

## Written language in an Early Childhood Education institution: concepts and practices in interaction



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### Abstract

In this article, we analyze the perception of teachers on practices of/with written language at two classrooms of a public institution dedicated to Early Childhood Education. The ideas of Vygotsky (2007) and Sepúlveda and Teberosky (2011) were linked to studies of Abramovay and Kramer (1985), Kishimoto (2010), and Martins (1991) to find the theory of the research presented in this paper. The research, under a qualitative approach, counted on two teachers of Early Childhood Education classes to participate in sessions of observation with written and visual records, and in an experience of focus group. We found that written language was conceived as a knowledge with which children should interact and appropriate, recognizing, in this object/instrument of knowledge, specificities of teaching/promotion by teachers and learning/development by children, treated as a socially relevant knowledge. However, we did not identify significant situations in which written language was handled from a social literacy perspective.

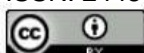
### Keywords

early childhood education. written language. pedagogical practices.

### A linguagem escrita em uma instituição de educação infantil: concepções e práticas em interação

### Resumo

Analisamos, neste artigo, a percepção de professores sobre práticas de/com linguagem escrita desenvolvidas com duas turmas de crianças em uma instituição pública de Educação Infantil. Como fundamentação teórica, utilizamos os estudos de Vygotsky (2007), de Sepúlveda e Teberosky (2011), relacionados com as ideias de Abramovay e Kramer (1985), Kishimoto (2010) e Martins (1991) sobre a relação entre criança e linguagem. A pesquisa, de abordagem qualitativa, contou com a participação de duas professoras de Educação Infantil em sessões de observação com registros escritos e visuais, e uma experiência de grupo focal. Constatamos que a linguagem escrita era concebida como um conhecimento com o qual as crianças deveriam interagir e se apropriar, reconhecendo nesse objeto/instrumento de conhecimento especificidades de ensino/promoção pelas docentes e de aprendizagem/desenvolvimento pelas crianças, tratando-se de um conhecimento socialmente relevante. Todavia, não identificamos situações significativas em que a linguagem escrita fosse abordada na perspectiva do letramento.



**Palavras-chaves**

educação infantil. linguagem escrita. práticas pedagógicas.

**El lenguaje escrito en una institución de educación infantil:  
concepciones y prácticas en interacción****Resumen**

Nosotros analizamos aquí la percepción de docentes sobre las prácticas de/con lenguaje escrito en salas de una institución pública de Educación Infantil. Las ideas de Vygotsky (2007) y Sepúlveda y Teberosky (2011) se vincularon a los estudios de Abramovay y Kramer (1985), Kishimoto (2010) y Martins (1991) para fundamentar teóricamente la investigación presentada en este artículo. La investigación, con un enfoque cualitativo, contó con dos maestras de Educación Infantil para participar en sesiones de observación con registros escritos y visuales, y de una experiencia en grupo focal. Descubrimos que el lenguaje escrito fue concebido como un conocimiento con el cual los niños deben interactuar y apropiarse, reconociendo, en este objeto/instrumento de conocimiento, especificidades de enseñanza/promoción por las maestras y de aprendizaje/desarrollo por los niños, tratado como un conocimiento socialmente relevante. Pero, no identificamos situaciones significativas en las que el lenguaje escrito fuera manejado desde una perspectiva de alfabetización social.

**Palabras clave**

educación infantil. lengua escrita. prácticas pedagógicas.

**1 Introduction**

Children's introduction to written culture(s) usually begins in their everyday lives at home and is expanded in and through the organization of spaces, materials, times, and experiences offered to them in Early Childhood Education institutions. In this process, children appropriate various languages, including written language, creating hypotheses about its construction and the social practices it enables and supports. Early childhood education institutions are, therefore, spaces in which teachers experience pedagogical situations with children, in which it is necessary to listen to them and talk to them, giving children the opportunity to interact with the material and symbolic artifacts of written language.

According to Baptista (2010, p. 2):

Working with written language must enable early childhood education to assume an important role in the training of readers and competent users of the written system, respecting the child as a producer of culture.

