



Multiple languages and curriculum in early childhood education¹

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Abstract

The study aims to promote a critical-reflective discussion about multiple languages in the Early Childhood Education curriculum, understanding them as elements that foster educational experiences of learning and development in childhood. It seeks to address the following questions: what are multiple languages and what is the importance of working with multiple languages in Early Childhood Education? How can experiences that respect and value multiple languages be ensured in both the curriculum and the daily practices of Early Childhood Education? The research is theoretically grounded in the contributions of Vigotsky (2009, 2010), Leontiev (2010), and Malaguzzi (1987), among others, and, from a legal perspective, in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (Brazil, 2009) and the National Common Core Curriculum (Brazil, 2017). This investigation, characterized as bibliographic and documentary, highlights that the respect and daily appreciation of multiple languages contribute to the expansion of repertoires related to the knowledge produced by humanity. It identifies play as the main activity in early childhood and argues that working with multiple languages enhances the development of a sensitive and aesthetic perspective in both children and adults.

Keywords: Early childhood education; multiple languages; play; curriculum.

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Múltiplas linguagens e currículo na educação infantil

Resumo

O estudo objetiva promover uma discussão crítico-reflexiva acerca das múltiplas linguagens no currículo da Educação Infantil, compreendendo-as como elementos que favorecem experiências educativas de aprendizagem e de desenvolvimento na infância. Busca ainda esclarecer os seguintes questionamentos: o que são múltiplas linguagens e qual a importância do trabalho com as múltiplas linguagens na Educação Infantil? E, do ponto de vista metodológico, como garantir, no currículo e no cotidiano da Educação Infantil, experiências que respeitem e valorizem as múltiplas linguagens? A pesquisa está ancorada teoricamente nas contribuições de Vigotsky (2009, 2010), Leonteiv (2010), Malaguzzi (1987) entre outros e, do ponto de vista legal, nas Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil (Brasil, 2009) e na Base nacional Comum Curricular (Brasil, 2017). Vale salientar que a investigação, de cunho bibliográfico e documental, evidencia que o respeito e a valorização cotidiana das múltiplas linguagens favorecem a ampliação de repertórios sobre os conhecimentos produzidos pela humanidade. Além disso, indica a brincadeira como atividade principal na primeira infância e argumenta sobre o trabalho com as múltiplas linguagens como favorecedor no aprimoramento do olhar sensível e estético de crianças e de adultos.

Palavras-chave: Educação infantil; múltiplas linguagens; brincadeiras; currículo.



Lenguajes múltiples y currículo en la educación infantil

Resumen

El estudio tiene como objetivo promover una discusión crítico-reflexiva acerca de los múltiples lenguajes en el currículo de la Educación Infantil, entendiéndolos como elementos que favorecen experiencias educativas de aprendizaje y desarrollo en la infancia. Se busca responder a las siguientes preguntas: ¿qué son los múltiples lenguajes y cuál es la importancia de trabajar con ellos en la Educación Infantil? ¿Cómo garantizar, en el currículo y en la vida cotidiana de la Educación Infantil, experiencias que respeten y valoren los múltiples lenguajes? La investigación se fundamenta teóricamente en las contribuciones de Vigotsky (2009, 2010), Leontiev (2010) y Malaguzzi (1987), entre otros, y, desde el punto de vista legal, en las Directrices Curriculares Nacionales para la Educación Infantil (Brasil, 2009) y en la Base Nacional Común Curricular (Brasil, 2017). La investigación, de carácter bibliográfico y documental, evidencia que el respeto y la valoración cotidiana de los múltiples lenguajes favorecen la ampliación de repertorios sobre los conocimientos producidos por la humanidad. Señala el juego como actividad principal en la primera infancia y argumenta que el trabajo con los múltiples lenguajes contribuye al desarrollo de una mirada sensible y estética en niños y adultos.

Palabras clave: Educación infantil; múltiples lenguajes; juego; currículo.



Introduction

Upon arriving at Early Childhood Education institutions, children—conceived as historical subjects, holders of rights, and endowed with the capacity for critical consciousness—bring with them a repertoire of knowledge. Thus, it is the responsibility of Early Childhood Education, among other functions, to articulate and expand such knowledge alongside the knowledge constructed by humanity, through mediation between adults and children, and between children and their peers, while valuing the diverse languages of and in childhood.

Starting from the premise that it is necessary to overcome the historically constructed view that attributes centrality to written language in Early Childhood Education—especially in preschool, due to its function as “pre-literacy”—we advocate for the need to problematize such an approach. This is aimed at breaking this logic, de-marginalizing, and promoting experiences with multiple languages, considering that multiple forms of expression and languages are fundamental for the learning and integral development of infants and children.

