

**POSSIBLE PLAY IN TIMES OF ISOLATION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUPERIOR PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF MEMORY AND IMAGINATION**

***O BRINCAR POSSÍVEL EM TEMPOS DE ISOLAMENTO: O DESENVOLVIMENTO DAS FUNÇÕES PSÍQUICAS SUPERIORES DA MEMÓRIA E DA IMAGINAÇÃO***

***LOS JUEGOS POSIBLES EN TIEMPOS DE AISLAMIENTO: EL DESARROLLO DE LAS FUNCIONES PSÍQUICAS SUPERIORES DE LA MEMORIA Y LA IMAGINACIÓN***

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to investigate the development of superior psychological functions of memory and imagination during role-play. The general aim of this research was to analyze the development of superior psychological functions of memory and imagination through participatory investigation. The research is based on historical-cultural psychology which encompasses a broad study on the development of superior psychological functions, considering that the process of cultural of the child is the foundation for the constitution of psychic functions. Based on this theoretical background, this qualitative research was conducted with the following methodological resources: participatory investigation and observation. Through the study, it was possible to broaden the theoretical discussion of how role-play was set up, even in moments of isolation and social distancing in the routine of Children's Education, contributing to the development of memory and imagination.

**KEYWORDS:** Superior psychological functions. Memory. Imagination. Role-play.

**RESUMO:** *Este estudo busca investigar o desenvolvimento das funções psíquicas superiores da memória e da imaginação no momento da brincadeira de faz de conta. A pesquisa está fundamentada na Psicologia Histórico-Cultural que contempla o desenvolvimento das funções psíquicas superiores, considerando que o processo de desenvolvimento cultural da criança é o alicerce para a constituição das funções psíquicas. Partindo desse referencial teórico, a pesquisa, de cunho qualitativo, foi realizada com os seguintes recursos metodológicos: investigação participativa e a observação. Com este estudo, foi possível ampliar a discussão teórica sobre como se constituiu a brincadeira de faz de conta mesmo em um momento de isolamento e distanciamento social no cotidiano da Educação Infantil, contribuindo para o desenvolvimento da memória e da imaginação.*

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Funções psíquicas superiores. Memória. Imaginação. Brincadeira de faz de conta.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este estudio busca investigar el desarrollo de las funciones psíquicas superiores de la memoria y la imaginación durante los juegos de fantasía. El objetivo general de esta investigación fue analizar a partir de la investigación participativa el desarrollo de las funciones psíquicas superiores de la memoria y la imaginación. La investigación se basa en la psicología Histórico-Cultural que aborda un estudio amplio sobre el desarrollo de las funciones psíquicas superiores, considerando que el proceso de desarrollo cultural del niño es la base para la constitución de las funciones psíquicas. A partir de este marco teórico la investigación cualitativa se realizó con los siguientes recursos metodológicos: la investigación participativa y la observación. Con este estudio, fue posible ampliar la discusión teórica sobre cómo se constituyeron los juegos de fantasía incluso en un momento de aislamiento y distanciamiento social en la vida cotidiana de la Educación Infantil, contribuyendo al desarrollo de la memoria y la imaginación.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Funciones psíquicas superiores. Memoria. Imaginación. Juego de fantasía.*

## Introduction

Playing is the activity by which the child appropriates the world around him. (ELKONIN, 2009; VIGOTSKI, 2010)<sup>3</sup>. And, when entering this world, the child has in his body the first possibility of contact and, at the same time that he goes beyond the limits of the body, delimits, organizes and creates his psychic world, his self. The imbricated relationship between body, world and the other is a triad that is not defined in isolated descriptions, but by the immensity of possibilities of interrelation that now builds a new world.

