

Indigenous children's and youth literature

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Abstract

This study examines the interactions between Indigenous children's and youth literature and the teaching of environmental sciences, emphasizing the relevance of literary reading in the teaching and learning process from the perspective of building intercultural dialogues. This is a qualitative study, based on content and ecocritical analysis. The results showed the interrelationships between Indigenous narratives and environmental themes – culture, biodiversity, places, agriculture, conservation, myths, and legends – reinforcing the importance of literary reading in the classroom, integrated with Indigenous knowledge and environmental sciences. Indigenous children's and youth literature, when analyzed in the light of ecocriticism, proved to be a valuable resource for environmental reflections in the classroom. It can inspire students, awakening them to new ways of coexisting with humanity that value more ethical attitudes towards the diversity of worlds and knowledge.

Keywords: Literary reading. Indigenous knowledge. Environmental sciences. Intercultural dialogues.

Literatura infantojuvenil indígena

Resumo

O trabalho analisa as interações entre a literatura infantojuvenil indígena e o ensino das ciências ambientais, destacando a relevância da leitura literária no processo de ensino e aprendizagem, a partir da perspectiva da construção de diálogos interculturais. Trata-se de uma pesquisa de natureza qualitativa, fundamentada no método de análise de conteúdo e análise ecocrítica. Os

resultados evidenciaram as inter-relações entre as narrativas indígenas e os temas ambientais – cultura, biodiversidade, lugares, agricultura, conservação, mitos e lendas – reforçando a importância da leitura literária em sala de aula, articulada aos saberes indígenas e às ciências ambientais. A literatura infantojuvenil indígena, quando analisada à luz da ecocrítica, demonstrou ser um recurso valioso nas reflexões ambientais em sala de aula. Ela pode ser inspiradora aos educandos, despertando-os para novas formas de convivência com a humanidade que valorize posturas mais éticas em relação à diversidade de mundos e de saberes.

Palavras-chave: Leitura literária. Saberes indígenas. Ciências ambientais. Diálogos interculturais.

Literatura infantil y juvenil indígena

Resumen

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El trabajo analiza las interacciones entre la literatura infantil y juvenil indígena y la enseñanza de las ciencias ambientales, destacando la relevancia de la lectura literaria en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje desde la perspectiva de la construcción de diálogos interculturales. Se trata de una investigación de naturaleza cualitativa, basada en el método de análisis de contenido y análisis ecocrítico. Los resultados evidenciaron las interrelaciones entre las narrativas indígenas y los temas ambientales – cultura, biodiversidad, lugares, agricultura, conservación, mitos y leyendas –, reforzando la importancia de la lectura literaria en el aula, articulada con los saberes indígenas y las ciencias ambientales. La literatura infantil y juvenil indígena, cuando se analiza a la luz de la ecocrítica, ha demostrado ser un recurso valioso en las reflexiones ambientales en el aula. Puede ser inspiradora para los alumnos, despertándolos a nuevas formas de convivencia con la humanidad que valoran posturas más éticas en relación con la diversidad de mundos y conocimientos.

Palabras clave: Lectura literaria. Saberes indígenas. Ciencias ambientales. Diálogos interculturales.

Introduction

The practice of literary reading of various textual genres provides a broad set of knowledge, promotes contact with different cultures and contributes to attitudes of respect and empathy with diversity and difference. Souza, Barros, and Matos (2020) consider the presence of the literary text essential in the teaching-learning process, and can be used interdisciplinarily in the various areas of knowledge as a tool that cooperates for the general formation of individuals, as it helps in the development of critical thinking and in the expansion of the information acquired, providing new and enriching experiences.

Based on considerations about the current environmental crisis we are going through, the proposal arose to analyze narratives of indigenous children's literature, considering the importance of literary reading and the objectives of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC, acronym in Portuguese) regarding the enjoyment and appreciation of the various Brazilian artistic and cultural manifestations in the school environment (Brasil, 2018).