The characteristics of the sociocultural contexts in which children, from a very young age, experience their first social practices are factors that influence the appropriation of written language by these subjects. Therefore, according to Galvão (2016, p. 16), the written text is present in almost all situations of everyday life, with adults and children, whether they are from the elites, the middle class, or the popular classes. Therefore, even those who do not know how to read and write are, in these cases, immersed in a world in which written text occupies a fundamental place in forms of communication, socialization, recording, and even leisure.

Therefore, we live in a literate world, full of literacy practices, that is, social uses of reading and writing in different discursive contexts. However, for the child to be able to experience and use this knowledge in different situations, whether at school or outside, it is necessary for them to understand the specificities of the language in written form, understanding how, in our case of Portuguese speakers, the Alphabetic Writing System (Sistema de Escrita Alfabética or SEA), which becomes possible through the literacy process. It is worth highlighting that the literacy process does not exist without the literacy process and vice versa and, therefore, for children to expand their knowledge about written culture, these processes must happen in an articulated and inseparable way, always respecting the specificities of development of the child since the Early Childhood Education stage (SOARES, 1998; 2011).

Considering that the debate on the introduction of written language to young children between the ages of 3 and 5 is still controversial, we decided to address the issue in this text. This is justified by the concern among some educators and childhood researchers that this introduction may take on the appearance of early schooling, not least because of parents' anxiety that their children will be able to write fluently by the first year of elementary school. In this sense, based on data from a qualitative empirical investigation, our aim is to analyze teachers' perceptions of the practices of/with written language developed in preschool classes in a public Early Childhood Education institution.

In order to give textual concreteness to this discussion, we present, in addition to this introduction, a discussion of conceptions and practices of/with written language in Early Childhood Education. Next, we will describe the methodological design of the research that was carried out. Later, we will present and discuss the data gathered, followed by some final considerations on the issue.

## 2 Teaching writing to children in Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood schools should be spaces, intentionally planned and permanently evaluated, in which children can interact with SEA in an immersive way in written cultures. Galvão (2016) defines written cultures as the places, both symbolic and material, occupied by writing in/for a given social group, community, or society. Through interactions with cultural objects and more experienced members, girls and boys in a given society appropriate the meanings and uses of writing, especially in the community in which they live and in which written language can exercise a certain function with greater impetus and be conveyed more frequently in one or other text medium. Therefore, by being born into a society marked by writing, young children end up entering the flow of this culture, trying to respond to its communication demands and understand the uses of writing, as well as the implication of this language modality for what they want to represent, express, communicate, etc. (GOULART; MATA, 2016).

This understanding has implications for pedagogical work in nurseries and pre-schools. For example, the promotion of listening, speaking, and language comprehension situations through the experience of various communicative situations, such as conversation circles, personal attention activities, mealtimes, welcoming, farewells, conflicts, exchanges, etc. This makes it clear that children need to experience language as it is spoken in their cultural reality and seek to broaden it, helping them to express themselves and acquire a vocabulary that is both contextualized and diverse.

Vygotsky (2007), using the studies made until then and the ways of understanding, at his time, education for children, had already made relevant indications about the teaching of written language since the beginning of the 20th century. According to him:

Teaching must be organized in such a way that reading and writing become necessary for children. Reading and writing must be something that the child needs [...]. [Thus,] an intrinsic need must be awakened in them and writing must be incorporated into a necessary and relevant task for life. Only then can we be sure that it will develop not as a hand and finger habit, but as a new and complex form of language. [...] The best method is one in which children do not learn to read and write, but rather discover these skills during play situations. For this to happen, letters need to become a part of children's lives, in the same way as speech, for example. Just as children learn to speak, they may well learn to read and write. Natural methods of teaching reading and writing involve appropriate operations in the children's environment. They must feel the need to read and write in their play.

[Therefore] what should be done is to teach children written language and not just the writing of letters (VYGOTSKY, 2007, p. 143-144).

In this sense, we suggest that reading and storytelling help children in the introduction and appropriation of the written culture, since they require their active and responsive participation around the meaning of what is written and illustrated in books and an understanding of the forms and structures of writing.