But the natural and naturalized actions of children's play, as well as social interactions in general, were completely altered by the advent of the Sars-Cov2 pandemic. The Covid-19 disease pandemic impacted the world, the relationships, and especially the children, who, without seeing the virus, without understanding how or why a touch could be dangerous, were (re)meaning a series of information/actions/relationships. In the schools, the partial return to classes, starting in the second semester of 2021, was marked by the emergence of "new normal" in these relationships. For a safe return to school, it was necessary that the school

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<sup>3</sup> The spelling of Lev Semionovich Vygotsky's name in this text will be made using the most current translations directly from the Russian language, which use only the letter 'i' and no longer the letter 'y'. In the text references, the original spellings of each publication will be used.

units followed the safety protocols established in the Guide prepared by the Ministry of Health in our country, which includes, for example, the social distance of one meter between people (children and adults), the use of masks, periodic hand washing, not using objects, and restricting the use of collective spaces. In this context, the interactions between the children were constituted in a completely different way. And if for more than a year they were not allowed to touch each other or exchange objects, now the "almost normal" is being remade in a mixture of suspicious, anxious looks, but still under adult supervision that the children do not always understand very well.

Thus, the immensity of possibilities of inter-relationship that would build a new world is being molded to less diverse situations. And the questions that arise from this scenario are many: did the children play less? How and with whom did they play? With what languages, objects and games? What changes did their perceptions and conceptualizations go through? Finally, how did they develop and how has the return to classroom activities been in schools?

Such questions, which have the function here of raising reflections, point to one of the main premises of the Cultural-Historical approach, which is the interrelation between biology and culture. By stating that mental processes, which include sensations, perceptions, language, memory, imagination, and logical reasoning, should not be considered isolated aspects of the human psyche or brain, Luria (1976/2017), based on Vigotski (1932/1996), highlights the complexity of the relationship between the biological, the psychological, and the cultural. And, from the consideration of brain functioning as a set of complex functional systems, the authors put in focus that the study of human development must contemplate dynamics and interfunctionality as premises for any interpretation.

As a backdrop, the research seeks to understand the construction of meanings as a "place"/"space-time" of expression of this development, considering that the meanings of the instruments and signs of their culture are being re-signified in the act of playing. In other words, the centrality of the culture built before the child's birth is fundamental to define the development of the next generations. About this, based on Vigotski, Duarte (2000) states that the adult-child relationship is the source that drives the child's cultural development and this would be the differential with the organic development. This is because, in phylogenetic terms, unlike ontogenetic, there was not someone "more evolved" for the human species to relate and learn, but this occurs in ontogenetic terms, that is, the child interacts with people who experience a culture, habits, and languages that will then mark his cultural development. According to Duarte (2000), "This makes the analysis of child development extremely

complex and puts the issue of education at the center of this analysis, since such development is the result of the educational process" (p. 106).

That said, it is emphasized that the foundation of this article is the study of the human development of preschool children, therefore, between four and five years of age, in the daily life of Early Childhood Education institutions, considering a body in interaction. relationship with the other and with the objects of the world, in a post-social isolation moment. And, as a way of circumscribing the investigation, we present here the results of the study of the processes of meaning that encompass the development of higher psychic functions, specifically memory and imagination in everyday school situations. For the elaboration of this article, an excerpt of a field research was carried out with the main objectives: to analyze how children appropriate the superior psychic functions of memory and imagination at the time of make-believe games.

### **The development of the psychic functions of memory and imagination**

The human baby is the most fragile of mammals and is totally dependent on the solidarity and care of his fellows, because he cannot survive on his own (PINO, 2005). From the beginning he needs the other to develop and constitute himself as a human (cultural) being. Linhares and Facci (2021) point out that "[...] research on the development of the brain in animals allows us to state that, generally, new edifices take place from the levels of the previous stage, and that for each decisive biological development there is a change in the structure and functions of the nervous system." (p. 33).

In the case of other animals the evolutionary changes are studied from the phylogenetic data, on the biological plane, while in human beings the changes extrapolate the biological plane and occur evidently on the cultural plane, a space in which evolution seems to have no limits, and which is described by Vigotski (1932/1996) as being the place of revolutions. Thus:

The course of man's biological evolution ends before historical development begins. Attempts to explain man's way of thinking no longer focus on morphophysiological particularities transmitted by heredity, but on work that inaugurates a new dynamism of transmitting achievements to new generations (LINHARES; FACCI, 2021, p. 33).

