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Lithuanian preschool teachers' pedagogical habitus of reading to children

Nawyki pedagogiczne litewskich nauczycieli wychowania przedszkolnego w zakresie czytania dzieciom

Introduction

More than forty years ago, the poet Justinas Marcinkevičius (1981), laureate of the Lithuanian National Culture Progress Award, wrote the following words: “Someday the arrival of the book to people will be likened to the stealing of the divine fire – for how do we defend ourselves against the beasts of darkness and violence, if not with the book, with what we warm the benumbed soul, whose light, if not the light of the book, has guided us and continues to guide

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us through the labyrinths of the world and our own hearts”. However, even today there are no trends for this prophecy of the Lithuanian poet to come true – in the country, not only is recorded the trend of decreasing reading by adults themselves, but also of their reading to children: in the “2019–2024 programme for the promotion of reading” (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, 2018), attention was drawn to the fact that during the period 2014–2017, the share of Lithuanian residents who spend their free time on the Internet increased. Out of all leisure activities (watching TV, listening to the radio, using the Internet), they spend the least amount of time reading books – as many as 43 percent of adults do not spend time reading during the week. In addition, adults read to children less. Parents are increasingly using audiobooks and other digital media instead of reading to their children themselves. Meanwhile, talking to the child should be live and not broadcast through smart devices or TV, because in order to develop the child’s language skills, the child needs live talking and feedback from adults. In addition to household and everyday conversations, reading books aloud to the child is necessary – the language of books is richer than that used by parents or other family members, therefore, books can be a source of new, unusual and uncommon, but no less important and necessary, words. In addition, while flipping through books together with the child, parents engage in dialogue – this is how the children’s communication skills are developed (Niklas et al., 2016).

As it is well known, since 2006, programmes to promote reading have been organized in Lithuania, which aim to form a positive attitude towards reading, to interest non-reading or low-reading members of the society by various activities. However, as the research conducted by Rimkutė and Lukoševičiūtė (2023) shows, those activities and reading initiatives only attract people who already read a lot. Based on the findings of the report of the study “Inhabitants’ participation in culture and satisfaction with cultural services” (Lithuanian Council for Culture, 2021), it can be assumed that those initiatives do not attract the attention of the members of society who do not read or read little, because they are not interested in reading and culture in general. These are individuals who have grown up in an unfavourable cultural context, and their lack of education prevents them from enjoying cultural activities, including those related to reading. Not feeling the need to read themselves, such parents do not read to their children either, they do not understand how important reading is for the child.

Since no research has been conducted in Lithuania that would prove to parents that the early education of a reader must begin in the home environment and that reading is very important for a child, we have to rely on the insights of foreign scientists. According to the research findings of Cline et al. (2022), it is necessary to read to babies from the very first days or even while the baby is still in the mother's womb, because they hear, respond to their mother's voice and, one could say, learn to read before birth. When books are read to children, their literacy experience is formed – parental literacy activities involvement and parental literacy expectations contribute more to children's literacy knowledge enhancement (Dong et al., 2020). The findings from the study by Kim et al. (2014) show that there is an association between the HLE (home literacy environment) during the preschool period and the HLE in first grade, and the HLE in first grade positively affects children's language performance. Also, the children's language performance has a positive influence on their school adjustment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the HLE during the preschool period is a significant feature that lingers to affect children's language performance and school adjustment. Analogous research conclusions are made by Niklas et al. (2016): early reading can support the development of children's language abilities and the onset of shared reading seems to be a good and specific indicator of the overall HLE. Consequently, parents should be encouraged to start reading to their children when they are very young – the sooner, the better.

Referring to Wildova and Kropačková (2015), pre-literacy development (early childhood literacy) starts with a child's birth and continues until child's entry to school. The aim of this period is to develop the child's positive relationship to written speech and to open and encourage their skills and abilities enabling them future optimum reading and writing development. The emphasis is put on developing positive motivation for reading and writing. It is also worth paying attention to the research showing that when shared book reading is enriched with explicit attention to the development of children's reading skills and strategies, then shared book reading is an effective vehicle for promoting the early literacy ability even of disadvantaged children (Phillips et al., 2008).