By dialoguing with various expressions, the literary text promotes egalitarian pedagogical practices (Freire, 2019) that go beyond the field of science and teaching and include other types of knowledge and knowledges (Leff, 2011). Therefore, it is present in different cultures, with different textual productions, oral or written (Candido, 2023).

However, when we, educators around Portuguese language and literature, look for literary bibliographies that meet the need to address Brazilian cultural diversity, we have difficulty finding this type of material in the school context, especially when we want to deal with topics related to our culture and our specific region.

Contrary to what people think, bibliography of this nature exists, it is indigenous literature, in particular *indigenous children's literature*, written by members of the original peoples of different Brazilian ethnicities, whose texts are intended for *children and adolescents* (Lajolo, 2021). It is from this perspective that inserting indigenous narratives in the school space can lead to the recognition of the critical intercultural reality, combating negative views imposed on these peoples since colonization, so that children learn, from an early age, about the diversity of the world (Dorrico, 2021; Ramos; Nogueira; Franco, 2020).

Presenting the cultural and ethnic diversity of Brazil since childhood, in addition to its literary specificities, is a contribution to the recognition of the various indigenous populations, divided into 305 Brazilian ethnicities, with approximately 63 of these located mainly in the state of Amazonas (ISA, 2023).

Indigenous literature has different themes in individual and collective productions such as ancestry, memory, and tradition (Dorrigo, 2018). Indigenous texts are also anchored by environmental themes, treated implicitly, and stand out by demonstrating the interactions of indigenous peoples with the environment where they live. In this sense, the original and contextualized way that these literary production structure the contents can contribute to trigger the much-needed critical intercultural reflection on the current behavior of society in the face of transformations on the planet.

Therefore, the objective of this work was to identify and analyze the interactions of the narratives of indigenous children's literature with the teaching of environmental sciences from the perspective of building intercultural dialogues.

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Methodological procedures

In the development of the research, we adopted the qualitative approach, based on the conception of the educator as a reflective individual and on the appreciation of a contextualized, critical, and transformative professional practice. From this perspective, the construction of meanings among the individuals involved in each context of social activity is privileged —in this case, educators and students experiencing practices of building intercultural dialogues based on *indigenous children's literature* interdisciplinarity associated with environmental knowledge. Therefore, we anchor this research in the sense of critical interculturality, as it represents the peoples who suffered from the process of colonization, inferiorization, domination and who aspire and demand the recognition and appreciation of the culture of each indigenous people (Ramos, Nogueira; Franco, 2020).

Thus, the study was directly related to indigenous children's narratives through the content analysis method, based on Bardin (2015) and Franco

(2018), in the identification of the interrelationships of these narratives with the environmental sciences, also using ecocriticism to examine the interconnections of knowledge and the attribution of meanings between literature and environment.

Through ecocritical analysis, we seek to verify the importance and space given to environmental themes in indigenous texts, since ecocriticism studies, through cultural aspects of language and literature (Gloffely, 1996), the way different human cultures interact with nature (Mendes, 2020). Moreover, ecocriticism emerges as an orientation to place literature and culture among human activities capable of making visible, complex, and finding ways to face the environmental injustices that occur in the world at the most diverse scales, frequencies, and intensities (Brugioni; Melo, 2025).

Ecocritical analysis was associated with the foundations of conservation biology, in search of critical reflections on the growing threats that biological diversity faces, caused by human activities that transform landscapes and degrade the environment (Trombulak; Omland, Robison; Lusk; Fleischne; Brown; Domroese, 2004).

To this end, we selected nine books of indigenous children's literature for the constitution of the *corpus* of the analysis. The first criterion for choosing the works was based on the selection of names of indigenous authors who stand out in this type of production, through internet searches, on websites that deal with indigenous literature.