Thus, we seek to clarify the following questions: what are multiple languages and what is the importance of working with them in Early Childhood Education? From a methodological point of view, how can we guarantee, within the curriculum and daily life, experiences that respect and value multiple languages? The present study, of a bibliographic and documentary nature, aims to promote a critical reflection on multiple languages in the Early Childhood Education curriculum, understanding them as elements that favor educational experiences of learning and development.

In order to compile a preliminary list of relevant sources—albeit incomplete, given the breadth and complexity of the theme—we carried out the process of mapping bibliographic and documentary sources to compose the *corpus* of analysis for our investigation. This *corpus* was organized based on theoretical contributions from: Historical-Cultural Psychology, according to Vygotsky



(2009; 2010), Leontiev (2010), and Davydov (1988); Historical-Critical Pedagogy, in Saviani (2021) and Lazaretti (2022); and the analysis of legislation based on two normative documents that have important implications for pedagogical practice in Early Childhood Education: the National Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (Brasil, 2009) and the National Common Curricular Base (Brasil, 2017), with a view toward conceptual discussion and its articulation with teaching *práxis*.

In an attempt to understand meanings, senses, and intentions present in the textual discourses of scientific literature and documents, as proposed by Bardin (2011), following a preliminary reading (*leitura flutuante*), we performed an exploration and meticulous recording of relevant information within the perspectives outlined by the authors, in which codes were identified (languages; multiple languages; Early Childhood Education). The categorization process was based on the assumptions of Bardin (2011), considering criteria such as mutual exclusion, homogeneity, relevance, objectivity, fidelity, and productivity, so as to ensure rigor in the organization and interpretation of data.

Throughout the text, we weave a dialogical construction that aims to problematize, expand, strengthen, and inspire the debate on pedagogical practices in Early Childhood Education, based on a curricular organization that favors the promotion of intentionally planned experiences. Consequently, the text is organized into three thematic units: initially, we engage in a dialogue about language in light of the theoretical contributions of historical-cultural psychology; next, we problematize the need to advance the discussion regarding multiple languages in the curriculum and the didactics of/in Early Childhood Education, considering the normative points of the DCNEIs and the BNCC; subsequently, we bring discussions on methodological limits and possibilities from the perspective of a “developmental didactics” in Early Childhood Education.



Languages in Early Childhood Education: Reflections from a Historical-Cultural Perspective

The child has a hundred languages (and a hundred hundred hundred more) but they steal ninety-nine. The school and the culture separate the head from the body. They tell the child: to think without hands, to do without head, to listen and not to speak, to understand without joy, to love and to marvel only at Easter and Christmas. They tell the child: to discover a world that already exists.

Malaguzzi (2006)

Human beings, from their earliest age, possess diverse ways of communicating and expressing what they feel. From the first days of life, infants communicate and express themselves through various forms, such as crying, movements, facial expressions, and even silences. These initial forms of communication gradually evolve into speech and play, which are characteristic of very young and young children. This refers, therefore, to multiple languages, or, as Loris Malaguzzi (2006) states in the opening passage of our dialogue, the child has a hundred languages. In view of this, the school of/for childhoods faces the challenge of remaining a living, sensitive, instigating, and challenging organism for learning within a safe and purposeful setting.

Discussions regarding multiple languages in Early Childhood Education gained notoriety in Brazil through the expansion of debates surrounding the Malaguzzian approach and the Reggio Emilia experience². In dialogue with other intellectuals such as Gianni Rodari (1920-1980) and Jerome Bruner (1915-2016), Malaguzzi undertook a political, cultural, and pedagogical movement that proposed a revolutionary educational change for the education of children in early childhood education. An example of this movement can be seen in the exhibition *L'occhio se salta il muro*³, created in 1981. This exhibition documented the potential of the thinking of the child-researcher, influencing a pedagogical approach focused on the hundred languages. “*Qui ci sono bambini e adulti che cercano il piacere di giocare, lavorare, parlare, pensare, inventare insieme*” (Malaguzzi, 1987, p. 4). That is, a documentation of pedagogical work that



evidences the presence of children and adults seeking the pleasure of playing, working, talking, thinking, and inventing together.

Despite the unquestionable and immeasurable contribution of such a perspective, the idea of working with multiple languages could already be identified in other theoretical perspectives such as: 1. Vygotsky's (2010) Cultural-Historical Psychology, which posits language as a higher psychic function, and that its development unfolds starting from social language, passing through egocentric language, and concluding in inner language; 2. the discussions of the Bakhtin Circle (2016), for whom language constitutes a communicative/expressive relationship that occurs in a given interaction between speaker and interlocutor within a dialogic continuum of verbal and non-verbal constructions—that is, language as activity, established in a concrete process of human existence situated within historical and political determinants, among others.