The construction resources of these works, both literary and in their material form, contribute to the child's task of appropriating increasingly complex ways of acting with and on writing (SEPÚLVEDA; TEBEROSKY, 2011). As these are young children, it is essential that the Early Childhood Education teacher promotes confidence in both boys and girls, so that they feel capable of learning to read and write (ABRAMOVAY; KRAMER, 1985). This confidence can go hand in hand with their desire to use writing.

Vygotsky (2007) also states that, depending on the children's experiences, written language can be an object of curiosity. For the author, as seen in the previous quote, if they feel the need to use this instrument, they will strive to appropriate its peculiar structure, its uses, and its social functions in different contexts. For this reason, pedagogical work should promote children's experiences of interaction with written language and be responsible for supporting them in constructing answers/solutions to their questions about this language (GALVÃO, 2016).

The role/place of written language in Early Childhood Education and its implications for the pedagogical work with young children highlight the teachers' responsibility to promote social language practices that involve writing in one way or another, whether they are valued or not, local or global, in order to cover diverse social contexts (family, work, media, school, etc.). According to Rojo (2009), this takes place from a sociological, anthropological, and sociocultural perspective, because, for the author, it is up to the educational institution to enhance multicultural dialogue, bringing within its walls not only the valued, dominant, canonical culture but also local and popular cultures, to turn them into voices of a dialogue and objects of study and criticism.

Initially, children create their own rules until they understand the conventional rules of the writing system developing hypotheses, which Ferreiro and Teberosky (1985) called the psychogenesis of written language. In this sense, the promotion of writing must start from the knowledge expressed by the children, and it is essential that they write according

to their hypotheses, in which "mistakes" are understood as constructive and reflective of an original thought. In this way, the teacher knows the characteristics of the child's process of constructing writing and is able to intervene and plan activities that enable progress to be made in this process.

According to Brandão and Leal (2011), in situations of contact with and production of writing, children mobilize appropriate knowledge about this language in reading practices, using their own strategies. As a result, they can begin to recognize regularities in the relationships between sound units and graphic units and discover the logic of how the SEA works. According to Albuquerque, Brandão, and Morais (2016), children also need to be challenged to think about words, which can be experienced in situations of reflection on sound properties, their parts, sound similarities between words, etc., using materials such as: named notebooks, communication diaries between teachers and families; notes with real social use that have been produced individually or collectively, and so on.

The pedagogical work aimed at children's appreciation and appropriation of oral and written language also requires, in order to be effective, the creation of an environment that stimulates reading and writing, children's imagination, and creativity. As highlighted in the Indicators of Quality in Early Childhood Education (BRASIL, 2009), it is important that there are organized spaces for reading, equipped with shelves, books, magazines, and other materials accessible to children and in sufficient quantity and quality. These spaces should be organized in such a way that children can see and touch the books, thus guiding their choices.

It is also important that the collection in these spaces includes books and texts of different types and genres: toy books, interactive books, short stories, poems, art books, verbal and visual texts, encyclopedias, research books, newspapers, comic books, magazines, and so on. This is justified because a literate environment can, for example, boost children's games, which, according to Kishimoto (2010), are scenarios that help them develop written language skills and strategies in imaginary contexts linked to the real situations they experience. Literacy artifacts in the context of play such as books, labels, newspapers, etc., can make a huge contribution to the emergence of reading and text-producing behavior in the roles that children take on, whether as parents, salespeople, teachers, singers, etc. When they develop these dialogues in imaginary situations, they are

supported by the artifacts of written culture, which therefore help them to construct the meanings that will be attributed to them.

### 3 Methodology

In view of the conceptions and actions advocated so far, promoting the learning of written language is not a simple choice that educational institutions for children can make or not, but is part of their social, pedagogical, and political function, committed to expanding the knowledge and experiences of girls and boys from different regions and social classes. In light of these conceptions and theoretical-practical references, an investigation was carried out with teachers from a public Early Childhood Education institution in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará, with the aim of understanding how pedagogical practices of/with written language were developed in pre-school classes in this context. To this end, a field study was conducted, guided by a qualitative approach, which used observation, recording and focus groups as data construction procedures.