The birth of a human baby is thus not only a biological event, but also a social one. According to Vigotski (1932/1996), development happens from the so-called genetic planes:

*phylogenesis* defines characteristics of our species such as group living, bipedia, being mammals, etc. *Ontogenesis* describes the history of development of the individual in its species, and an example of this genetic plane would be the fact that the child, after a certain period of time (from months to one or two years) probably sits up and then learns to crawl and walk. Both genetic planes would be related to the biological aspects of development. The third plane would be *sociogenesis*, which concerns the development of the human being from his or her social and cultural environment - the customs of the society in which the subject is inserted. And the fourth plan would be *microgenesis*, which is "[...] the history of the development of particular psychic processes of a given person along with others in a relatively short period of time" (DELARI, 2009, p. 29). According to Linhares and Facci (2021, p. 32):

The real history of the development of the human psychism reflects the history of the complexification of life in society, and the human psychism can only be explained as a social construction. The historicity of the human being related to the higher psychic functions, expresses characteristics that distinguish man as belonging to the human gender.

When considering human "birth" from the different genetic planes, we can think that the elements of culture end up, in fact, delineating the way in which these births happen. In this sense, the mastery of nature (as an "external" aspect) and of behavior itself (as an "internal" aspect) are strictly related, since man's alteration of nature alters, in turn, man's own nature (VIGOTSKI, 1932/1996). This is the Marxist basis of the dialectical assumption of all Cultural-Historical Psychology (SOUZA, 2016).

The mediated relationship with the world, marked by the instrument and the work, materializes in the purposeful actions, thus conferring the semiotic instrumentality also of human activity about itself and the world. In the instrumental action, between the object and the directed psychological operation, according to the Cultural-Historical psychology, a new component emerges: the psychological instrument, which causes the development of a series of new functions, the so-called Higher Psychic Functions (HPF). The sequence or quantity of the HPF appear in Vigotski's work in a widespread way<sup>4</sup>. Here, we delimit in: attention, perception, language, memory, emotions, logical reasoning, and imagination. According to

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<sup>4</sup> Information on the different nominations is summarized in the diagram prepared by Achilles Delari and available on the author's own website: <http://www.estmir.net/diagrama-para-funcao-psiquica-superior.html>. Accessed on: Dec. 2021.

Delari (2011, p. 24), the social origin is "[...] the driving force and the explanatory principle of the genesis of the human psychological functions themselves".

As a way of organizing the study of the terms, which should not be confused with the understanding of the phenomenon itself, the HPF of memory and imagination will be addressed as assumptions for the discussion of real, complex and multifaceted situations.

According to Cultural-Historical Psychology, memory, as a phenomenon of appropriation and recall of information, exists very early in the child's development and develops over time, in a "hidden" way relative to the other functions. The development of memory is so complex that we cannot represent it in a linear way, because it subsidizes all the other functions, always supporting new ways of experiencing the world.

Comparative studies of human memory, carried out by Cultural-Historical Psychology, reveal that even in more primitive stages of social development there are two fundamentally different types of memory. One, dominant in the behavior of primitive peoples, is characterized by the retention of actual experiences as the basis of memory traces: this type of memory is very close to perception, because it arises as a consequence of the direct influence of external stimuli (LURIA, 1976/2017). Memory as a product of social development is a new organization that evolves from the elaborate culture of human behavior. An example of simple operations such as making a knot or marking on a piece of wood for the purpose of aiding memorization modify the psychological structure of the memory process (VIGOTSKI, 2007).

The fundamental characteristic of elementary functions is that they are completely and directly determined by environmental stimulation. In the case of higher functions, the essential characteristic is self-generated stimulation, that is, the creation and use of artificial stimuli that become the immediate cause of behavior (VIGOTSKI, 2007, p. 33).

This fact alone is sufficient to demonstrate the fundamental characteristic of higher forms of behavior. In the elementary form something is remembered; in the higher form human beings remember something (VIGOTSKI, 2007, p. 50).