But, after all, when we refer to multiple languages in Early Childhood Education, what are we talking about? Before attempting to answer this question, it is first necessary to emphasize that we understand children as socio-historical subjects, endowed with the capacity for critical consciousness, who produce culture; political subjects with rights, who learn actively, develop, and construct and reconstruct meanings in a permanent relationship with culture.

According to Vygotsky (2009), culture provides the individual with symbolic systems of reality representation; that is, the universe of significations that allows for (re)creation, (re)interpretation, and (re)signification. Within culture, the child comes into contact with a set of expressions, knowledge, expertise, customs, habits, beliefs, values, norms, and artistic constructions, for example.

It is also important to point out that we understand language as a symbolic system of communication for human groups. According to Vygotsky (2009), language is a higher psychic function that has a reciprocal relationship—initially independent, then articulated—with thought; that is, the development of language implies the development of thought. In the author's words, "Language is, above all, a means of social communication, of enunciation and



understanding” (Vygotsky, 2009, p. 11). Furthermore, he adds that, until recently, Psychology mistakenly believed that the means of communication were the sign, the word, or the sound; that is, Psychology reduced communication only to speech and symbols, disregarding the social context that marks the interaction between people.

Language originates first of all as a means of communication between the child and the people around them. Only later, converted into internal language, does it transform into an internal mental function that provides the fundamental means for the child’s thinking (Vygotskii; Luria; Leontiev, 2010, p. 114).

Constituted by genetic, biological (brain), cultural, and psychosocial aspects, language plays a crucial role in development and has, according to Vygotsky (2009), two functions: social exchange, which is linked to the communicative process; and generalized thought, which allows human beings to make use of instruments that are not concretely within reach, but rather abstractly—for example, when we access memory and recall a certain meaning of a socially internalized sign. In other words, accessing the mental image of a car without necessarily being in front of one. This complex process of internalizing signs, meanings, and senses is constructed through sociocultural mediation.

Thus, language—a higher psychic function—is closely linked to thought and, consequently, to learning. In this sense, interactions and play are configured as primordial elements in Early Childhood Education, guiding axes of pedagogical practices and, therefore, foundational to the curriculum and the planning of teaching action, and to a didactics that favors development.

Leontiev (2010, p. 64) emphasizes that each stage of psychic development is characterized by an explicit relationship “between the child and the main reality at that stage and by a precise and dominant type of activity.” During the Early Childhood Education stage, we identify three periods of psychic development pointed out by Davidov (p. 74, 1988, our emphasis):



1. **La comunicación emocional directa** con los adultos es propia del bebé desde las primeras semanas de vida y hasta el año [...]

2. **La actividad objetal-manipulatoria** es característica para el niño desde el año hasta los tres años. Realizando esta actividad (primero en colaboración con los adultos) el niño reproduce los procedimientos de acción con las cosas, elaborados socialmente; surge en él el lenguaje, la designación con sentido de las cosas, la percepción categorial generalizada del mundo objetal y el pensamiento concreto en acciones. [...]

3. **La actividad de juego** es la más característica para el niño de tres a seis años. En su realización surgen en el pequeño la imaginación y la función simbólica, la orientación en el sentido general de las relaciones y acciones humanas, la capacidad de separar en ellas los aspectos de subordinación y dirección; también se forman las vivencias generalizadas y la orientación consciente en éstas. (our emphasis)

It is emphasized that this understanding is essential for grounding a praxis that understands the leading activity as the ‘basis’ for the emergence of other activities by children, in which psychic processes are reorganized. It is the activity that governs development, the most important changes in psychic processes, and the psychological traits of the child’s personality, and in which psychological changes are observed.

Given the importance of playful language for the constitution of the human being, as pointed out by Vygotsky (2010), Leontiev (2010), and Davidov (1988), we highlight that the playful role, marked by the representative action of the real, enables the child, through the capacity for generalization, to reproduce daily situations. “The initial form of play is that of games [...], such as, for example, a child playing at riding a hobbyhorse. The basic characteristic, the thing that most catches our attention in these plays, is the existence of an imaginary situation” (Leontiev, 2010, p. 132).

Play (*brincadeira*)—a noun derived from the verb to play (*brincar*), whose Latin origin derives from *vinculum*, meaning “bond,” which in turn comes from the verb *vincire*, meaning “to bind, seduce, enchant”—presupposes the child’s action upon something and has an intrinsic relationship with development and learning. Thus, the child’s action in play is based on their involvement in



the activity of transition between the real dimension (of the real conditions of existence) and the interpretation of reality in make-believe. Play is marked by the evolutionary flow that follows the ‘law of play development.’

