by the following questions: Which French-language literary texts may be more appropriate for children in early childhood and in the learning phase of FLE? Which literary genres are more appropriate to be inserted into this learning context: tales, poems, others? In order to answer such questions, we have developed a qualitative documentary research in light of the need to take into consideration the nature of the phenomenon investigated (MOREIRA; CALEFFE, 2008).

In addition to these research questions, the main objective of this study has been to identify literary texts that may be utilized in the teaching of the French language to children in an exolingue context, that is, in a country where the language studied is not the mother tongue. To reach this goal, we have aimed to: analyze the various literary texts addressed to children so as to identify those characteristics that stimulate the pleasure literary reading enjoyment. Also, ascertain and analyze which literary genres are more appropriate for children between four and eight years old. Catalog the literary texts that enable the teaching of language together with literature in order to favor the non-dissociation between then. Compile the literary texts which, according to theoretical foundations, better enable literary reading as an enjoyable experience and, consequently, the child’s development. This research has not only contributed to the aforementioned studies on the effectiveness of foreign language teaching for children, but also stressed the importance of understanding language and literature as complementary and essential domains for the expansion of the universe of any human being, regardless of the stage of life.

It is worth noting that teachers often meet the challenge of awakening in the learner a spontaneous desire to read literary works, be it in their mother tongue or in a foreign language. In this sense, by reflecting on how they teach literature, Poslaniec (2002) claims that teaching continues aligned to old means, but those practical solutions were already achieved by some researchers.

The relevance of this research has arisen from such a necessary rupture as well as from the fact that investigations in this area are still insufficient. We have also intended to supply materials that support FLE teachers and thus contribute to a better teaching-
learning experience, especially for children who, due to their lack of concentration, demand more elaborated activities. In this regard, learning a foreign language in childhood enables the discovery of a new world, new cultures and ways of thinking, thus motivating the children's imaginary.

2. METHODS

Our research is based on the paradigm of qualitative researches, since the nature of the phenomenon investigated was our focus (MOREIRA; CALEFFE, 2008) as we identified the literary texts that best fit the teaching of FLE for children in an exolingue space. Given the need for an evaluative analysis, we have sought anchorage in the established standards for qualitative research and adjusted the techniques to this type of research. Besides, this is also an exploratory documentary research since we have investigated the specificities of literary texts by focusing on the elements that favor literary reading enjoyment by the young audience.

The research has been carried out through three axes. The initial axis consisted of a bibliographical study on the use of literature as an effective way in the teaching / learning process of FLE, following Poslaniec (2002), Vanthier (2009), Sumiya, Gotti and Rochebois (2013), Rocha (2007), Silva (2013), Pinheiro-Mariz (2007) and Oliveira (2011).

This first phase of the research has led us to reflect on several aspects concerning the teaching of French for children and the challenges encountered by teachers, more specifically in the case of FLE teaching. In light of this assertion, we understand that "the role of teachers is also vital for the learner to feel (or not) motivated to learn a new language."3 (ROCHA, 2007, p.291). Despite the difficulties in awakening a "spontaneous" desire to read French literature, it is necessary that teachers carefully select adequate texts to arouse the learner’s interest and facilitate a better learning experience by pre-established objective(s). Therefore, they play a fundamental role in fostering the process of learning a new language.

In general, children in early childhood have neither learned how to read nor write, even in their mother tongue and in such cases, it is up to the teacher to engage them in "story-telling." According to Vanthier (2009), "the stories give pleasure to children, they help

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3"o papel do professor é também vital para que o aprendiz sinta-se (ou não) motivado a aprender uma nova língua". (ROCHA, 2007, p. 291). We have translated this and all other quotes in this paper, unless otherwise stated.
them grow"⁴. Therefore, given children’s fondness to listen to stories, it is essential that teachers make the choices appropriately and tell the stories in an attractive way and be attentive to their intonation. Assuming that the child has an imaginative predisposition, the literary text is a strong auxiliary in the development of the capacity of "traveling" without leaving the place, as Silva (2013) points out.