The aforementioned and other studies point out that regular reading aloud to the child not only provides children with pleasant sensations, but also promotes their linguistic abilities: develops the linguistic hearing, expands

vocabulary, develops skills to express thoughts clearly and consistently, stimulates thinking, perception, memory and imagination, teaches concentration, promotes creativity. Reading aloud is useful for developing the child's social and emotional skills, strengthening the relationship between the child and the parents. In addition, literary works talk about events and phenomena that are not encountered every day, which means that the child's interests and knowledge are expanded, etc. Therefore, reading for children is an "eternal" and irreplaceable way of learning about the world, a source of active and creative language use.

Seeing the emerging trend in Lithuania of parents not reading to their children and understanding the importance of reading as the child's educational need, it can be assumed that the environment of a preschool education institution could compensate for not reading to children in the family, because the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania (Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania – Reconstituent Seimas, 1991) defines the purpose of preschool education as to help the child satisfy his/her natural, cultural, as well as ethnic, social and cognitive abilities, to develop the child's cognitive skills.

Referring to the Methodological Recommendations for Preschool Education (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015) and the General Programme of Pre-primary Education (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, 2022), the child's literary education includes encouraging interest in books, responding to the text being read, told, narrated, and this process takes place sequentially in such stages of the child's development as a reader:

1. Getting to know the book: the child flips through the book, touches it, rips it, chews it, plays with it.
2. "Skimming" the book: the child flips through the book, looks at the pictures, points to the objects, names them.
3. Interest in books and reading: the child not only looks at the illustrations, but also asks to read, pretends to read himself/herself.
4. Involvement in reading: the child talks about the action of the text being read, asks questions, explains the causal relationships of events based on his/her own experience, evaluates the motives of the character's behaviour and the consequences of the behaviour, models situations how the character could have acted differently, etc., i.e., develops creative and critical thinking skills.

Comprehension of a literary work is a complex process that requires the child's attention, imagination, memory, thinking, concentration efforts. According to Skunčikas (2007), a work of fiction should be read and discussed with children as a unique, multi-meaningful, multi-layered structure. Only then, the aesthetic experience of the text will give the child spiritual satisfaction, a deeper sense of beauty, and his/her emotional experience will expand.

This study focuses on the fourth stage of the development of the child as a reader, assuming that if it is reached, then the previous stages have been completed successfully. Therefore, the aim of the research is to find out what the pedagogical habitus of Lithuanian preschool teachers in reading to children is. A teacher's pedagogical habitus, as a system of educational dispositions, structures the manner in which teachers routinely enact their teaching practices (Feldman, 2016). Pedagogical habitus is a layer of a teacher's primary habitus. Incorporated into a teacher's habitus are embodied social and cultural messages from the field of education which organizes and positions them as certain types of teachers, and which in turn structures their teaching practices in particular ways (Feldman, Fataar, 2018).

Methodology

The research included 20 preschool education teachers working in public preschool education institutions of one city of Lithuania. The administration of educational institutions and teachers were informed that the researcher's goal was to get to know the educational environments and activities that teachers organize in those environments. Research participants were selected using random targeted sampling – educational activities were observed in those preschool educational institutions and with those teachers who agreed to accept the researcher's presence and did not object to the researcher participating several times in pre-arranged times throughout the day's activities. Since there are no strict rules for how many observations should be made in qualitative research, the basic rule was followed – to observe more than once and to take a longer pause between observations (Frechtling, Sharp, 1997, cit. Rupšienė, 2007). The study sample was determined by critical case sampling, which is used when the analysis of several critical cases suggests that the results will be the same in other cases (Rupšienė, 2007). The size of the research sample and the number of observations were not predetermined – the data were collected

until they began to repeat themselves and their informativeness obviously decreased. A total of 3–5 full-day activities of each of the 20 preschool teachers were observed.

The research was conducted using disguised observation and an informal conversational interview. Disguised observation makes it possible to better understand the experience and habits of the research participant, eliminates the possibility of “doing the right thing” (Tidikis, 2003; Rupšienė, 2007): the subject does not know what exactly is being observed, therefore, the research takes place in a natural environment. Such observation does not violate ethical principles: “everything depends on the aims of the research, which are pursued by the observation, on the tact of the observer and on the use of the obtained data for scientific (...) purposes. (...) The fact that the observation is carried out to satisfy the interests of the group itself and society removes the basis for moral apprehensions” (Tidikis, 2003, p. 450). An informal conversational interview takes place spontaneously during the research, the informant may not even know that he/she is being interviewed. The researcher asks questions about what is relevant to him/her in the context of the question under investigation (Rupšienė, 2007).