The leading activity undergoes changes guided by the ‘law of play development,’ that is, by the transformations of play throughout childhood. This means that play is an evident activity in the development of infants and children, as pointed out by Leontiev (2010, p. 133, our emphasis):

The classic games that initiate children’s play in the **pre-school period are plot-based games** with an explicit role, an explicit imaginary situation, and a latent rule. The law of play development, as indicated by Elkonin’s experimental findings, says that play also evolves from an initial situation where the role and the imaginary situation are explicit and the rule is latent, to a situation where the rule becomes explicit and the imaginary situation and the role become latent.

Plot-based games or role-playing—playing house, doctor, teacher, among others—do not have previously defined rules with established objectives, such as scoring points. But this does not mean there are no rules. This type of situation has particular rules for each situation, meaning they begin and end when the ‘dramatic’ situation concludes. On the other hand, games with rules can be reproduced by different groups in various scenarios. They include objectives defined in advance and summon the child to master the rule and, consequently, their behavior.

Furthermore, Leontiev (2010) draws attention to the existence of games situated on the boundary between role-playing and games with rules. These are boundary games—didactic games, dramatization games, improvisation, and sports.

They, in fact, are situated on the limit of classic pre-school play and constitute a form of transition games, either to non-play activity, for which they directly prepare the way, or to the games of the school period of the child’s psychic development. They are **didactic games**—in the broad sense of the word—and **dramatization games**, on one hand, and **sports and improvisation games**, on the other (Leontiev, 2010, p. 140, our emphasis).



Didactic games represent a transition from playful activity to non-playful activity. In the words of Leontiev (2010, p. 140), “Didactic games are games that train the development of cognitive operations necessary in the child’s subsequent school activity.” Thus, it can be stated that the dramatization game is already a type of “pre-aesthetic” activity. Unlike role-playing, in dramatization games, the child does not reproduce behaviors in a generalized way, but thinks about details, gestures, and characteristics. The dramatization game is, therefore, a possible form of transition to aesthetic activity.

Dramatization, sporting (belonging to the school period of childhood), and improvisation games mark the exhaustion of playful activity in its pre-school forms; that is, although they remain as play, where the focus is on the process, thought directed toward the result and the product simultaneously appears.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that children play the same things in different ways; therefore, it is necessary to observe to understand the meaning the game has for the child. In this perspective, there is a pressing need to permanently discuss the centrality of play in the curriculum and daily life of Early Childhood Education, and the role of initial and continuing teacher education for the permanent exercise of observing and listening to children in their daily lives.

Multiple languages, curriculum, and didactics of/in Early Childhood Education: dialogues based on the DCNEIs and the BNCC

A didactics of invention

To feel the intimacy of the world one must know:

- a) That the splendor of the morning does not open with a knife
- b) The way violets prepare the day to die
- c) Why red-banded butterflies have a devotion to tombs
- d) Whether the man who plays his existence on a bassoon in the afternoon has salvation
- e) That a river flowing between 2 hyacinths carries more tenderness than a river flowing between 2 lizards
- f) How to catch the voice of a fish



g) Which side of the night moistens first.

etc.

etc.

etc.

Unlearning 8 hours a day teaches the principles.

Barros (2016, p. 13).

The excerpt from Manoel de Barros's poem mobilizes us to reflect on the intrinsic relationship between sensitivity and rationality in the pedagogical practice of Early Childhood Education, as this stage of basic education calls for us to unlearn old modes—constructed under notions of transmissive Pedagogies—and to advance in strengthening a didactics of invention, that is, a 'developmental didactics.'

When we refer to the child's multiple languages, we recognize their right to manifest themselves in their varied forms of expression—drawings, paintings, sculptures, movements, play, speech—which are not always valued, understood, or encouraged. However, before deepening the debate on multiple languages, we consider it essential to discuss didactics in Early Childhood Education, given that one of the purposes of this work is to think about multiple languages in their theoretical-conceptual and practical dimensions—that is, their presence in the daily life of Early Childhood Education.

We situate ourselves within the perspective of Historical-Critical Pedagogy and Historical-Cultural Psychology, counter to the trend of uncritical neoliberal pedagogical thoughts. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the defense of a didactics in Early Childhood Education. A didactics that considers Early Childhood Education as the first stage of Basic Education, mediated in collective, non-home-based education institutions; that understands children as singular subjects in their particularities and plural in their aspects of collective identity, belonging to specific groups within situated historical, economic, religious, ethnic, and geographical contexts, etc.