Representative images begin to surface in the child's mind from the early childhood period, which ranges from zero to six years old. These images have a direct influence on the development of the child's character, since they constitute the way in which the individual conceives the world around him/her, his/her first perceptions and interactional contacts with society. Such images are the first symbolic expressions of representative thought (SILVA, 2013, p. 123).⁵

To help children develop such an imaginative capacity and understand the literary text in a foreign language, FLE teachers can find in the images an aid that can / should be used to draw the student’s attention. While listening to a story, children acquire experiences with the language, and while observing the images they find a source of pleasure, as Vanthier (2009) suggests:

> Through reading stories, one has the opportunity to play with fiction, to store images through which a linguistic and cultural memory is built. The children’s literature is a field where the child meets the other, around the book, through the sharing of fictitious references which are crimped, weaving an intertextual network from one language to another and from one culture to the other⁶. (VANTHIER, 2009, p. 61)

Images similarly help children to attribute meaning to the text, making it easier for their access to the target language. The topic addressed in the stories should also be chosen carefully, since stories that deal with topics of their interest (either because they identify themselves with the text or recognize their own desires and feelings), whether of fiction or everyday situations, tend to catch their attention.

According to Poslaniec (2002), the aim of teachers is, on the one hand, to teach children how to read and, on the other hand, to be able to say something about the text they have

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⁴ “les histoires plaisent aux enfants, elles les aident à grandir.” (VANTHIER, 2009, p. 61).
⁵ As imagens representativas começam a aflorar na mente da criança a partir do período da primeira infância, que compreende a faixa etária de zero aos seis anos. Essas imagens exercem influência direta na formação do caráter do indivíduo, pois são elas que vão constituindo o modo como ele concebe o mundo ao seu redor, as suas primeiras percepções e contatos interacionais com a sociedade; tais imagens são as primeiras expressões simbólicas do pensamento representativo (SILVA, 2013, p. 123)
⁶ À travers les lectures d’histoires, il a la possibilité de jouer avec la fiction, de stocker des images à travers lesquelles il se construit une mémoire linguistique et culturelle. La littérature de jeneusse constitue un terrain où l’enfant rencontre l’autre, autour du livre, à travers le partage de références fictionnelles qui s’encroistent, tissant ainsi un réseau intertextuel d’une langue à l’autre et d’une culture à l’autre (VANTHIER, 2009, p. 61).
read. In order to make children talk about the text, teachers must guide them according to the objective, that is, what s/he exactly wants them to say. Then, starting from this objective they must develop playful activities to engage children in an enjoyable process of FLE learning. Through an immersive methodology, as pointed out by Silva (2013), the child is led to an awakening to language.

To teach children how to read it is important to present books/texts that please them. In this process, teachers should not distinguish between what is literature and what is not. By discussing the teaching of literature and the choice of works, Rouxel (2013) makes three reflections which could guide the teacher’s decision. The first one concerns presenting to the students the diversity of genres, considering both the traditional and the contemporary ones. The second reflection refers to proposing works that not only develop the taste for reading, but also provide the identity construction of the reader and the enrichment of his/her personality. Finally, the last reflection regards observing the degree of difficulty of the proposed work. It is important, too, that the level of reading/comprehension increase gradually so that children feel challenged to discover the new and advance towards FLE learning. However, in order not to leave the "classic text" aside, there is the option of adjusting it to the child’s reality. There already exist many works adapted for different levels of language proficiency and ages, while there are others which could still be adapted by the teacher. Nevertheless, though quite playful, the texts presented should neither be "shallow" nor lack connection to children’s lives, but rather consist of several characters and situations which in turn will trigger their interest for discoveries. In this sense, taking the learner’s background knowledge into consideration may help him/her better understand the text s/he is reading or listening to.

Another important point about literary texts is that the whole, and not isolated parts thereof, should be used in class, as Pinheiro-Mariz (2007) suggests. The researcher claims that it is commonplace to find texts excerpts in didactic books for foreign languages teaching, which thus divert the work from its context and empty up its senses. Therefore, an effective alternative for the FLE teacher in classes for children is to use short texts in full.