The age indicated for reading the books was another selection criterion, as well as the verification of the term "child and youth". We choose the following books: *Kunumi guarani* (Werá Jeguaka Mirim); *Olho d'água: o caminho dos sonhos* [Water spring: the path of dreams] (Roni Wasiry Guará); *Contos da floresta* [Tales of the forest] (Yaguarê Yamã); *Fabulosas fábulas de lauareté* [Fabulous fables of lauareté] (Kaka Werá Jecupé); *Nós: uma antologia de literatura indígena* [We an anthology of indigenous literature] (Black Mauritius Organization/narratives of several indigenous authors); *A cura da Terra* [The healing of the Earth] (Eliana Potiguará); *A origem da constelação da garça* [The origin of the constellation of the heron] (Jaime Diakara); *Um curumim, uma canoa* [A boy, a canoe] (Yaguarê Yamã) and; *Tekoa: conhecendo uma aldeia indígena* [Tekoa: knowing an indigenous village] (Olívio Jekupé).

The study material brought together works by eighteen indigenous authors from different regions of Brazil, written in Portuguese, including terms from their mother tongues, as well as glossaries and additional information.

We carried out the pre-analysis of the works, through *superficial reading* (Franco, 2018), to acquire the first information and impressions. Next, we proceed to *the choice of materials* using the selection rules proposed by Bardin (2015). The *formulation of the hypothesis and the objective* was based on the idea of a connection of the narratives with the environment favorable to the objective of the interdisciplinary teaching of Environmental Sciences.

In *referencing the indexes and preparing the indicators*, we consider the importance and respect for the forest as central elements of the analysis. The recurrence of these themes served as a basis for the identification and interpretation of the other themes.

The material was treated, organized, and gathered in units to verify the relevance and association of the contents with the environmental sciences, through the messages of the texts, analyzed both in their explicit and implicit contents. To this end, we used excerpts to establish the elements that would be considered in the selection of the units of analysis, divided into registration and context units. In the research, we used the *theme* as a recording unit, as it provides a greater possibility of investigation in different elements, both objective and subjective (Bardin, 2015).

Results and discussion

The books researched were formed by literary genres such as fables, diaries, myths, legends, and tales. It is important to emphasize that indigenous texts have these characteristics. As Santos (2022) observes, they are aesthetic productions with hybrid genres, driven by memory, tradition and ancestry, characteristics specific to the indigenous people, with values and perceptions that express orality and its marks. For each of the books, the same procedure was performed, reaching six registration units (table 1).

Table 1 – Composition of the registration units. Organization of the themes in relation to their presence in the selected books. Lábrea, Amazonas

Presence in books	Topics					
	Cult.	Biod.	Pla.	Agri.	Cons.	M & L
A cura da Terra	x	x	x	x	x	x
Contos da floresta	x	x	x	x	x	x
Fabulosas fábulas de Iauareté	x	x	x	x	x	x
Kunumi guarani	x	x	x	x		x
Nós: uma antologia de literatura indígena	x	x	x	x	x	x
Olho d'água: o caminho dos sonhos	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tekoa: conhecendo uma aldeia indígena	x	x	x	x	x	x
Um curumim, uma canoa	x	x	x	x		x
Yahi Puíro Kí'ti: A origem da constelação da garça	x	x	x	x	x	x

Cult.: culture; Biod.: biodiversity; Pla.: places; Agri: agriculture; Cons: conservation; M & L: myths and legends.

Source: study data.

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Considering the vast biodiversity and sociodiversity with a significant presence of indigenous populations in Brazil, the themes identified in the books represent a territory of great interest for ecological discussions. We find a constant frequency of the themes culture, biodiversity, places, agriculture, myths and legends, in the nine books. On the other hand, the theme of conservation was not mentioned in two books, *Kunumi Guarani* and *Um Curumim, uma canoa*.

After this step, we move on to the composition of the context units, aiming at understanding the meanings of the registration units.

The meanings of the context units were established by assigning meanings to the registration units based on the interpretation of the selected paragraphs, the explicit and implicit contents and other elements that make up the indigenous textualities, including the illustrations, which offer varied information to the narratives (table 2).