Reading activity in a preschool education institution includes both the creation of a reading environment and the selection of reading strategies, therefore, during the observation, attention was paid to: when is reading to children carried out? What kind of literary works are read? How is it read? How are questions formulated to understand the content of the text? Informal conversational interview questions sought to find out: how do teachers equip the classroom library? How do they evaluate children’s interest in books and reading? How do they try to get children interested in books and reading? How do they choose which books to read to children?

The researcher’s behaviour at each stage of observation (according to Rupšienė, 2007):

1. after the administration of the preschool educational institution allowed to observe the daily activities of the teachers in the classrooms, a sincere relationship was established with each teacher who agreed to accept the researcher’s presence, and the trust of the subject was gained;
2. the excellent relationship between the researcher and the subject was maintained throughout the observation, efforts were made not to lose the subject’s trust;

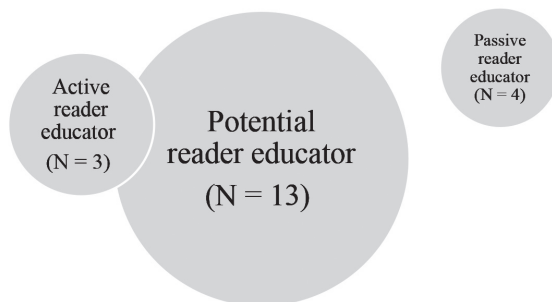
3. the observation was carried out in an unobtrusive manner so that the subject forgets that he/she is being observed.

Field notes were taken during the observation and informal conversational interview – short notes during the observation and detailed notes after the day's observation ended. During the observation, it was important for the researcher to see, listen and remember, therefore, only the main things were recorded – the details were described immediately after the observation. Field notes were as detailed as possible, because a thick description is one of the ways to ensure the transferability of observation-based research (Rupšienė, 2007). Therefore, the field notes describe all observation scenes: the time and date were recorded; the location of the observation and the people involved were described in detail; the observed events were chronologically described, recording everything the researcher sees and hears.

Since the study was conducted using disguised observation, it is understandable that the subjects were not informed about the study and its immediate purpose. However, the researchers tried to protect the subjects from possible harm from the point of view of the subjects and strictly adhered to the following ethical principles: the subjects participated in the study voluntarily – neither the researchers nor the administration of the educational institution exerted any pressure, and, as already mentioned, the educational activities of those teachers who agreed to accept the observer's presence and did not object to the observer participating in the whole day's activities several times at a pre-agreed time were observed; although without informing the teachers about the research being conducted, the researchers ensured the anonymity of the participants (each subject remained anonymous during the entire study and after the study) and the confidentiality of the information obtained (no one except the researchers knew the aim of the research, observation information and impressions were not shared with anyone).

Results

After analysing and summarizing the research results, three profiles of the teacher as a child-reader educator emerged, which we named according to teachers' attitudes and behaviour of reading to children: active reader educator, potential reader educator and passive reader educator (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Profiles of the teacher as a child-reader educator (N = 20)

Source: own research.

In the classrooms of the teachers of *passive reader educator profile*, there is no separate reading space – the bookshelf is in the play area, consequently, the children do not even have the opportunity to separate themselves from their friends in order to flip through books and “read” without being disturbed. Sometimes, children approach the bookshelf, flip through one or another book, but do not focus on it for a longer period of time. After evaluating the contents of the library, it is obvious that the books are either quite old or of little artistic and aesthetic value. However, teachers do not attach importance to the contents of the library, e.g.: “Our library contains all kinds of works, but mostly fairy tales and poems, some calendars, children’s magazines. Those books have been here for a long time, but sometimes the children bring them, or I bring them from home”; “The library is not new – basically all the books are from a long time ago, we have received something through projects. Those books are expensive now, the educational institution does not buy them, you will not ask the parents to buy them. And even if you buy it, how much will those children be interested? Past graduates were more interested, some of these flip through, but not for long”; “Between us, that library is set up just because it has to be set up. I brought something from my home, because my children are grown up, and I also found books from my childhood. Some are given by the children’s parents. Today’s children are no longer interested in books, they need you to give them a tablet, turn something interesting on the computer, they are more interested in doing experiments, exploring”.