Two teachers and 38 children aged from 4 to 5 years old were part of the study, and their actions and interactions were documented by the researchers; documentation which, once selected and organized, was the subject of reflections in the focus groups. These procedures were carried out in the second half of 2019, with the authorization of the Department of Education and the institution's management, as well as the consent of the professionals and those responsible for the children who participated directly in the field research shifts (choices, procedures, and instruments will be detailed in the methodology section).

The locus of this investigation, as mentioned, was a public Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará. This institution was chosen because it has a wide range of preschool classes in the capital of Ceará and because its teachers take part in ongoing training courses offered by the network itself, which are based on documents they have authored on the appropriation of written language in Early Childhood Education<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The mentioned documents are available on the following link:  
<https://educacao.sme.fortaleza.ce.gov.br/index.php/rede-de-ensino/educ-infantil>.

Another relevant factor for choosing this context was the use of workbooks with children aged 4 to 5 years and 11 months, which was adopted by the municipality's Department of Education. Bearing in mind that studies reveal the limits that the use of workbooks places on children's manifestations of language (SILVA, 2012), the presence of this type of material in preschool classes was important in defining this context for the study; it is a reality that needs to be known and reflected upon. Two preschool classes took part in the research, called "Infant IV-A and Infant IV-B", which each had one teacher and 19 children aged between 4 and 5. We chose children in this age group because they were just starting their preschool experience and, as such, probably had an even more progressive introduction (than in nursery school) to pedagogical practices geared towards the appropriation of written language.

The names of those participating in the research, specifically the two teachers, are real, as permitted by the institution's coordinator and the teachers themselves. The real names of the children in the two classes have also been used, with permission given by their parents by signing the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) also signed by the coordinator and the teachers. For the data generation process, the participant observation procedure was developed, in which not only teaching practices but also the interactions between children and teachers and between the researchers and these subjects were recorded using a field diary, photographs, and video recordings. Immersed in this context, the researchers became part of the set of relationships experienced there.

From the very first contact with the institution and its professionals, the researchers felt welcomed and, in particular, the teachers, who were direct participants in the investigation, showed an interest in the topic to be explored in their classrooms, written language. This may have contributed to the climate of collaboration experienced during the investigative process, both in the observations and in the focus groups (explained below). During the observation shifts, the researchers entered the classroom with a field diary and a cell phone. The diary was kept handy for making short notes, which were later rewritten in a more complete and narrative way, while the cell phone was left in the pocket of the clothes and used to photograph or film moments and scenes that the researchers considered relevant to the investigation.

These choices were based on the qualitative nature of the study and the understanding that it was necessary to establish a relationship of bonding and trust with the



teachers and children in these classes. As Minayo (2009, p. 70) argues, we believe that the researcher playing the role of the observer must remain:

[...] in direct contact with his interlocutors in the social space of the research, as far as possible participating in their social life, in their cultural setting, but with the aim of collecting data and understanding the context of the research.

This technique is relevant in that it allows researchers to perceive all the nuances that materialize and interfere in the context under investigation, enabling a more reliable data construction process.

The observations began in August 2019 and lasted until December of that year. The period chosen for this procedure included the afternoon shift, from 1 PM to 5 PM, and observations took place twice a week, with one day dedicated to each class, totaling 26 observation sessions. This procedure was done in greater volume in the reference room of the two classes investigated, but also in the other spaces of the institution, as the children's routine was monitored. However, for this article, we will only focus on the reading and writing activities performed inside the reference rooms.

Some aspects were chosen to guide the observations: the activities proposed with a focus on written language; the development of their mediation; the children's reaction and participation; the interaction between teachers and children and between the children themselves in these proposals. After selecting, organizing, and analyzing the records (written and imagery), the data was categorically gathered in a tool that contained a field for contextualizing and describing the documented practices and another for noting reflections on them.

The first field was filled in by the researchers in preparation for the focus groups, and the second was constructed through verbal interactions between them and the teachers taking part in the research during the groups, which were initiated and mediated by the researchers. The focus groups lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, were held in the coordinator's office, but without her presence, and, as well as being recorded on the instrument, were recorded and later transcribed so that the excerpts could be categorized and analyzed.