The meanings of the established units were identified according to the interpretation of the contexts in which they are inserted, and the purpose of

this detailing is not to deepen the concepts addressed, but to analyze the relationship between indigenous environmental practices, found in the narratives, and Environmental Sciences.

Table 2 – Identified context units, related to the registration units. Lábrea, Amazonas

Nº	Registration Units	Context Units
1	Culture	Traditions, identity, customs, beliefs, rituals, and ways of life.
2	Biodiversity	Ecosystem, specific and genetic diversity.
3	Places	Landscape units: igarapé (small river), river, lake, beach, forest, waterfall, spring.
4	Agriculture	Family farming and indigenous family farming.
5	Preservation	Tillage, use, sustainability, and conservation practices.
6	Myths and legends.	Explanations for phenomena, explanations by origin myths, explanations of the world (cosmos).

Source: study data.

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The traditions, identities, customs, beliefs, rites, and ways of life are present in all the analyzed books, showing the cultural richness of the indigenous populations of Brazil. Dorrico (2018) clarifies that the indigenous author produces and publishes a literature that has traditional culture as its essence, opposing European visions and values to dispel negative ideas about their peoples.

The narratives take from invisibility the indigenous populations in Brazil and their cultures and the authors present aspects of their ethnicities. Thus, we infer that, in addition to the visibility they intend to give to their peoples, they also aim for non-indigenous people to understand the differences between the many peoples who give life to the stories.

Thus, indigenous children's literature intends to communicate with the various ethnic and cultural groups that make up the Brazilian population, promoting interculturality, equality and respect for the identity of the other, stimulating opportunities to know and learn about the different (Candau, 2012).

Consequently, the different cultures of indigenous peoples make up the core of the narratives, as shown in the excerpt from Guará (2012, p.

13): “Many moons ago, the Maraguá people were celebrating, everyone in the village celebrated the great abundance in agriculture and fishing”. This excerpt, like so many others, shows that each indigenous ethnicity has its own customs, traditions, ways of life, among other characteristics.

In addition, through their cultures, indigenous people use creativity in their interaction with nature, using common goods with respect and zeal. This way of perceiving and interacting with the environment is seen not only in the written lines, but also in the illustrations (figure 1).

In the culture of the Kamaiurá, the indigenous people hold a grand celebration in honor of the jaguar and, while the community celebrates, it watches them from above. The jaguar is not presented as a threat, but rather as belonging to the ancestral knowledge that structures collective life. Thus, words, sentences, writings, and drawings connect to create a whole that represents the culture of each indigenous ethnic group.

Biological diversity or biodiversity is the variety of living organisms, of *habitats*, ecosystems and associated traditional knowledge (Trombulak; Omland; Robison; Lusk; Fleischner; Brown; Domroese, 2004). In indigenous narratives, is frequent the presence of plants, animals, forest, land, river, and different ecosystem components, which highlights the value of biodiversity for these populations.

Figure 1 – Illustration taken from the book “Fabulosas fábulas de Iauareté”.



Source: Jecupé (2007, p. 25).