The initiative to get children interested in books and reading is passed on to parents by the teachers of passive reader educator profile, e.g.: “There are many children in the classroom, all of them have different interests – what one person likes, does not mean that the others will like it. You will not read to individual children in kindergarten. And it is much simpler at home with one or two children”; “Reading to children should be the primary concern of parents”. In the context of the child’s literary education, teachers of this profile are limited to (a) participating in projects of the preschool educational institution (e.g., “We participated in the expressive reading project “Little Spring of Poetry”, where the children had to recite a poem by a Lithuanian author, and received certificates of appreciation”; “We took part in the kindergarten project “Give a Book to the Kindergarten”; “The children took part in the quiz and had to guess from which fairy tale there was an excerpt, a character or a picture”; “We participated in the children’s creativity project “I Tell a Fairy Tale” – the children had to learn to tell fairy tales at home and tell them to each other in the classroom”); (b) trips to the library (e.g., “Sometimes we go to the city library when there is some kind of event for children”; “We were in the library, they showed the children around the premises, showed them what books were stored where, explained what a library is, that you can borrow books here, you don’t have to buy them”); (c) creative activities (e.g., “We prepare mini-plays, children embody into characters, create books themselves, we play shadow theatre”; “They create fairy tale books themselves, play library – the “librarian” fills in the reader’s card, other children come to choose books, take them, return them”; “We play “book doctors” – we fix books, this is how children develop a love for books”; “We create fairy tale characters from secondary raw materials”).

The educational activities of each of these teachers were observed for five days: interesting artistic, physical, and STEAM activities were offered to children, however, no activities related to reading were observed, except for listening to audio recording of Lithuanian fairy tales before bedtime. However, passively listening to a fairy tale (or other artistic text) is only a means of relaxation, while reading to the child is unimaginable without his/her active involvement as a reader, because only during attentive and engaging reading does the child develop the ability to think, reason, justify his/her opinion, etc., at the same time, it is likely that the understanding that reading is interesting is formed.

Teachers of *potential reader educator profile* provide obviously greater opportunities for children's literary education. First of all, attention should be paid to the reading environment of the classroom created by these teachers: the reading spaces are more or less isolated from the play space, the bookshelves have a variety of books: audio, toy, musical, alphabet, puzzle books, and older and newer children's poems, folk tales, pictures, educational books, stencil books, encyclopaedias for children. From conversations with the teachers, it can be concluded that they sincerely care about the literary education of children, however, in their words, it is difficult to choose "in a sea of books".

Teachers of potential reader educator profile try to get children interested in reading in a variety of ways: they read the same book as many times as the children ask; they read a book chosen by the children; they regularly change book displays in the classroom library; they organize discussions of the books read by children at home; they organize trips to the library where they not only get to know the library's environment and visitor rules, but also find out why the library is needed, read books in the library, and discuss them (e.g., Lorenz Pauli and Kathrin Schärer "Pippilothek???" (title in English "The Fox in the Library"), Becky Bloom and Pascal Biet "Wolf!", Alison Donald and Alex Willmore "The New Librarian"); they create acting improvisations based on the plot of the book, etc. Nevertheless, teachers miss the more active role of children's parents in developing the child as a reader – there are children in the classroom who are not interested in books and reading at all, such children have no experience of reading and listening, therefore, when the teacher is reading, they not only do not focus themselves, but also do not allow others to listen.

According to the observation data, the teachers of potential reader educator profile mostly use the "Morning Circle" to read literary works and choose them according to the criterion "the literary work has to teach children", as a result, educational literature is often used, e.g., works by Lithuanian authors and translations about feelings, good behaviour, ecology and nature conservation, etc. ("Morning Circle" is a session led by the teacher in the morning, during which a specific topic planned by the teacher is discussed.) However, if the children asked, the teacher read the book they wanted, offered to listen to a book they chose or brought from home at any free time during the day. Before reading the text, the teachers always showed the children the cover of the book, read the author's and illustrator's names and surnames, the title of the book