This teaching/learning experience, teeming with challenges, discoveries, imaginary development and playful activities, could even be more effective when associated with the practice of literary reading, since “literature in much resembles the imaginary universe of
the child; therefore, such an imaginary can be led to perceive the reality-referring elements through literary reading\(^7\) (SILVA, 2013, p. 128-129). From this perspective, a literary text stimulates the thought/imaginary of children by presenting fictional stories – through which they make symbolic representations of the reality – set in different times and countries. These young learners are introduced to different cultures, situations, peoples and ways of thinking, in addition to discovering and building their identity through the identification or non-identification with the characters.

Teaching French should not be reduced to a simple linguistic initiation. Learning a foreign language can contribute to the struggle against ethnocentrism, sociocentrism and egocentrism. The child may come to understand that the culture into which s/he is inserted is not the only one in the world, that one culture is not better than another since each one has its own history, its own values and its principles. [...] (SUMIYA; GOTTI; ROCHEBOIS, 2013, p.344).\(^8\)

Thinking about the issues raised in the reflections of Sumiya, Gotti and Rochebois (2013) may be a determining path for the reading development of the young apprentice, especially considering the cultures involved in such a learning experience (i.e. the child’s and the other’s).

In parallel with the first stage and continuing with the investigation, we identified the literary genres which are mostly utilized with children between four and eight years old and which figure in both literary anthologies and other media, such as books and internet. After that, we analyzed the works that best foster literary reading enjoyment by drawing on theoretical concepts previously discussed.

The second axis of the research consisted of the analysis of the works as an attempt to propose an approach for the use of literature in FLE teaching. Therefore, we have answered our first research question: which French-language literary texts may best suit children in early childhood and in the learning phase of FLE?

Finally, in the third axis we have identified and compiled the texts, as well as classified them according to their genre. In this process, we also added comments so as to justify

\(^7\) “... a literatura em muito se assemelha ao universo imaginário da criança, e, portanto, o imaginário infantil pode ser conduzido a perceber os elementos referentes à realidade, através da leitura literária” (SILVA, 2013, p. 128-129).

\(^8\) O ensino de língua francesa não deve ser reduzido a uma simples iniciação linguística. Aprender uma língua estrangeira pode contribuir para a luta contra o etnocentrismo, sociocentrismo e egocentrismo. A criança pode passar a entender que a cultura em que está inserida não é a única maneira de se viver, que não existe uma melhor no mundo e que cada uma tem sua própria história, seus próprios valores, seus princípios. [...] (SUMIYA, GOTTI; ROCHEBOIS, 2013, p. 344).
the choice of the texts as elements that promote literary fruition enjoyment in the FLE teaching context. As a result, we have answered another research question: which literary genres are more appropriate to be inserted into this learning context: tales, poems, others?

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through our exploratory documentary research, we have identified and analyzed ten literary texts. The choice of the texts has been made based on other scholarly studies, which stressed characteristics that literary texts must present to facilitate understanding and arouse children’s interest. We later divided the texts into genres and three categories of analysis, namely: presentation of images; short texts that can be utilized in class in full; possibility of tackling interculturality in FLE context.

Let's look at this division more clearly in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Category of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les animaux ont du souci</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Images / Short text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanson des oiseaux</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Images / Short text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’enfant serpent</td>
<td>Tale</td>
<td>Images / Short text /Interculturality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le garçon aux grandes oreilles</td>
<td>Tale</td>
<td>Images / Short text /Interculturality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le garçon aux grandes oreilles</td>
<td>Tale</td>
<td>Images / Short text /Interculturality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le corbeau et le renard</td>
<td>Fable</td>
<td>Images / Short text</td>
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<tr>
<td>La cigale et la fourmi</td>
<td>Fable</td>
<td>Images / Short text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le grand livre des contes de la ferme</td>
<td>Book of tales</td>
<td>Images / Short text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maman sera ravie</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>Images / Short text /Interculturality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le petit prince</td>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>Images / Short text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tintin au Congo</td>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>Images / Short text /Interculturality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: solely designed by the authors for the purposes of this research