In an equally different way, Vigotski and Luria highlight the complexity of the so-called psychic function of imagination. It is defined as a function of agglutinative nature, and Vigotski says about it:

[...] it is wrong to regard imagination as a special function among other functions, as a form of brain activity of the same kind, which repeats itself regularly. Imagination must be considered as a more complex form of

psychic activity, as the real union of various functions and their peculiar relations (VIGOTSKI, 1983, p. 436).

The author emphasizes that imagination is a higher psychic function that is directly related to all other higher psychic functions, such as memory, oral language, perception, and emotions, but it does not resemble or equate to their "sums," but is close to the conceptualization of synthesis in Hegelian terms or monad in Spinozian terms.

The psychic function of imagination represents a potential of the creative activity that enables man to plan, project and build his own conditions of existence (SMOLKA; NOGUEIRA, 2011). Thus, with the exception of nature, everything that surrounds us was made by man, being the product of his imagination and creation as a product of the brain's plastic capacity, which not only preserves and reproduces experiences, but combines and reworks it in a creative way.

Imagination, despite its character of apparent repetition, cannot be confused with the higher psychic function of memory. As Vigotski (1983) states, there is an important difference between the rest of the forms of human psychic activity and imagination, which is its character of novelty. That is, imagination is not just a repetition of combinations and forms of isolated impressions accumulated before, but a phenomenon that reconstitutes new series from the impressions accumulated before.

The activity of memory consists in the appearance, in human consciousness, of scenes previously experienced and that are not always related to a new motive for their reproduction. On the other hand, the activity of imagination, which is strictly related to the activity of memory, when it operates with the previous images, differs because it is a creative activity, giving rise to new combinations. Imagination is the basis of the activity that allows representing in a totally new way the images and impressions registered by the memory activity, in a new combination of all previously accumulated impressions (VIGOTSKI, 1995/1983). In this sense, imagining can be understood as a transformation of memory activity that encompasses both remembering, reproduction, presentification, and the creation of the new.

The capacities of reproduction and creation, well described by Vigotski (2009) in *Imagination and Creation in Childhood*, still consider the biological aspects of these processes. And, despite the incipient works of the early twentieth century, lived by Vigotski and Luria, there was in their writings the fundamental point for the studies of the brain functioning in this process. In addition to the contribution to the fields of Psychology and

Education, the author contributed significantly to the field of Neuroscience, embryonic at the time, but that currently has had an increasingly strong role in studies on human development in its broadest sense. For Vigotski (2009, p. 14) "The brain is not only the organ that preserves and reproduces our previous experience, but also the one that combines and reworks, in a creative way, elements of previous experience, erecting new situations and new behavior". In a period when the concept of brain plasticity was still quite simple, such statement shed light and showed future paths that are being followed until today.

### **Make-believe play as a source of child development**

Child development, from its very beginning, is marked by the relationships established with the other and with the world, marked by a complex process of construction of meanings and senses. The child is introduced to the world by the other, who enables the exploration via words/gestures and objects, building new desires and needs. Through the mediations that interaction provides, the child will constitute and place itself in the world (ARCE; DUARTE, 2006). Play emerges as a result of these interaction processes mediated by the other and allows the child to act on the world and, thus, assign meanings trying to understand/classify/name/organize what surrounds them.

For Leontiev (2010), play is not instinctive, it is an objective activity because it forms the basis of the child's perception of the world, of objects, and of human relations that determine the content of his make-believe games. These perceptions aroused in the child a need to act like the adult, to act the way he sees others act, the way he was told, and so on (LEONTIEV, 2010). According to the author, the child wants to drive the car herself, row a boat by herself, perform the activities that she knows are possible, but that she cannot yet do anyway. But in playful activity, through imagination and make-believe play, she can satisfy her wants and needs.

Play can create the impression to outsiders that the child has "lost track" of reality. However, it is exactly the opposite, because in play the child is already able to compare himself to the adult and through the representation of the roles he perceives himself as a child (BATISTA; SILVA; PASQUALINI, 2021, p. 87).

For Elkonin (2009), when the child adopts a proper name, it prepares for the appearance of the role in the game, that is, the exercise of being in the place of another, doing or imitating actions of another more "competent" than her, is a fundamental step for the



development of the psychism, because it represents the exercise of adult life, with the nuances of rules and habits different from the one she knows and experiences.