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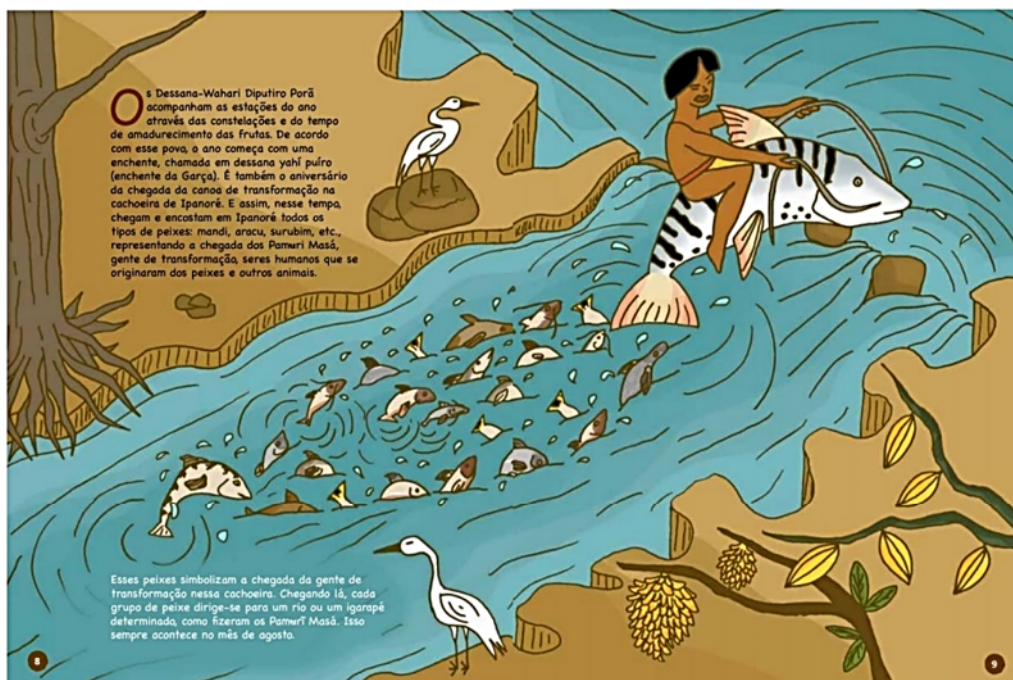
In Mirim (2014, p. 11), for example, we find the passage “there are many birds, many trees and a beautiful dam to cool off on hot days”. The character Kunumi, when presenting his village, makes a point of presenting the biological diversity that is in it, as well as the quality of the space in which he lives. This biodiversity is mainly represented in the illustrations. Figure 2 shows the entities that make up biodiversity: fish, birds, fruits, trees, river, stones, and the indigenous people themselves, all characteristic of the place where they live.

For the Dessana-Wahari Diputiro Porã people, the year begins with a flood, described in Dessana yahí puíro as a heron flood. During this period, all types of fish arrive and touch Ipanoré: mandi (*Pimelodus maculatus*), aracu (*Synaptolaemus cingulatus*), catfish, etc. (Diakara, 2011).

In the book *Yahi Puíro Ki'ti: A origem da constelação da garça*, Diakara (2011) describes scenes of the daily life of this ethnic group, its relations with nature and its beliefs. Thus, biodiversity is not restricted to components and phenomena of nature, it is also a cultural and social composition

(Diegues; Arruda; Silva; Figols; Andrade, 2000). Therefore, the appreciation of ecosystems, of species, of each being or component, confirms the importance of biodiversity for indigenous peoples.

Figure 2 – Illustration taken from the book “Yahi Puíro Kí’ti: A origem da constelação da garça”



Source: Diakara (2011, p. 6-7).

The landscape emerges from the interaction of these populations with the environment in the indigenous narratives. The texts and illustrations highlight igarapés (small rivers), rivers, lakes, beaches, forests, waterfalls, springs, dams, and other landscape components.

For these peoples, interaction with the environment is not limited to housing, it represents more than spaces or places, which is in line with the statement of Balée (2008, p. 11), “[...] landscape are meetings of people and places whose stories are printed in matter, including livingmatter”.

In the narratives, we investigated the aforementioned concept, as in the book *Fabulosas fábulas de lavareté*, by Jecupé (2007, p. 12), “[...] at the top of the forest, it had a beautiful and good view to observe all the forest and its movements”. The description of the landscape composition leads to different sensory orders, which confirms the idea that landscapes do not only concern the domain of what is seen. As Santos (2022) points out, landscape is everything we perceive, with volumes, shapes, colors, movements, and smells.