Distancing ourselves from a pedagogical practice that is either spontaneous or merely preparatory for the child's access to elementary school,



we argue that the democratization of the debate on didactics in Early Childhood Education is urgent. In this perspective, we anchor ourselves in Lazaretti (2022), based on Davidov (1988), emphasizing the pressing need for developmental teaching, in which the child's formation must be guided by pedagogical means that stimulate their maximum potential. As Vygotsky (2010, p. 114) states, "the only good teaching is that which gets ahead of development." Thus, teaching is essential for learning; it needs to be intentionally planned, that is, systematically organized.

Regarding the curriculum, we understand it as a device constituted by a "set of practices that seek to articulate the experiences and knowledge of children with the knowledge that is part of the cultural, artistic, environmental, scientific, and technological heritage, so as to promote the integral development of children from 0 to 5 years of age," as expressed in the DCNEI (Brazil, 2010).

In the words of Saviani (2021, p. 17), "a curriculum is, therefore, a school in operation; that is, a school performing the function that is proper to it." A school whose dimensions of space-time-interactions are configured as a terrain for the construction of knowledge in the most diverse areas and languages, in situations of interaction between the child and instruments, their peers, and adults, including the teacher.

It follows that part of the teacher's work is to reflect critically, select, organize, plan, mediate, and monitor the set of practices and interactions, ensuring the plurality of situations that promote the full development of children (Brazil, 2017, p. 39).

In the meantime, the valorization of multiple languages in Early Childhood Education suggests practices in which the teacher, as an attentive observer, understands educating and caring as inseparable dimensions and can: 1. mediate and provide opportunities for interactions and play—the structuring axes of pedagogical practice—which guarantee the rights to learning and development (coexisting, participating, playing, exploring, expressing, knowing oneself) and which respect, value, and enhance the multiple languages in/of



childhood. 2. Ensure planning where the fields of experience are not disciplinary components; therefore, the focus shifts from organization by ‘disciplines’ to the child’s activity in relation to ‘objects’ of learning (knowledge about themselves and the world). And what does this mean?

In the recent history of Early Childhood Education in Brazil, experiences were previously organized according to ‘axes of work,’ as set out in the 1998 Curricular References. On the other hand, in the approach by fields of experience (Brazil, 2017), the activity of the ‘learning’ child—protagonist and investigator—is what is in focus, and from this activity, the contents⁴ involved emerge rather than the other way around. This ensures, as established in Article 9 of MEC/CNE Resolution No. 05/09, which sets the National Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI), varied and ‘transdisciplinary’⁵ experiences in relations of critical, welcoming, and democratic pedagogical mediation that:

I promote knowledge of self and the world through the expansion of sensory, expressive, and bodily experiences that enable broad movement, expression of individuality, and respect for the child’s rhythms and desires; II Favor the children’s immersion in different languages and their progressive mastery of various genres and forms of expression: gestural, verbal, plastic, dramatic, and musical; III Provide children with experiences of narratives, appreciation, and interaction with oral and written language, and coexistence with different supports and oral and written textual genres; ... VII Provide ethical and aesthetic experiences with other children and cultural groups that broaden their reference standards and identities in dialogue and knowledge of diversity; ... IX Promote children’s relationship and interaction with diversified manifestations of music, plastic and graphic arts, cinema, photography, dance, theater, poetry, and literature; XI Foster children’s interaction with and knowledge of Brazilian cultural manifestations and traditions; ... XII Enable the use of recorders, projectors, computers, cameras, and other technological and media resources (Brazil, 2009, emphasis added).

An analysis of the presence of the term ‘multiple languages’ in the DCNEI (2009) document reveals that the expression is cited only once, mentioning that the Secretariat of Basic Education, through the General Coordination of Early Childhood Education (COGEI), is developing curricular guidelines through a



process of democratic debate and specialized technical consultancy on various themes, including “multiple languages of boys and girls in the daily life of education” (Brazil, p. 31, 2009).

Expanding the search to the thematic unit ‘languages,’ we identify that it appears only twice. First, when emphasizing that the “pedagogical proposal of Early Childhood Education institutions must aim to guarantee the child access to processes of appropriation, renewal, and articulation of knowledge and learning of different languages [...]” (Brazil, 2009, p. 18). Second, when mentioning the guarantee of experiences that “favor the immersion of children in different languages and the progressive mastery by them of various genres and forms of expression: gestural, verbal, plastic, dramatic, and musical” (Brazil, 2009, p. 25). Given the complexity, emergence, and breadth of the theme, the study of the DCNEI highlights the need for discussion on the subject of multiple languages, considering its citation in law and its urgency in pedagogical praxis.