and the publisher, and looked at and discussed the illustrations. They read the book with the text facing the children, taking their time, allowing the children to ask if something was unclear to them. In the "Morning Circle", perhaps the most noticeable thing about the reading habits of the teachers of a potential reader educator profile is warning the children to listen carefully, because then they will have to answer the questions. After reading the literary work, the children were asked a lot of questions quickly, they were encouraged to think faster, the questions required a specific answer. If the children did not answer or did not understand the question, the teacher answered herself, not paying too much attention to the children's reactions. The questions were basically aimed at finding out whether the children understood the content of the text, what exactly they remember from the read text, but not encouraging them to analyse, consider, imagine, model situations, thus developing children's critical and creative thinking. Attention was also drawn to the fact that teachers do not know how to formulate questions for children: there are mainly (a) closed questions that can be answered with one word; (b) questions that prompt an answer in advance; (c) overly broad questions that require a great effort from the child to understand and answer them, therefore, there is no answer at all; (d) excessively long and confusingly constructed questions that use words and concepts still unknown to the child; (e) the purpose of the question is unclear. It is precisely such errors in the formulation of questions that dominate the speech of the teachers of potential reader educator profile. Below are some examples of questions that were not formulated properly by the teachers:

What ice cream was mentioned in the text? Do you like ice cream? What kind of ice cream do you like? Do you eat a lot of ice cream? Can you eat a lot of ice cream? You can't, can you? You will get sick if you eat a lot of ice cream, won't you? Do not eat a lot of ice cream, children. Remember.

Why did the knife, the fork and the spoon quarrel? Did the knife, the fork and the spoon were right to quarrel? What did the candy name them? Are you brags? When did you brag to someone? Is it nice to quarrel and be a brag? What should you do when someone quarrels and brags? Tell me, what did you learn from this story? Have you learned not to quarrel and brag?

On what basis did the hare invite the fox to live with him, and on what basis could he not have invited? Who initiated and for what objective reasons the friendship between the hare and the fox ended? Do you have any friends? Why

do you need friends? Have there been such situations in your life when a friend lied? What did you do then? It feels bad to be lied to, doesn't it?

Another shortcoming of reading by the teachers of a potential reader educator profile is that very quickly they leave the space of the literary work and move to a conversation-questioning about children's experiences. In summary, it can be said that the teachers of potential reader educator profile understand the need to read to children, discuss with them what has been heard, connect the events of the text with the child's experience, however, the reading habits of the teachers of this profile do not bring much benefit to children: the teachers limit themselves to only reading the text, do not think about how to involve children in reading, do not ask questions that stimulate critical and creative thinking, which is very important in developing a child as an active reader, they quickly leave the space of the literary work and move on to talking about the real life experience of children, without avoiding open didacticism.

The activities of the teachers of potential reader educator profile lack the use of folklore works (legends, proverbs, riddles). From the informal conversational interview, it can be understood that in the opinion of most teachers, folklore works, with the exception of fairy tales, are simply not interesting to children, it is difficult for them to solve riddles, understand the meaning of proverbs, and there are words that today's children no longer understand. Therefore, folklore works are used only in thematic events aimed at developing children's national identity. However, folklore, in Sauka's (1982) words, is "inexhaustible accumulations of thought and image", because these linguistic texts, refined over centuries, can maximally meet the educational needs of the child.

After assessing the shortcomings of the teachers of a potential reader educator profile in the pedagogical habitus of reading to children, it can be assumed that the teachers of this profile simply lack knowledge about the genre features of children's literature, reading strategies involving the child, rules for formulating questions, etc. It is likely that after acquiring theoretical knowledge and practical skills, what and how to read inclusively to children, how to properly formulate questions to help them understand the content of the work heard, the majority of teachers of potential reader educator profile would change their pedagogical habitus of reading to children and add to the ranks of teachers of active reader educator profile. As Feldman (2016) explains, referring to Bourdieu's theory, although teachers' pedagogical habitus is a product of their educational history and predisposes them to respond

in a particular manner based on the structures on which their pedagogical habitus was structured, one's habitus can be changed by new knowledge, different teaching experience.