It is only between two and a half and three years of age that the child begins to act out a role and assume itself as another. Elkonin (2009) characterizes this behavior based on two series of factors, which he observed through his experiments on role-playing. The first would be when the child puts the name of a character on the toy, representing him differently. The second characteristic would be when the child begins to speak on behalf of the toy. These actions can be repeated many times with the same object, without changing the content.

The child, through role-play, gets to know the world around him and the rules of social coexistence, forming a guiding activity. Role playing makes the child learn the meaning of objects and at the same time their social functions (ELKONIN, 2009). Vigotski (2008) states that the child learns to act according to what he has in mind, that is, what he is thinking, but is not visible, relying on internal tendencies and motives. The play situation thus allows the representations to make room for the appearance of external (collective) rules and internal (individual) rules of behavior. Thus, the more elaborate the role play, the greater the possibility of creation, interaction, imagination, and argumentation. Thus,

Play is the source of development and creates the zone of imminent development<sup>5</sup>. Action in an imaginary field, in an imaginary situation, the creation of a voluntary intention, the formation of a life plan, of volitional motives - all these arise in play, placing it on a higher level of development, raising it to the crest of the wave and making it the decuminal wave of development in the preschool age, which rises from the deeper but relatively calm waters (VIGOTSKI, 2008, p. 35).

Play creates a zone of imminent development, that is, at the moment of play the child can take on the actions of an older child (VIGOTSKI, 2008). Play, like a magnifying glass, allows for a leap in the child's development.

### **Methodological aspects**

The main methodological tool of field research is participatory research and observation. The researcher is responsible for observing the child, for analyzing the different modes of participation and reconstructing the process, analyzing the details of meaning and

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<sup>5</sup> In some translations the terms zone of proximal development and zone of imminent development are used interchangeably, the latter was chosen for this study because it brings the idea of proximity and possibility at the same time.

appropriation experienced by the child. This assumption holds that the child assumes an active role in observation, description, interpretation, acting, assuming itself as a subject, with an active and transforming role in the research process, being its voice and its social action central aspects for the development process of the research dynamics (FERNANDES; MARCHI, 2020).

Regarding the methodological path, we would like to highlight two aspects: the first is the centrality and respect for children as active and participatory subjects of the process, and the second refers to the realization of the limitation of the interpretations presented here. The unfinishedness of the analyses is taken, therefore, as an integral part of the very process of investigating and understanding or presupposing how the other assigns meanings, considering that imagination and memory have been a constant exercise.

For Qvortrup (2011), childhood should be understood as a permanent social category, a social category in which all children occupy this place (from different ethnic, economic, gender and other groups), and that will always be occupied by children, because children grow up and become adults, but soon other children will come. It is a permanent process in human society. An important concept for the discussion of the methodology of the study with children, discussed by both Qvortrup (2011) and Castro (2001), refers to the invisibility of childhood that, historically, is "covered up" by families or the school institution; and this implies the fact that we generally do not put ourselves in the place of the child to talk about his or her world. But, from our adult world, we talk about how the child must be thinking, how he/she acted, represented, etc. This point makes us rethink the place of the child in research, so that we can prioritize the participation and listening to children in field research.

Having the Cultural-Historical Psychology as a theoretical basis, the research, besides promoting a study about the development of higher psychological functions at the moment of role-playing, is also concerned with bringing the children's opinion about their favorite games. For this reason, the discussion covers theoretical concepts from the sociology of childhood, precisely to ground and elucidate the methodological choices of the research.

As stated by Corsaro (2005), children develop individually, but throughout this development the collective process of which they are part is also changing. We understand as changes precisely to consider the child as capable and participative in their own choices, actively re-signifying the social practice. Ferreira (2005) also highlights the importance of considering children as social actors, because they reconstruct and resignify through multiple and complex interactions with peers, with interests and ways of thinking, acting and feeling

capable of generating differentiated relations as a social group. Demartini (2009) also emphasizes the importance that increasingly, in current times, researchers and teachers learn to listen to children and young people. It is up to the researcher to have this attentive look at the different forms of manifestation and specificities of the child, considering their life stories and their context.