Just as in the DCNEI (2010), in the National Common Curricular Base – BNCC (Brazil, 2017), Early Childhood Education chapter, the term ‘multiple languages’ appears only twice. The first is in the summary of the field of experience *listening, speaking, thought, and imagination*, stating that in the implications with “multiple languages, children actively constitute themselves as singular subjects belonging to a social group” (Brazil, 2017, p. 42).

The second occurrence is in the learning and development objective in the field of experience *space, time, quantities, relations, and transformations* for the age group of young children, noting that children must “record observations, manipulations, and measurements, using multiple languages (drawing, recording by numbers, or spontaneous writing), in different supports” (Brazil, 2017, p. 51). This evidence reveals a gap and, given the importance of the multiple forms of expression of infants and children, this finding exposes the need to advance in problematizing the debate on working with multiple languages in Early Childhood Education.



We understand that working with multiple languages can be organized through various organizational modalities of the teacher's work, such as investigation projects, didactic sequences, workshops, studios (*ateliers*), among others, without losing sight of interactions and play as foundational for the organization of planning.

In this sense, the planning of routines and daily practices, with educational intentionality, must prioritize the diverse possibilities for valuing and stimulating multiple languages. For this, it is necessary to consider the organization of time, space, and materials, as established in the DCNEI (Brazil, 2010). This means that for the organization of time aimed at the development of activities, according to the needs, interests, curiosities, and doubts of the children and the observations of the teachers, one must keep in mind: what cannot be missing in the education of infants and children? What criteria should be used to include or exclude certain activities? How to work by field of experience? How to organize a routine with a 4-hour daily journey in mind, for example?

The organization of different environments must consider the particularities of each group of infants and children. Furthermore, classroom environments must be safe and attractive⁶, favoring the free manipulation of different materials in various circumscribed 'corners,' allowing free circulation and respecting the interest of infants and children to move and explore different spaces in the room. In the case of activities outside the reference rooms or activity rooms, we understand that planning is equally important.

The choice of materials must account for safety, diversity, and sufficient quantity to serve the children in the class. Therefore, it is necessary to plan work with diversified materials, such as books and toys, and open-ended materials (*materiais de largo alcance*)—cones, spools, pieces of wood, boxes of various sizes, fabrics, lids of various sizes, tires, natural elements, among others. Regarding this, Vygotsky (2010, p. 131, emphasis added) states that:

[...] **there are open-ended toys**, so to speak (sticks, blocks, etc., whose role in play we have already described); they can participate in various



actions. In contrast to them, we can differentiate specialized objects, that is, specialized toys. Among them, we can distinguish those that do not have fixed functions and those that do, such as, for example, a toy representing an acrobat swinging on a horizontal bar. This is a pseudo-toy.

Here, the need to provide opportunities for children to explore materials whose primary function is (re)defined in play becomes clear, avoiding access to materials that provide little ‘sustenance’ for creative nutrition.

In this process of planning and organization, the importance of observation by teachers cannot be ignored; therefore, documentation is an essential process and demands the selection of instruments—such as cell phones for recording voice and video and making notes in the device’s notepad. Having such tools within reach is an important condition for ‘capturing’ significant moments of children’s interactions in daily life. In view of the above, it is reinforced that daily life is a valuable source for the construction of narratives and daily records, understood, according to Ostetto (2017, p. 15),

[...] as an instrument of pedagogical work, as a reflective document of teachers, a space in which they mark what has been lived—achievements, discoveries, uncertainties, questions, fears, daring—and in whose dynamics they can take ownership of their practices, in a context of deep relationship with teacher training for early childhood education.

In view of the above, it is essential that the teacher believes in the “creative potential of children” (Cunha; Souza, 2022, p. 121) and practices observation and listening. For this, it is necessary for this adult, the reference professional, to establish: 1. an observation protocol (Will it be collective observation? Individual observation? Which aspects to emphasize? Will it be possible to perceive the child in their socio-emotional dimension? Cognitive? Psychomotor?); and 2. the habit of recording their observations in audio and written narratives to compose pedagogical documentation (murals, portfolios, logbooks, individual and collective reports).



These are foundational, though not unique, conditions for democratic and participatory work, as consequently, the needs and interests of children, families, and teachers are considered in the curriculum. Furthermore, for approaches involving investigation projects, studios, workshops, and/or didactic sequences that respect and stimulate oral, gestural, plastic, dramatic, visual, playful, musical, written, virtual, photographic, and cinematographic language, for example, these conditions are indispensable.