Teachers of *active reader educator profile*, first of all, are active readers themselves: "I love to read since childhood. I have several favourite authors, I buy their books, I have read them several times. I follow the news of children's literature. I myself like reading children's literature very much. Some people think it's very simple because it's aimed at children, but I find a lot of clever thoughts for an adult as well"; "My free time is only with a book. When I go on vacation, books take up a large part of my luggage. When it's work, it's not much time to read for pleasure. A few years ago, we "discovered" picture books together with the children. There is not much text in them, but when we start to explore the illustrations with the children, the text expands even more. And children are so observant, they see things that I had not noticed. Then they tell, create something more. Children love picture books. They also like "wordless books". We have only two such books in the classroom library, the children like to read them – they read to themselves and to each other while sitting on the beanbags". In the classrooms of the teachers of active reader educator profile, a reading corner is set up for children, where various books, mostly picture books, are placed on the shelves and in the boxes. After evaluating the content of the library, it can be said that it is dominated by quality books, there are quite a lot of new books that have won various awards. The teachers assured that they know how to choose valuable books – they buy them themselves, they ask for parents' support to update the classroom library. However, at the same time, the teachers regret that the classrooms are too small for various educational spaces. They would like to set up more original reading spaces, create "secluded" reading places for children, however, this would require a separate premise.

It has been noticed that there are always children in the reading corner – they independently choose books, flip through them, look at pictures, talk, read to each other, when they see something interesting or unknown, turn to the teacher, show her, comment, ask a lot of questions, ask her to read. On the shelves, the latest books or books related to classroom activities are facing the children with their covers. Children can also display the books they brought from home, however, at the same time they must explain to their friends why they want to show that book to others as well, why it is interesting. In

classrooms, traditions of “book exchange” have been formed – when children exchange books with each other, they can borrow a book from the classroom library to read with their parents at home. As the teachers note, there was never a problem that, after borrowing a book, the children returned it dirty or torn. While sharing their experience of how to interest a child in books and reading, the teachers of active reader educator profile said that they could not name specific methods and techniques – they participate in projects organized by the educational institution, organize trips to the library with children, however, in their opinion, the most interesting and valuable activities related to reading take place precisely in the classroom, when together with children they read, talk about what they read, tell, create and recreate stories, etc., after reading the book, the teachers spend as much time for conversations and stories as they see the children need, which is why they sometimes cancel other planned group activities.

The daily activities of the teachers of active reader educator profile were observed the least three times of each, however, analogous situations were seen all the times: the teachers read to the children not only during the “Morning Circle”, but also at any time of the day, if only the children wanted (it was noticed that the children often asked to read), children love to listen and especially to talk about what they have heard. Most likely because they were included in the reading, they could intervene, comment and predict the events, actions of the characters. The children actively participated in the reading, asking and answering questions about the text and retelling the story. The questions after reading the literary work were not focused on “testing the child’s memory”, but helping to understand the content of the work heard, i.e., probing questions that encourage to consider the situation, to think about the solution to the problem; questions of the evaluation of alternatives that help to develop the understanding that every problem has several solutions; follow-up questions to encourage the participant of the conversation to provide more information, and other types of questions for developing children’s critical, creative and metaphorical thinking. For example:

The teacher tells the children that she will read the Lithuanian fairy tale “The Hare’s Hut”, which is about how “You need to have your own head”; the children are asked how they understand this saying (the Lithuanian proverb “You need to have your own head” means to be smart, clever, knowledgeable). The children’s thoughts are listened to, but not evaluated. Then, the fairy tale is read.

Questions are raised after reading (the answers in brackets are only intended for the reader of the article to understand the context of the fairy tale):

What was the fox's hut made of? (Of ice.)

What was the hare's hut made of? (Of wood.)

Why did the hare agree to exchange huts with the fox? (Because the hare's hut was wooden, simple, and the fox's hut was like a shining palace.)

When did the fox and the hare exchange huts? (In winter.)

How did the hare feel when he exchanged huts with the fox? (He was overjoyed beyond measure.)

How do you understand the saying "He was overjoyed beyond measure"? (He was very-very happy.)

What happened to the hare's new home when spring came? (It melted.)

What did the hare do then? (Begged the fox to return his wooden hut.)

What did the fox say to the hare? (That she will not return it.)

Is the fox right in not returning the hare his former hut? Why do you think so?

Remember once again how the hare and the fox exchanged huts? (The fox praised her palace very much, and the hare wanted it very much, so he believed the words of the fox.)