Concerning the first category on the "presentation of images", we have realized that all the texts selected contain images. As previously discussed, Silva (2013) and Vanthier (2009) stress the importance of having images lead young readers to a source of pleasure and attribute meaning to the text. They also facilitate comprehension, develop the children’s
imaginary capacity and provoke learners’ interest not only in such texts, but also in literary reading as a whole.

Regarding the second category of analysis, "short texts", we have observed that it fits all our data. As pointed out by Pinheiro-Mariz (2007), it is important to utilize the full text and not excerpts thereof, since partial extracts restrict the meaning and overlook the text’s originating context. In addition, four of such texts likewise allow the teacher to work on (inter)cultural issues through the stories, since they present characters from several backgrounds who live in different societies and, consequently, have particular customs and habits. Such findings are supported by Santos (2014, p.4), who asserts that literature is the translation of how the reality of a certain society works, which seeks "to overcome, among other things, the propagation of stereotypes, opinions about a reality."9 The author further claims that interculturality develops an educational inclusive process and makes learners aware of their relationship with differences.

Literature is a relevant variable in the language-culture relationship and "implies a form of resource for teaching, since it introduces another world, while grammar, in the sense of syntax, does not provide the means for a semantic understanding of reality"10 (SANTOS, 2014, p.5). Therefore, the texts listed in Table 1 and included in this category could serve as a way to lead the student to a new perception of the world and to discover the world of the other so as to better understand his/her own.

The two poems listed in Table 1 have been extracted from free-access, interactive and playful website www.takatrouver.net. The FLE teacher will find texts by various authors and genres to be used for developing different skills and expanding students’ vocabulary. In addition, the website features various exercise tips and educational games that may facilitate children's learning in a playful and engaging way. The first poem, entitled Les animaux ont du souci, by Jacques Prévert, can be found in a music format on

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9"... de modo a superar, dentre outros, a propagação de estereótipos, opiniões acerca de uma realidade". (SANTOS, 2014, p. 4)
10"... implica em uma forma de recurso para o ensino, no sentido de apresentar outro mundo, pois a gramática, no sentido da sintaxe, não oferece os meios para uma compreensão semântica da realidade" (SANTOS, 2014, p. 5).
www.youtube.com, which is another internet aid that helps children memorize vocabulary more easily. Lastly, the second poem of our data is *Song of the birds*[^11], by Victor Hugo.

Poems are subjective and their understanding depends on the perception of those who read them. Children's poetry, specifically, "is structured in such a way that it does not fit with the conventional solutions of the language and, fundamentally, does not provide a habitual sense from where its character of discovery and presentation of new articulations is anchored"[^12] (CADEMARTORI, 2010). The author further states:

> The reading of poetic texts to children in the literacy phase not only brings them closer to the book as a source of knowledge and pleasure, but also plays a fundamental role in the surprise caused by the relationships established in the levels of composition and meaning (...). If these factors dimension the place of poetry at this stage of language development, others indicate the importance of children's history. (CADEMARTORI, 2010, p.60)[^13]

The third and fourth texts are short stories that have been taken from www.conte-moi.net. This website, like the previous one, is free and playful and therefore attractive for children, thus enabling the student and the teacher to access it as many times as they wish and then read the stories. In addition, each story has an audio version besides the written one which, when considering the child-apprentice, becomes even more interesting since children are still learning how to read and are much more motivated by sounds. The website presents texts originating from nine different Francophone countries, introducing the student to a broad view of the French language beyond France. The student thus has contact with different cultures and prepares himself/herself for the diversity of the world as a citizen. The first tale comes from Algeria and the second from Morocco, both written from the oral tradition.