Multiple languages: limits and possibilities in Early Childhood Education

The work of respecting, valuing, and stimulating children's multiple forms of expression and communication requires a paradigm shift from the teacher—that is, the incorporation of new stances and practices. This constitutes a challenge to be overcome, given that this process involves the guarantee of public policies for training, valorization, and good working conditions, as well as adequate remuneration for teaching professionals.

Furthermore, it is necessary to advance the understanding that pedagogical work with multiple languages is not restricted to oral and written language, but rather encompasses the diverse forms of manifestation, expression, and communication of infants and children. Consequently, it is necessary to de-marginalize these forms of expression so that they occupy a privileged time and space within the curriculum.

Without exhausting the debate, we present below some points to stimulate the discussion on pedagogical work with multiple languages in Early Childhood Education, based on a curriculum that values and promotes learning experiences from the perspective of a developmental didactics.

Pedagogical work with the child's oral and written language in early childhood education institutions can be organized to consider the child's perspective in interface with pedagogical intentionality, enabling interactions with literate culture. In this sense, the teacher must provide opportunities for



the child to experience reflective activities, as well as to elaborate and test different hypotheses about written culture through play with orality—such as *parlendas* (nursery rhymes), tongue-twisters, poems, wheel songs, riddles, and literature in verse and prose (classical, contemporary, national, and regional tales). Additionally, contact with various discourse genres (oral and written) that possess different social functions and typologies and are part of the culture in which the child is inserted—such as a birthday invitation, a shopping list, supermarket inserts, or pamphlets—is important.

Regarding artistic activities in early childhood education, visual arts, for example, play a fundamental role in developing a sensitive, attentive, investigative, and creative gaze; in expanding aesthetic, cultural, and historical knowledge; and in respecting diverse forms of artistic-cultural manifestation. It is worth noting that through plastic and visual language, children represent and (re)signify their experience in the world. Finally, it is emphasized that artistic activity involves both the appreciation and the creation of works.

Regarding appreciation, this involves the movement of encountering and inciting sensitivity, imagination, the aesthetic gaze, and the respect and understanding of others' ideas through engagement with the productions and constructions of a culture. As for creation, it encompasses construction and production: drawings, paintings, modeling, sculptures, cinema, architecture, photography, and other forms of expression.

We call man's creative activity that in which something new is created. It matters little whether what is created is an object of the external world or a construction of the mind or feeling, known only to the person in whom the construction dwells and manifests (Vygotskii, 2018, p. 13).

By manipulating and exploring materials⁷, whose materiality allows them to act with creative freedom and a repertoire of knowledge socially constructed through culture, the child transforms the environment and “appropriates pictorial language: color, line, texture, density, spatial occupation [...]” (Oliveira, 2012, p. 136). In this sense, various materials can be used to leave marks on



supports that receive the impressions left by the children and enable this artistic appropriation. The conclusion reached is that if we want solid foundations for children's creative construction, we need to broaden the aesthetic experiences of both teachers and children, for "the richer the experience, the richer the imagination must also be" (Vygotskii, 2018, p. 24).

It is noteworthy that the child is interested in investigating different types of "texture, color, temperature, taste, smell" (Oliveira, 2012, p. 135). In view of this, for the child to have experiences with visual language that provide opportunities for plastic exploration and the production of marks, the teacher must facilitate bodily activities for the child's movement and action in the world, providing opportunities for the exploration of various materials—marking instruments (brushes, paints, chalk, rollers, pencils, pens, charcoal, sponges, their own fingers) and supports (paper of different weights, the floor, walls, boxes, among others). Through this, the child explores materials and their materialities, thereby expanding creativity.

It is also important to highlight that the experience with visual language involves the construction of meanings within the child's biopsychosocial interaction with themselves and others. Therefore, it is beneficial to provide access to and appreciation of artworks ranging from the artistic canons to popular culture, in addition to offering opportunities for (re)interpretation⁸ so that children can construct their own works.

Furthermore, we note that experiences with image, light, and shadow are examples of significant possibilities for expanding the child's aesthetic and creative repertoire, since different combinations can be explored using various materials (boxes, toys, fabric, and paper). Therefore, it is worthwhile to invest in the exploration of different luminosities in play with lights and shadows that sharpen creativity, investigation, thought, and other dimensions of the child's development and learning.

Regarding the sonic dimension, we emphasize that sonority is present in human life even before birth. Through sounds, the child perceives rhythm



and the functioning of the world around them. Upon birth, children come into contact with different sounds and music of various rhythms. According to Brito (2003), the presence of music has been recorded in sacred rituals and festivities throughout human history since the most remote times.