For the indigenous people, landscape is experience, it symbolizes the collective, the psychological and the sensory. Such characteristics demonstrate the affective ties that indigenous peoples have with the environment and the meanings and senses they attribute to the place they inhabit. The richness and detail with which they describe, illustrate, and differentiate the scenarios of literary productions express the topophilic content of the narratives, in the proper sense of topophilia outlined by Yi-Fu Tuan, a Sino-American geographer and writer (1930 – 2022). Therefore, they are places where the social processes of affirmation and reaffirmation of values, tastes, objectives, and meanings are developed (Tuan, 2013).

12 The integrated perception of the space and the forms of organization of production in the place where they live also presents its contours in the indigenous narratives. These contours, constituted by an agriculture of a family nature in which the production process is under the responsibility of the family (Wanderley, 2011). An agriculture that can be developed by different societies, such as traditional ones, constituted by different cultural groups, which historically maintain their ways of life, using the common goods through tillage (Diegues; Arruda; Silva; Figols; Andrade, 2000).

In this sense, indigenous family farming is diverse, each member of the people has its attributions and functions, an essential practice for the survival of these peoples. These practices are related to the cultivation of crops, fishing, fruit collection, or hunting in the forest, aiming at food or other purposes of use, avoiding waste or aggression to the Earth. As we see in the excerpt below:

The old shaman asked the Mawé people to take a bunch of açai fruit and make wine from it to accompany the fish or crueira porridge. The nutritious fruit gave the indigenous people the strength

to resume the fields, their orchards, to make their fishing canoes (Hakiy, 2019, p. 32).

Another example of indigenous family farming practices is seen in Wapichana (2019, p. 69): "The Taurepang people built their village on the edge of a river, surrounded by a forest. They were always involved in hunting, fishing and fruit gathering."

In this way, the stories demonstrate the fundamentals of indigenous family farming, which occurs without the intention of accumulating wealth. They are collective practices organized and shared through traditional knowledge that are much more characterized by the management of ecosystems, instead of promoting drastic transformations in these ecosystems. As is evident in the contents analyzed, the diversity of species and components of the production system is the basis of support and balance of production, to meet the most diverse needs of these peoples.

The context of tillage, use, sustainability, and conservation practices are evident in the literary productions and the narratives show the concern of the indigenous people with the rational use of common goods, which corresponds to the conservation and well-being of the community, not forgetting the generations to come (Diegues, 2008). The use and tillage of biodiversity through conservation practices ensure sustainability among indigenous peoples.

Sustainability refers to everything that can be supported, conserved, and maintained (Siche; Agostinho; Ortega; Romeiro, 2007). We verified the use and sustainable management in *Fabulosas fábulas de lavareté* in the description of the production of canoes, carried out by the character lavaretê-mirim, who asks permission from an old jatobá tree to remove its bark, without having to cut down it (Jecupé, 2007). As Viveiros de Castro (2002) points out, it is this network of bonds, which postulates reciprocal care and an ethics of respectful coexistence among all forms of life, that the indigenous conception of the environment is established. In the narratives, plants, animals, rivers, forests are presented as elements inhabited by the spirits of the ancestors, therefore, deserving of all respect and care.

In the narratives, the concern with waste is evident. Therefore, the warning for the proper use of common goods is given to both indigenous and

non-indigenous people, preventing the environment from being impacted in a disastrous way, with irreversible damage to the planet.

From the perspective of native peoples, explanations for natural and social phenomena occur through origin myths – explanations of the world (cosmos). The indigenous reality is expanded, as it constantly relates the real to the supernatural (Guesse, 2011). This explains why myths and legends are frequent genres in indigenous narratives. Tolovi (2011) clarifies that myth arises culturally to explain the origin of things. Likewise, legends present the culture of the fantastic and the supernatural.

In the book *Nós: uma antologia de literatura indígena*, in the narrative *Wth̄ siburu, arumã sieve*, by Diakara (2019, p. 81): “An old indigenous man gathered the children in front of the longhouse to tell the sacred story about the origin of the Earth”. In *Yahi Puíro Ki 't: A origem da constelação da garça*, from Diakara (2011), addresses the Dessana-Wahari Diputiro Porã and reveals the explanation that these people attribute to the origin of the heron constellation.