[^11]: In french: *Chanson des oiseaux*.
[^12]: "... estrutura-se de modo a não se enquadrar com as soluções convencionais da língua e, fundamentalmente, não entrega um sentido habitual, de onde seu caráter de descoberta e de apresentação de novas articulações" (CADEMARTORI, 2010).
[^13]: A leitura de textos poéticos à criança em fase de alfabetização, não só a aproxima ao livro como fonte de conhecimento e prazer, como exerce papel fundamental a surpresa causada pelas relações que estabelece no plano da composição e do sentido. (...) Se esses fatores dimensionam o lugar da poesia nessa fase do desenvolvimento linguístico, outros indicam a importância da história infantil. (CADEMARTORI, 2010, p. 60)
The snake child\textsuperscript{14} tells the story of a woman who gave birth to an animal, a small serpent, and the parents agreed to keep him hidden at home. However, Samy, the serpent, wanted to live free like the other children and soon managed to prove to everyone that he could perform various activities like the other children at his age. This text allows the teacher to take the children to reflect on family values, bonds of friendship, respect and overcoming.

Originally from Morocco, The boy with big ears\textsuperscript{15} tells the story of a boy who had huge ears and so his father deprived him of public life for fear that he would be a laughingstock. The values of social equality and respect could be approached from this story through the exploration, for example, of the final discourse, in which the governor's son shows his father that it is necessary to have respect for the others, regardless of their physical or social differences. He also claims to be a creature of God and that his difference should not be a source of shame: “Je suis une créature de Dieu, je n'ai pas à rougir d'être différent des autres”. This outburst of the son, who could no longer bear to be deprived of living like any other boy, came when a barber, accused of having spread rumors about the boy’s large ears, went to the governor's house where he would be killed - it was a habit of the governor to kill those who told others about the size of his son's ears.

Building on the aforementioned tales, it is relevant to mention Léon’s (2004) discussion on short narratives. The author states that children's literature has its origins in popular tales and recalls that tales tend to build/establish the human being as a being of language and culture, for whom all survival activities (e.g. food, clothing, relationships with animals and plants) acquire imaginary and symbolic dimensions. (LÉON, 1994, \textit{apud} FARIA, 2004, p.24). For Léon (2004), tales are a special way in the making of the young reader, leading him/her to enjoy reading in the foreign language.

The fifth and sixth texts of our data are fables, a commonly used narrative genre in children pedagogy. They have been taken from \texttt{www.iletaitunehistoire.com}, but can easily be found on other websites and in books. Such a website offers the teacher several stories of various genres to be downloaded in PDF and MP3. The two fables have been written by La Fontaine, one of the best-known authors of this genre.

\textsuperscript{14} In french: \textit{L’enfant serpent}.

\textsuperscript{15} In french: \textit{Le garçon aux grandes oreilles}
The Fox and the Crow \textsuperscript{16} deals with the vanity of the raven that is fooled by the fox that praises it so as to take the cheese that it carries in the beak. The moral is that "every flatterer lives at the expense of the hearer." Through this fable, the FLE teacher may work on ethical issues that will help shape the character of children still under development. In addition, the second fable chosen could be explored in class, The grasshopper and the ant\textsuperscript{17}. The fable tells the story of a cicada that, having spent the whole summer singing, went without provisions when the cold winter wind came, having neither a bit of fly nor earthworm to eat. Then she turns to her neighbor ant and asks her to lend her some grains to survive until the arrival of the next season. However, the ant refuses to help her and says that she had spent the summer singing and should dance now.

Based on Todorov (1975), Oliveira (2011) endorses the fable as the closest genre to pure allegory. This allegory is the double-sense assertion in which the proper meaning completely disappears: "No one, when listening to the fable The fox and the grapes, will literally think of foxes or grapes, but in the sense behind the fable"\textsuperscript{18} (OLIVEIRA, 2011, p. 22, emphasis in the original). Such possibilities of interpreting beyond what is explicitly said in the text make us return to the considerations of Silva (2013), who stresses the

\textsuperscript{16} In french: Le Corbeau et le Renard

\textsuperscript{17} In french: La cigale et La fourmi

\textsuperscript{18} “Ninguém, ao ouvir a fábula ‘A raposa e as uvas’ vai pensar literalmente em raposas ou em uvas, mas no sentido que está por trás da fábula” (OLIVEIRA, 2011, p. 22, grifo da autora).
importance of the development of the child’s imaginary universe, having the fable as the propitious genre for this process.