In the focus groups, we analyzed the pedagogical practices for written language developed by the teachers and how the children interacted with these proposals. The combination of observation, recording, and discussion procedures (focus groups) made it

possible to organize, present, and analyze these proposals in a number of categories, which will be mentioned below and detailed in the next section of this article: 1- proper name/working with stable words; 2 - calendar; 3 - workbook; 4 - activities with playful possibilities; 5 - reading or storytelling. Each category includes, not necessarily in that order, a presentation of the key ideas that support the pedagogical practice in question, a description of situations arising from the field research and an analysis of the development and implications of mediation in these practices.

#### 4 Results and Discussion

The field research data, evidence of the actions, interactions, and practices experienced by the teachers and children who were part of the research, were constructed during observation sessions in the reference classrooms. Once they had been selected and organized, they were discussed in focus groups, which focused on constructing analyses of the practices of/with written language planned and proposed by the teachers, placing them in interaction with the educational action itself, especially with the intentions involved in them and their repercussions for the children's learning. With this investigative approach, we sought to analyze the written language practices developed in a preschool context, in order to make visible how this language participates in the educational experience of given children.

Working with **proper names**, the first category of the practices analyzed was done on a daily basis, especially by recognizing them in each child's diary. In both groups, after filling in the diaries, the teachers formed a conversation circle, the first moment of which was usually to return the diaries. This dynamic took place in two formats: the first, in which the diaries were laid out on the floor and two or three children, in turn, identified their diary by name; and the second, in which one diary at a time was presented by the teacher and the children identified who that diary belonged to.

The first format was the most recurrent and, in it, it was possible to better understand the children who were having difficulty identifying their own name and, consequently, the agenda that belonged to them; as the following record exemplifies:

In the Infant IV-B class, when the diary is handed back, Ayron seems to choose a diary at random and asks the teacher if it's his. The teacher asks the whole group: "What is Ayron's initial letter?" The teacher asks him to sit down, as she's going to

call other children, reducing the number of diaries on the floor. She praises Samuel, who this time immediately identifies his diary. The teacher calls on Ayrton again and he identifies his diary to the teacher's praise (FIELD NOTES, 01/10/19).

In the second format of working with the proper name supported by the diary, the teacher only showed the initial letter of the name of a diary and asked the children which letter was being shown. She then asked which child's name began with that letter, until the children either found out whose diary it was or identified their own diary. Some children presented both pieces of information correctly.

The importance of first names for children's identity cannot be overlooked (MARTINS, 1991), as they are a way of calling themselves, seeing themselves, and imagining themselves. This identity element is part of the symbolic differentiation that children make between themselves and other members of the groups they belong to. At the same time, this movement also ensures their symbolic aggregation in these groups (MARTINS, 1991), which is then configured as a symbolic representation of the person, elaborated through the other, constructed in successive socializations that take place both in the family and at school, making up the process of identity construction in childhood. From our observations, we can see that contact with written language, in a systematic and intentionally planned way, begins with the children being shown their names, either on school materials and utensils or simply on the card that contains the child's name with an instrument that marks their presence in the institution.

Teacher Camila, from the Infant IV-B class, seemed to consider the experiences that the children had already had with their own names in previous experiences (including those she had provided) and would therefore be in a position to develop the activity of identifying this name in the diary. However, some children, like Ayrton, only seemed to randomly choose which diary would be theirs based on the characteristics that shaped it, rather than identifying it by writing their name. To make it easier for children who had difficulty identifying their diaries, the teacher left them to participate last, when there were fewer diaries on the floor. This could make it easier for the children to identify with the diaries, if they were really getting to grips with their own names, or increase the chance that they would randomly "get it right" by collecting the correct diary.

Apparently, some children were able to recognize their own name on the cover of the diary, reading a few letters of that name or reading the whole name. However, the majority relied on other aspects, such as the shape of the letters or the colors, which made

memorization easier. This consists of logographic reading, a concept coined by Frith (1985, *apud* MALUF; SOUSA, 2004, p. 56), which can be described as "[...] a way of identifying words based on the recognition of a visual pattern, in which the child learns the meaning through memorization".