For Oliveira (2012), sounds and music (with their parameters of pitch, timbre, intensity, density, duration, etc.) involve, entertain, and capture the child's attention, mobilizing feelings and emotions, revealing beliefs and values, and serving as forms of cultural manifestation that carry information and meanings.

Regarding wheel games (*brincadeiras de roda*) with popular songs in the public domain, these are important activities for fostering the culture of childhood, as contact with and appreciation of different rhythms, sounds, and melodies stimulate higher psychic functions such as oral language and memory in articulation with the motor act.

It is also worth noting that Law No. 11,769 of August 18, 2008, mandates music teaching in basic education, which presupposes that the teacher builds a musical repertoire comprising different musical genres and provides children with the exercise of auditory perception, expression, and bodily awareness—movement, balance, and interaction with others. Taking this into consideration, experiences with sonority and music should consider different combinations of volume, speed, timbre, intensity, rhythm, duration, melody, harmony, and meter, for example.

To this end, it is necessary for the teacher to research repertoires and musical instruments that allow children to experience wheel games, popular songs, the appreciation of classical and contemporary compositions of Brazilian popular music, regional music, and games involving rhymes, sung stories, as well as the perception, listening, and reproduction of nature sounds and the production of sounds with their own bodies, among other sonic explorations.

That said, working with multiple languages implies a socially referenced pedagogical action committed to the learning and integral development of



infants and children. This movement undoubtedly requires processes of teacher training. Thus, the curriculum and pedagogical practice favor the expansion of children's repertoires regarding the knowledge produced by humanity, while providing opportunities for the refinement of a sensitive and aesthetic gaze from the earliest age in childhood.

Final considerations

Let us return to the problematizing questions of our dialogue: what are multiple languages and what is the importance of working with multiple languages in Early Childhood Education? From a methodological point of view, how can we ensure, within the curriculum and daily life, experiences that respect and value multiple languages?

In order to weave a critical reflection on a curriculum that promotes good experiences—one that respects and fosters the valorization of multiple languages in Early Childhood Education—this theoretical study highlights that working with multiple languages presupposes a socially referenced pedagogical action committed to the learning and integral development of infants and children.

Guaranteeing experiences that respect and value multiple languages in the daily routine of Early Childhood Education, and consequently in the curriculum, predicts that Early Childhood Education is not a time to think without hands, to act without the head, to listen and not speak, or to understand without joy and wonder. Furthermore, it is a time for scientific, cultural, environmental, and artistic discoveries, among many others; therefore, it is a time to (re)invent what exists and discover what does not.

Therefore, in the meantime, within the planning intentionally constructed by the teacher, play is a *sine qua non* element in the curriculum. Play is configured as the child's privileged activity during the pre-school period, enabling them to investigate and construct meanings regarding the diverse forms of cultural and artistic manifestation—and so many others—of different peoples across



varied geographical and temporal contexts. Thus, the daily respect for and valorization of multiple languages favor the expansion of repertoires regarding the knowledge produced by humanity and provide opportunities for the refinement of a sensitive and aesthetic gaze from the earliest age in childhood through diverse experiences.

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Notes

- 1 Translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI.
- 2 A city located in northern Italy which, after the Second World War (1939-1945), having the pedagogue Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994) as one of the great exponents of progressive ideas, countered the hegemonic religious thought of the Catholic Church and presented a new proposal for the education of children.
- 3 When the eye jumps over the wall. Free translation.
- 4 We understand that content is what the child learns and what the teacher intends to teach. It arises in and from everyday experiences; in other words, when children play in the park, discover and ask about earthworms in the soil, about birds in the tree, about the functioning of the mother tongue, about their own body, cultural, moral, ethical, and aesthetic knowledge, etc.—there we find the contents; that is, everything can be content.
- 5 The use of the term here is employed based on an understanding that, in Early Childhood Education, the movement of pedagogical mediation transcends the 'boundaries' of fields/areas/disciplines.
- 6 The term attractive is not linked to stereotyped aesthetic preparation with images previously prepared by adults and which, therefore, tell little about the children's daily learning narrative. We argue that attractiveness lies in the organization that reveals the group, its paths through documentation in verbal and imagetic narratives that communicate the daily life of experiences and learning to children, families, and other professionals.
- 7 Primarily, we refer to the term material which, for Pareyson (2001), is the object or physical material seen in the natural constitution in which art forms [...] Regarding materiality within children's multiple languages, the focus is on what we can see, perceive, and do so that experiences linked to art and other languages, as well as creation, can exist in a visible and appreciable context (apud Cunha; Souza, 2022, p. 105).
- 8 Here, reinterpretation (releitura) is understood as an interpretive process that presupposes the construction of meaning; that is, it does not refer to the mere copying of works by children.





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