For this to happen effectively, the study was carried out with attention to the participatory forms of children in everyday life in Early Childhood Education, with the moment of make-believe play as the central object of study. The field research was authorized by the Ethics Committee with opinion number 4,235,627, and started in March 2021. The subjects who participated in this field research were thirty-five children aged five to six years old, in two institutions of Early Childhood Education in a city in the interior of the state of São Paulo. The field research was conducted for two hours a day and the visits took place twice a week, during the first semester of 2021.

The researcher produced an informational video about the field research, which was forwarded to parents and guardians through the school's interaction group with families on the Telegram app. Children who were authorized by their guardians to participate in the field research were invited to talk to the researcher, who presented them with the consent form. During the conversation between the children and the researcher they were asked if they would like to participate in the research, respecting all the ethical criteria for conducting research with children.

Throughout the field research process, the researcher registered, by means of photographs, videos, and a field diary, the daily life back to school after a period of social isolation (due to the Covid-19 pandemic).

## **Data presentation and analysis**

In this article, we will present a section of the field research, focusing on a reflection on the aspects of apparent "non-interaction" among children. The record took place on March 14, 2021: there were eight children present in the classroom and each child was at their own little table with colored building blocks. The context was recorded by the researcher by video and in the field diary.

The teacher arranged the children's tables respecting the norms of social distance of 1.5m apart individually. The children were handling their blocks individually when one of the children got up and started to use a block as if it were a telephone.

**Figure 1** – Photographic record "Telephone game"



Source: Devised by the authors

Below is the transcript of the video, which is one minute and three seconds long. The names used for the presentation of the data are fictitious, to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in this research.

**EPISODE 1- "Phone Play"(day 6, 03/14/2018, video recorder)**

- (1) Beatrice: bi, bi, bi, bi, bi, bi [...] (imitating the sound of a ringing phone).
- (2) Bruno: Hi Beatriz, how are you? Beatriz? Beatrice? [...] (Bruno was on the other side of the room and tried to communicate with Beatrice, but got no response).
- (3) Beatrice: bi, bi, bi, bi, bi, bi [...] (keeps imitating the sound of the phone calling).
- (4) Maria Cecilia: Hello, who is it?
- (5) Beatrice: Hi, how are you? It's Beatrice, what are you doing?
- (6) Maria Cecilia: I am calling you.
- (7) Bruno: I'm working.
- (8) TEACHER: Time to get the water bottle (play is interrupted).

In the episode named "Telephone Play", the teacher had handed out building blocks to the children and Beatriz was the first to build a telephone. In the photographic record it is possible to see the children handling the building blocks and Beatriz standing holding her phone, soon afterwards the other children also built a phone and started talking to each other.

We notice in the episode above that, even with the rules established by social distancing, through the higher psychic function of imagination and make-believe play, children find a way to interact and communicate. The "telephone game" starts with Beatriz, but, little by little, the other classmates also build a telephone to communicate among themselves, establishing a relationship among the group of children.

Colussi (2016) states that children's interactions at the time of role play favor the overall development of children because, in these games, children form their personality, learn to act towards things and people, since the practical actions they perform in their figurations structure internal processes that guide other practical actions. Thus, they develop more autonomy and make the internal processes more complex through the exercise of imagination and memory, enriching and improving the higher psychological functions.

Still about the episode above, through make-believe games, the children represent an experience that has been a communication channel used a lot by adults in this moment of pandemic. The use of the telephone here has apparently paradoxical functions: the children are a little more than a meter away, that is, they can talk to each other in person, but they subvert this fact and create a situation that is certainly the reason for the creation, by adults, of the technical and semiotic instrument telephone: the distance and the need for communication.