In *The grasshopper and the ant*, there are at least two questions to be worked on in FLE class aimed at the development of children. The first one is the fact that life is not made just for fun and games. Everyone has responsibilities (some more than others) and that we should, in a certain way, be concerned about the future. We could thus awaken in the child the desire to study by stressing its importance for his/her future life. The second question concerns the attitude of the ant that refused to help her neighbor. We can lead children to reflect on such an attitude by questioning, for instance, whether such an attitude was correct or not, and what their attitude towards the cicada’s request would have been if they were the ant, etc. Furthermore, *The grasshopper and the ant* also presents some (bad) characteristics of the human being, such as imprudence and avarice, which can serve as parameters for reflections on human values. Still with regard to such a genre, La Fontaine (apud OLIVEIRA, 2013, p. 28) states: “Fables are not what they seem to be for the animals teach us how to live. Direct advice sometimes annoys the reader, but in the bosom of fables, their strength grows. To entertain by instructing is the goal of such stories. Telling stories for the sake of telling only seems ineffective.”

The fable, as any other literary text, is an inexhaustible source of wisdom, teaching and pleasure that must be told not only for the sake of telling, but to bring reflections about its teachings. In addition, both fables discussed here are translated into Portuguese and may also be found in different versions. They can be used as an extra aid to the understanding of such texts, given that children are probably already familiar with these stories in their mother tongue. We thus believe that the children’s mother tongue could serve as a support for their foreign language development.

Furthermore, we have also encountered and analyzed Heather Amery's book entitled "*The big book of the tales of the farm"*, which is composed of sixteen short stories in French for children. All the tales tell stories set on the farm of the *Pommiers* family. It is noteworthy

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19“As fábulas não são o que parecem ser; nelas, os animais ensinam a viver. Um conselho direto, às vezes aborrece, mas, no bojo das fábulas, sua força cresce. Divertir instruindo é meta destes contos. Contar só por contar me parece pouco eficaz”. (LA FONTAINE apud OLIVEIRA, 2013, p. 28).
20 In french: *Le grand livre des contes de la ferme*
that the book presents a "note for parents" in which the author states that the stories have been written so that readers can read them without difficulty. Amery (2002) further advises:

To help your child, first read the story out loud and comment on the pictures with him. Then encourage him to read the short text that is at the top of each page and read the longer text under the illustration. This "each one in turn" reading gives children confidence and stimulates them. They will be happy to discover that they can read the story on their own. (AMERY, 2002)

As observed in this quotation, the very idea proposed by the book is to encourage the children's learning of written comprehension as well as be independent and able to read stories on their own. This may be done in a pleasant way through the use of simple and illustrated texts, since illustrations give meaning to words and help children understand the text. In "The big book of the tales of the farm", the narratives present different stories featuring the same characters - the owners of the farm - and distinct animals that live there, which allows the child to be affectively involved with them and interested in learning more about the Pommiers family and their animals.

Mom will be delighted, the next selected text, has been written by Christian Lamblin and illustrated by Sébastien Mourrain. It tells the story of a boy named Oma, who lives in the middle of the desert. One day he finds a seed and decides to plant it. However, as it hardly rains in the desert, he has to water it every day. A beautiful flower later grows and he decides to give it to his mother. However, one day he was going to water it and, on the way, he met several friends who complained of being thirsty and asked for some of his water. When Oma finally arrives where his flower is planted, he realizes that there is no more water in his bottle. It is then that the flower withers and Oma becomes sad because he can no longer gift his mother. Oma, his friend Ali and some animals then begin to cry around the flower, bringing it to life after it drank all the tears. Oma can finally take the flower to his mother, who becomes very happy. We understand that this is a text that helps the teacher and the student in the process of teaching/learning since it tells the story of

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21 Pour aider votre enfant, lisez d’abord l’histoire à haute voix et commentez les images avec lui. Puis encouragez-le à lire le texte court et simple qui se trouve en haut de chaque page et lisez vous-même le texte plus long sous l’illustration. Cette lecture « à tour de rôle » donne confiance aux enfants et les stimule. Ils seront ravis de découvrir qu’ils peuvent lire l’histoire tout seuls. (AMERY, 2002).