We also believe that the children's recognition of the diary/name could be based on other indications, such as a dent or scratch on the cover, leading them to recognize their diary. In any case, despite these possible biases in the process, we can emphasize how important it is for the children to be included in an interactive practice in which writing is a mediating element, so that they can, in some way, enter the process of understanding its social function.

Another strategy for working with proper names in the classes investigated was to ask the children to write their names on the sheets of paper on which they sketched some drawings. They could do this activity in any way they knew how, even when they wanted to write a certain word that linked to the theme/fact illustrated by the drawing, which had been discussed collectively. Some of these words were already known to the children, making them possibly stable for them, as recorded in the field:

In the Infant IV-B class, after a drawing activity, the teacher asks the children to write their names on the sheets in the way they know how. Some children write the way they know how (unconventionally), others write conventionally, without the help of the proper name card, and others ask the teacher for the card (FIELD NOTES, 24/10/19).

Teacher Camila commented that by asking the children to write "in their own way", for example, to name their drawings, this activity allowed her to reflect on how the children were learning to write because, with the use of the card, some children just copied. This was linked to the procedural assessment of the children's learning of written language; an indispensable procedure for teacher mediation in the process of acquiring this language. As already discussed in this article, one of the teacher's actions in promoting children's writing is to observe and understand how this subject is thinking about this cultural instrument, in other words, what hypothesis of writing construction the child is at. In this way, it is possible to direct their practice in such a way as to promote progress in the development of this hypothesis, so that the child appropriates the conventions that structure written language.

In this sense, the teachers also experimented with writing in conjunction with other languages, such as drawing:

After a conversation about the cell phone, in the Infant IV-B class, which emerged from Artur's request for the class to bring this object to school, Camila proposes that the children write the word cell phone on the board. The teacher hands out sheets of paper for the children to draw on, and some of them draw something related to the cell phone. While the children were drawing, she called on one at a time to do a test in which the child drew an object and wrote the name of that object. On this day, she asked the children to draw a cell phone and write the "name" cell phone. Camila says it's "Emília Ferreiro's test" (FIELD NOTES, 17/10/19).

From this perspective, working with stable words, especially with one's proper name, may stem from the consideration that a "writing model" is important in the process of learning this language modality. According to Gallart and Teberosky (2004), stable words are words whose conventional spelling can be memorized by the child and serve as a source of experience for writing other words. Therefore, in addition to the use of the diary, other situations were observed in which children worked with their first names, such as the use of "activities" for home and the use of the "name card".

Work with written language, specifically with the units of the word, letters, and syllables, was also performed in the classrooms investigated by exploring the name of the month. This work was supported by the **calendar** artifact and most often took place in conversation circles.

When planning, the teachers built the skeleton of the calendar, making the columns for the days of the week and the rows for the days of the month. In block letters, they added the name of the month and the days of the week. This tool was presented to the children at the beginning of the month, usually during the conversation circle, as exemplified in the following story:

In the Infant IV-A class, the teacher talks to the children about the day of the week and the month. She does this with the help of a calendar produced on a cardboard sheet. She works on written language, exploring the name of the month, the initial letter, and the other letters that correspond to August. She also works on numbers, with the help of the days of the month (FIELD NOTES, 08/08/19).

The calendar is an everyday textual genre that is essential for children's literacy so that they can understand its function. In order to achieve this goal, teaching practices must explore it in a systematized way, in close relation to the social function of written language. The link between literacy (social practices in the use of reading and writing) and mathematical literacy contributes to the production of texts and the practice of reading by providing children with knowledge of how texts are structured and how writing is organized in our society and, at the same time, how it is organized. Thus, children can learn the

difference between horizontal and vertical, what segmentation is, identify positions such as bottom, top, left and right, beginning, middle and end, count paragraphs, stanzas, etc.