Myths and legends in the narratives also have the important role of sensitizing everyone not to waste the goods, as in the example of makukáwas, “*visajentos*” animals that cannot be killed in excess by a single person, because the hunter is punished if this happens, for not killing only what is necessary (Yamã, 2012). Thus, myths and legends are part of the reality of indigenous peoples with different perspectives.

Therefore, the explanations of the meanings of the context show the interrelationship of indigenous peoples with the environment, given the connection with environmental themes, corresponding to the expectations of ecocriticism, since they contribute to combating the degradation of biological diversity. In view of these findings, we carried out the last step of the content analysis.

The results obtained in the previous phases were organized to convey clarity and adequacy to the objective of the research, so that the raw data were summarized and categorized according to the method. Although it is not a mandatory process, most analysis procedures are systematized in categories (Bardin, 2015).

We opted for the semantic categorization, based on the thematic axes, established in the context (table 3), so that the acquired results were

explained, corresponding to the regrouping of the data based on analogies, through defined criteria (Franco, 2018).

With the definition of the categories of analysis, inference and interpretation were carried out, transmitting logical deductions, in accordance with the analysis performed, complemented by theoretical bases.

The indigenous narratives value the culture of the native peoples of Brazil, highlighting the *cultural identity* of the various ethnicities. For Bisch (1998), cultural identity is formed by a set of characteristics, which can be both individual and collective. These characteristics help the individual in the formation of their identity, in their self-construction and interaction with others, always seeking to be treated with respect and dignity.

Table 3 – Identified context units, related to the categories. Lábrea, Amazonas

Nº	Context Units	Categories
1	Traditions, identity, customs, beliefs, rituals, and ways of life.	Identity Culture
6	Explanations for phenomena, explanations by origin myths, explanations of the world (cosmos).	
2	Ecosystem, specific and genetic diversity.	Value systems and environmental perception
3	Landscape units: igarapé (small river), river, lake, beach, forest, waterfall, spring.	
4	Family farming and indigenous family farming.	
5	Tillage, use, sustainability and conservation practices.	

Source: study data.

We infer, therefore, that indigenous narratives claim recognition, respect, and appreciation of the cultural identity of the peoples represented in these texts. Such claims are justified by the stereotypes established by the colonizers, who standardized and fictionalized the original peoples (Thiél, 2013).

To end the silencing that these communities have faced for years, indigenous literature is characterized by an emphasis on the identity of indigenous peoples (Dorrigo, 2021). The authors write their texts, considering their cultural visions and their references to show all the wealth of their peoples (Munduruku, 2017). It is important to highlight, however, that orality continues to function as a pillar in indigenous cultures and, together with written records, plays a

crucial role in the defense, propagation, and conservation of the cultural identity of these peoples (Guesse, 2013).

Indigenous children's literature highlights the interdependence of indigenous peoples with the environment, showing their deep connection with nature. This bond guarantees the survival and maintenance of the various ethnic groups culture and the development of their populations as a society (Rodrigues; Santos; Girardon, 2014).

From the indigenous perspective, there is no separation between people and what the Earth provides, everything is nature (Krenak, 2020). This conception reflects an interaction motivated by respect and the feeling of belonging, in a relationship of kinship and friendship with the environment. That is why these peoples use common goods without destroying them. For indigenous peoples, Posey (1992) points out, the forest goes beyond mere natural resources, it also symbolizes spiritual and cosmic forces that shape existence.

It is through spirituality, ancestral knowledge, memory, ways of life, customs, traditions, beliefs, practical experience of living with the Earth and other cultural identity elements that indigenous children's stories are formed.