22 In french: Maman sera ravie
another child with whom the students can identify themselves, in addition to falling into our three categories of analysis. Moreover, it can still teach them the importance of helping other people, since Oma, even having little water, did not fail to give it to his thirsty friends.

Finally, we have selected two comic books for our research. Given that this genre is quite playful, it usually stimulates the interest of the young readers. The first *The little Prince* is an adaptation made from the well-known work by French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. This is a story grounded on values and teachings, which charms children and adults around the world. It is also the third best-selling book in the world, having sold about 134 million books worldwide, including 8 million in Brazil, and been translated into more than 220 languages and dialects.

![Image 2 - Comic book cover of Le petit prince](source: scanned image)

The second comic book, *Tintin in Congo*, is part of the series of stories entitled *The Adventures of Tintin* and was created by Belgian author Georges Prosper Remi. A quick search on the internet reveals the great proportion that these comics have taken around the world. The series is one of the most popular European comics of the twentieth century, having been translated into more than 50 languages and sold more than 200 million copies. The main character of this story is young journalist Tintin who, in this story

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23 In french: *Les aventures de Tintin*
specifically, decides to live adventures all over Congo in Africa, always accompanied by his friend: the dog Milou. This story allows the child to live the adventures together with the characters and still travel with them to Congo and discover a new world.

We can verify that the texts indicated here as conducive to the teaching/learning of FLE are poetry and short narratives, which in turn "offer the child, in their literacy stage, the opportunity to experience the linguistic potential and discover the various possibilities of naming that will mediate their exploration and the understanding of the world" (CADEMARTORI, 2010, p. 63). In addition, still in accordance with the author, literature plays a fundamental role in establishing an active relationship between the speaker and the language.

CONCLUSIONS

This research has allowed us to identify ten texts that may contribute to the teaching/learning process of FLE for children in an exolingue context. The identification of such texts allows us to answer our first research question: which French-language literary texts may best suit children in their early childhood and in the learning phase of FLE? We have seen that all the texts discussed here allow the teacher to work with them in full given their size. The themes they discuss are partially or wholly illustrated and are of particular

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24“oferecem à criança em fase de alfabetização a oportunidade de experimentar a potencialidade linguística, descobrindo as diversas possibilidades de nomeação que mediará sua exploração e o entendimento do mundo” (CADEMARTORI, 2010, p. 63).
interest to children. The texts also favor the child's comprehension and lead to a better understanding of the target language. In addition, we have observed that they foster literary reading enjoyment since they can take students to assign a new meaning to reality, arouse emotions and develop the taste and pleasure for literary reading, making it an activity that flows naturally into the daily lives of young readers.

Regarding our second research question, i.e. which literary genres are more appropriate to be inserted into this learning context: tales, poems, others?, we find that poetry and short stories - tales, fables and comics - are appropriate for children between four and eight years old, for all the reasons already mentioned in the course of this paper. Furthermore, they promote the non-dissociation between language and literature and the development of the child by fostering learning which goes beyond language.

By carrying out this research we could verify that a literary text is an important component/auxiliary in the teaching-learning process of FLE. It allows students to learn the French language in a pleasant way and get to know new and different world views. Teachers are also able to work on moral and ethical issues in the classroom, develop the children's imaginary and also contribute to the development of a human being who may be better equipped in the job market in the future. Therefore, we observe that literary genres constitute a very special way to teach FLE for children in early childhood.

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