What did the hare have to foresee before agreeing to exchange huts with the fox?

How could the hare behave differently when the fox offered him to exchange huts?

Was the hare right in demanding that the fox return his wooden hut? Why do you think so?

What would have happened if the rooster had not chased the fox out of the hut?

Can you tell the hare to have his own head? Why do you think so?

As can be seen from the given example, before reading the fairy tale, the teacher activates the children's attention with a folk proverb, however, she does not hurry to explain its meaning – she allows the children to discover the wisdom of the proverb by formulating targeted and specific questions. Such pre-reading strategies, using proverbs and riddles, have been identified more than once in the daily activities of the teachers of an active reader educator

profile. For example, before starting a conversation with the children about the parts of the human body, the teacher asks the children riddles: “Two sisters cannot come together over the hill. What is it?”, “Two wheels stand near the forest. What is it?” To get children to think rather than guess, they are given hints such as “every person and animal has this”. If it is still difficult for children – “these are the parts of the body”. After solving, the children are asked to explain why they think so. Thus, when solving riddles, the teacher trains the children to think and look for a relevant specific object or phenomenon to which the characteristics indicated in the riddle can be applied, and to identify and explain their connection.

One of the most common reading strategies used by the teachers of active reader educator profile is the read-aloud strategy, where they read to children expressively, so that they hear the meaning of the text, and at a leisurely pace, so that they have time to comprehend. The read-aloud strategy is combined with dialogic and interactive reading, where children are engaged in a conversation about issues that develop critical and creative thinking. Out of the nine daily activities by the teachers of an active reader educator profile observed, the strategy of reading with anticipation, which awakens children’s imagination, activates thinking, develops linguistic expression, was recorded four times. In this strategy, the text is read and examined in parts: first, the book cover is examined, the title of the text is read, and children are encouraged to reason about what the text could be about. All, even the “craziest” children’s ideas are accepted, however, they must be substantiated by an answer to the question “Why do you think so?” Next, the text is read in meaningful sections, after each section discussing whether or not what had been assumed was true. Then new insights are created again. The entire text is read in this order. It was interesting to observe how the children’s moods change when their insights are confirmed/not confirmed, and the engagement in reading is maximum. These are just a few of the reading strategies identified in the activities of the teachers of active reader educator profile, however, there are likely to be many more.

Conclusions

According to the attitudes of Lithuanian preschool teachers and their behaviour of reading to children, i.e., pedagogical habitus of reading to children, three profiles of a teacher as a child-reader educator were identified: active reader educator, potential reader educator and passive reader educator.

Teachers of passive reader educator profile believe that today's children are not interested in reading books, that they are much more interested in activities related to research, smart technologies, creative works, physical activity. Teachers of this profile do not care to set up a separate, attractive reading space for children in the classroom. Although there is a bookshelf in the classroom, however, its content is not given importance. Getting children interested in books and reading is only declared by the teachers of passive reader educator profile – the responsibility for educating the child as a reader is delegated to parents.

Teachers of a potential reader educator profile are concerned with the literary education of children: classrooms are equipped with reading spaces where possible, classroom libraries are rich in books, however, teachers lack the knowledge of how to choose artistically and aesthetically valuable books. Teachers of this profile read aloud to children every day, however, mostly in the “Morning Circle”, the most important criterion for selecting literary works is that the work has to teach the children something. Teachers understand the need to read to children every day, to discuss with them about what they have heard, to connect the events of the text with the child's experience, however, teachers of this profile limit themselves to reading the text only, they do not think about how to involve children in reading. After reading the work, children are asked quite a lot of questions to find out whether the children understood the content of the text, what exactly they remember from the read text, but not encouraging them to analyse, consider, imagine, model situations, thus developing children's critical and creative thinking. Also, teachers lack the ability to properly formulate questions for children – closed-type, overly broad, complexly constructed questions or questions that prompt an answer in advance dominate; they quickly leave the space of the literary work and move on to talking about the real-life experience of children, without avoiding open didacticism. It was observed that the teachers of potential reader educator profile do not use folklore works in their activities. Teachers of this profile feel an obligation to interest children in books and reading, however, they would like a more active role of parents in developing the child as a reader.