When addressing this topic from the perspective of thought, Viveiros de Castro (2025) constructs a critique of the dominance of instrumental reason in contemporary Western thought and suggests other ways of interpreting and relating to the world, ways established by principles of reciprocity, care, sharing, and respect for multiple forms of life.

The traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples is transmitted from generation to generation and is incorporated into the daily work (Munduruku, 2020). In the narratives, we observed that this knowledge is based on a *value system and on the environmental perception* of these peoples.

The way indigenous people perceive and deal with the environment corresponds to a set of values that contributes to land use in a coherent way, ensuring conservation and sustainability, through their intrinsic, instrumental, and psychological values, namely:

Value systems determine how we view nature and these systems can vary both within and between cultures... Intrinsic values are

those values of nature itself, regardless of usefulness to human beings. Instrumental values are based on the usefulness of nature to the human being. Psychological values are those that contribute to the psychological well-being of the human being (Trombulak; Omland, Robison; Lusk; Fleischne; Brown; Domroese, 2004, p. 3).

We find examples of these value systems in the narratives, as in *Fabulosas Fábulas de Iauareté*, when the character Juruá, an expert hunter, is warned about the lack of care for the forest (Jecupé, 2007). In this example, we perceive instrumental values, as they reveal the importance of the goods that the forest provides.

We found psychological values in Guará (2012, p. 11): “at the time of planting, the shaman would go to the forest and ask permission to plant, treating his relative forest with respect.” This value is related to the emotional, spiritual and aesthetic well-being of the human being (Trombulak; Omland; Robison; Lusk; Fleischne; Brown; Domroese, 2004). In the two passages mentioned above, the authors do not present the forest as a human property, but rather, according to Kramm (2025), as a relational entity, with which it is necessary to establish bonds of respect, reciprocity, and care.

In this context, Posey (1992) emphasizes that respect for spirits works as protection for certain areas, access to these places is not allowed to everyone, only to shamans and special hunting groups. These spaces become protected reserves, with rich biological diversity, which attract several species of animals.

This reality is the result of values that directly contribute to the conservation and sustainability of biodiversity. Based on this process, a system is sustainable when it presents resilience and capacity to adapt to disturbances, whether biological, social, or economic (Martins; Noda; Noda, 2013).

In this perspective, indigenous epistemologies that weave literary contents propose a relational and integrative construction in which plants, animals, ecosystems, humans, and spiritual beings interconnect in the same complex system (Descola, 2015). On the contrary, the author adds, Western epistemologies are marked by utilitarian and dualistic anthropocentrism, which disconnects individual, object, culture, and nature, constituting the origin of today's ecological crisis.

Therefore, indigenous epistemologies help us to understand that the contemporary environmental crisis does not result exclusively from destructive economic practices, but also from a worldview based on separation and domination. From the indigenous children's literature, we can promote the much needed meeting of knowledge and identities, in which the distinct knowledge of different peoples and cultures, emphasizes Leff (2009), meet and dialogue in search of a common good.

Final considerations

The analysis undertaken of the interrelationships between indigenous children's literature and environmental sciences showed the connection of indigenous peoples with the Earth and the value of the environment for these populations. In their narratives, indigenous authors write about their cultures and build environmental histories, tell how they live, how they relate to the environment, about the care and conservation of biodiversity for the survival of their peoples, unveiling their environmental knowledge.

18 Although the environmental theme is not the focus of these narratives, the contribution of the texts to understanding the current environmental crisis is of great relevance. The ecocritical analysis showed that children's narratives can contribute to a critical reflection on cultural and environmental aspects, promoting and supporting education from the perspective of the diversity of knowledge, recognizing, respecting, and valuing the different indigenous cultures represented by written, individual or collective production.

Given the above, indigenous children's literature presents itself as a valuable resource in reflections on environmental issues in the classroom, especially when guided by ecocriticism. It can be inspiring to students in formation, awakening them to new ways of living with humanity, which value and encourage more ethical attitudes in relation to the diversity of worlds and knowledge.

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