In interpretative terms we could infer here that the term "distance" is one of the main concepts elaborated by the children. They have heard about staying away and not touching each other during this whole pandemic period. So they know that distance has some function related to care, to preservation of life, to danger. Like a sponge (VIGOTSKI, 2010), this term is being meant in many ways. But at the same time, in this play a great distance was completely invented in order to be able to sustain an interaction. Thus, a real communication here is invented, imagined, presentified, signified through this subversion. The telephone here represents distance, but also communication and contact.

In the situation created, the children reconstitute an experience, represent the adult world and do this by remembering the gestures and speech of a context that is not that of the classroom. They create a situation through the use of images in action, that is, imagination is the practice of transforming any object into something with social meaning (the telephone). They speak the terms/words and intonations used by the adults and thus repeat, but also create forms of interaction, new ways of relating. Because they are next to each other, the adult function of the telephone instrument would have no real meaning, however, they do not use it because they need to, but because it is possible, because they want to repeat the adults (LEONTIEV, 2010).

In the interpretation of social relations, which is a fundamental characteristic of symbolic activity, the child assigns meanings to the interpreted roles, based on relations in the surrounding world (ELKONIN, 2009).

The child's activity in play tends to represent various actions (swimming, washing clothes, cooking, etc.). One represents the action itself. This is how action-games begin. The children's activity acquires a constructive character: masonry and construction games appear, in which there are usually no roles either. Finally, there are the protagonism games, in which the child produces one or another image. These games have two visible paths: role-playing games, when the child directs the toy (that is, she acts through the toy) and games in which the role is played personally by the child herself (playing mom, flying, etc.) (ELKONIN, 2009, p. 237).

In the course of make-believe play "[...] things, toys, and the environment are given concrete playful meanings that are retained throughout the game. The children play together and one child's actions are linked to the others" (ELKONIN, 2009, p. 243). This can be identified in the episode presented in this study, because the children represented in the "telephone game" a way to interact and communicate, even with the social distance that was established by the adults.

It was possible to notice that the children, from the experience of playing, developed their higher psychic functions, such as: memory, by reconstituting a situation of their daily life through imagination; oral language, by communicating; and their emotions, by showing interest in knowing how their classmates were doing. As already mentioned, in child development, memory is one of the central psychological functions. It is the function that organizes all other functions, playing a decisive role in all mental constructions (VIGOTSKI, 2009), as it was possible to see in the reconstitution of the telephone game.

Play is directly related to the child's everyday experiences and therefore depends on the social conditions offered. Even the rules present in imaginary situations are derived from the real world, establishing a dialectical relationship between imagination and reality (FARIA; HAI, 2020).

In childhood, in the process of humanizing itself, make-believe play collaborates in the process of separating the meaning of the word from the object, begins the process of separation between idea and object. It is no longer the object that guides the action, but the action, according to the rules, begins to be determined by the ideas, and this leads to a radical change in psychological structures that determine the child's relationship with reality (PRESTES, 2016).

## Final remarks

We must consider, according to the Cultural-Historical Psychology, that the biological functions that an individual brings at birth are essential, but not sufficient to ensure his survival and his life in society. To constitute himself as a subject, it is necessary that he interacts with a social group and, from the experiences lived collectively, actively builds the higher psychological functions, which characterize the typically human functioning through social relations that are established in this process of humanizing oneself.

Make-believe play enables the full development of the child in a significant way based on his/her social environment, experiences, and experiences that can be represented in the symbolic activity. As it was possible to analyze in this study, make-believe play contributes significantly to the development of the higher psychic functions of memory and imagination, so it is important that it, more than being present in the daily routine of Kindergarten, is the condition, the reason, the driving force of the child's life at school and outside of it. Therefore, the experience lived by children is the basis for the possibility of any development. And, beyond the core of this text, we end by pointing to other social, legal, and political aspects that should guarantee the possibility of these experiences. Thus, we emphasize the importance of the constant re-examination of spaces and times in early childhood education; of the concern with the constant availability of adequate pedagogical resources, be they building blocks or nature itself, inside and outside the classroom. We emphasize the urgency for playtime to be truly understood as the place par excellence of interaction among children, with less direct interference from adults, and that freedom of expression through different forms of language be effectively guaranteed on the school floor, as stated in the legal documents of early childhood education in our country.

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