Teachers of active reader educator profile are active readers themselves, they are interested in children's literature, book news, and are able to choose quality books. The libraries of the classroom are rich in books, mostly picture books, which are very special in children's reading, because the child processes

the information in the picture book simultaneously both visually and verbally. Teachers read to the children quite a lot and talk to them about what they have read. The teachers spend as much time for conversations and stories as they see the children need, as a result of which other planned group activities are sometimes abandoned. Children are involved in reading – they can intervene, comment and predict events, actions of characters, ask questions, retell the story. The questions asked by the teachers of active reader educator profile after reading the literary work are not focused on “testing the child’s memory”, but on helping to understand the content of the work heard, i.e., probing questions that encourage one to consider the situation, think about the solution to the problem; questions of the evaluation of alternatives that help to develop the understanding that every problem has several solutions; follow-up questions to encourage the participant of the conversation to provide more information and other types of questions to develop children’s critical, creative and metaphorical thinking. In the observed activities, the following reading strategies used by the teachers of active reader educator profile were identified: reading aloud, dialogic and interactive reading, reading with anticipation.

The research findings could be treated as insights for the generalization of pedagogical experience, which could be useful for teachers-practitioners and educational institutions looking for opportunities for diversity in education and can be used in creating programmes for teacher training and teacher qualification improvement (Petruškevičiūtė, 2018). As it is known to the authors of the article, during the last twenty years, there has been no children’s literature course in the study programmes of the Lithuanian higher education institutions that train preschool and pre-primary education teachers, and this may be the most important reason why teachers lack knowledge about the literary education of children and practical skills on how to do it in a quality manner. In the near future, to compensate for this, it is necessary to prepare and offer qualification improvement programmes on children’s reading and literature issues to the teachers of preschool education institutions.

Abstract: In Lithuania, the trend of parents not reading to their children is becoming evident. Understanding the importance of reading as the child's educational need, it is likely that the lack of reading to children in the family could be compensated by the environment of the preschool education institution, therefore, the aim of the presented research is to find out what the pedagogical habitus of the Lithuanian preschool teachers in reading to children is, i.e., teachers' attitudes and behaviour of reading to children. While using disguised observation and an informal conversational interview, three profiles of the teacher as a child-reader educator were identified and described in detail in the article: active reader educator, potential reader educator and passive reader educator. Referring to the findings of the study, it can be said that Lithuanian preschool education teachers lack knowledge about the child's literary education and practical skills on how to do it in a quality manner. Therefore, in the near future, to compensate for this, it is necessary to prepare and offer qualification improvement programmes on children's reading and literature issues to teachers of preschool education institutions.

Keywords: reading to children, preschool education teacher, pedagogical habitus, active reader educator, potential reader educator, passive reader educator

Streszczenie: Na Litwie rośnie tendencja do nieczytania dzieciom przez rodziców. Rozumiejąc znaczenie czytania jako potrzeb rozwojowych i edukacyjnych dziecka, prawdopodobne jest, że brak czytania dzieciom w rodzinie może być zrekompensowany przez środowisko placówki wychowania przedszkolnego, a celem niniejszego badania jest zbadanie nawyków pedagogicznych litewskich nauczycieli wychowania przedszkolnego w zakresie czytania dzieciom, tj. postaw nauczycieli wobec czytania dzieciom i ich zachowań czytelniczych. Korzystając z ukrytej obserwacji i nieformalnych rozmów-wywiadów, zidentyfikowano i szczegółowo opisano w artykule trzy profile nauczyciela jako edukatora dzieci-czytelników: aktywny edukator czytelnika, potencjalny edukator czytelnika oraz pasywny edukator czytelnika. Na podstawie wyników badania można stwierdzić, że litewskim nauczycielom wychowania przedszkolnego brakuje wiedzy na temat literackiej edukacji dzieci i praktycznych umiejętności, jak ją prowadzić jakościowo. Aby zrekompensować to w perspektywie krótkoterminowej, konieczne jest zatem opracowanie i zaoferowanie programów doskonalenia zawodowego dla nauczycieli wychowania przedszkolnego w zakresie czytania dzieciom i literatury dziecięcej.

Słowa kluczowe: czytanie dzieciom, nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego, nawyki pedagogiczne, aktywny edukator czytelnika, potencjalny edukator czytelnika, pasywny edukator czytelnika

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