The work developed with written language in the classes taking part in the research also made use of interaction and intervention with the **workbook material**. Regarding the use of this material, teacher Camila made the following comment: "It is so disconnected, this material, in general, is so disconnected from what we do". The teacher's statement reminds us of Smolka's (2012, p.18) opinion when she states that:

reading and writing activities, based on the textbook, are [...] devoid of meaning, and [...] alien to the functioning of language, contrasting violently with the reading and writing conditions of literate societies

In this sense, the activities and texts in the textbooks often explore written language in a very superficial way, based on texts that are uninteresting to the children's reality and which prioritize the memorization of content. In order to overcome this practice, when possible, the teachers who took part in this research connected the activities in the workbook with subjects being discussed in class, based on listening to the children; as explained by teacher Camila in one of the focus groups:

*We have the workbook... they asked to make a cellphone [...]. Me: "My God, what now?". and we had an activity in the workbook about cellphone numbers. I did this activity two days before, I got this activity and made it with them. They took it home and the parents wrote their cellphone numbers. I explored with them what they understood by cellphone, what they knew... I wrote the word cellphone on the board so they could write it, all these things [...]. In sum, I connected their wish to something that was in the workbook (Teacher Camila, 3rd Focal Group).*

With activities like this, the teacher was at the same time meeting the children's interests and, consequently, the demands of using the material acquired by the school network. According to Rinaldi (2017, p. 106), listening to children implies building "[...] the intertwining and connections, the network of relationships, to transform them into meaningful experiences of interaction and communication" between children and the practices proposed to them. Actions of this nature are relevant because they encourage children to reflect on the text and understand their own reality, as well as the broad social context in which they are inserted, actively participating in diverse literacy practices and events.

Another practice that sought to engage children in literacy events was the proposition of **educational games**, which, according to Kishimoto (1999, p. 59), are "[...] playful situations intentionally created by the adult with a view to stimulating certain types of

learning". Throughout the observations, we came across activities proposed by the teachers that had this playful potential:

In the Infant IV-B class, the teacher informs the children in a circle about the activity that will be performed, bingo. She asks the children to sit down at the tables, as she will be distributing the material. Camila hands each child a bingo card with letters instead of numbers. The teacher draws letter by letter and monitors whether or not the children identify it on the card, praises, corrects, and checks that the children are following the rules of the game. Most of the children respect the rules of the game and identify the letters. With children who have difficulties, the teacher monitors them closely so that they follow the rules of the game and play until the end. The game is organized in such a way that the children in first, second, or third place win at the end (FIELD NOTES, 24/10/2019).

The teacher's practice shows a perception of the use of games as a playful resource, with the pedagogical intention of promoting a meaningful experience with written language. The inclusion of pedagogical games in reading and writing practices in Early Childhood Education is seen by teachers as a "playful" way of teaching and promoting "pleasurable" learning for children (AQUINO, 2015). Leão (2015, p. 650) adds that there are other pedagogical purposes for this type of resource, such as:

[...] awaken children's motivation, expressiveness, imagination, communicative language, attention, concentration, logical reasoning, and can encompass different areas of knowledge.

We would also add that the game situations observed in the classes investigated involved girls and boys who showed little contact with written language, which encouraged these children to participate, contributing to the learning of this object of knowledge and to the development of skills specific to this psychic and social instrument.

**Reading or storytelling** was also part of the children's routine, and it was done after snack time, having or not related to the following practice which could be drawing, plays, games, or others. The storytelling also occurred, to a lesser extent, after dinner, approximately 20 minutes before departure time. The stories chosen by the teachers were sometimes linked to the project under development or chosen "at random". When they did, they were linked to themes understood as symbolic objects of interest and involvement for the children, such as death, violence, parties, work, etc. These themes usually emerged in the class. When the choice was random, it was based on the quality of the material, the text, the images, and the design.

The teachers wanted the children to appropriate the specificities of this tool, as observed in a storytelling session in the Infant IV-B class:

Before starting the storytelling, the teacher introduces the book and asks the children if they want to see who wrote it. She shows them and tells them the name. She also introduces the illustrator. One child says that she drew it in the book (FIELD NOTES, 29/08/2019).

The teachers said they knew that storytelling/reading is an important practice for working on the literacy dimension since reading and enjoying stories is a significant playful, social, and personal experience for children's reading and writing education. This practice is an indispensable part of daily life in early childhood education, implying the child's construction of reality and identity. Therefore, we cannot fail to mention the importance of social experiences with the use of language that favors the dimension of play [...]

[...] because we know that the playful practices are also discursive since it is exactly thorough mediating the play, the symbolic games, that children seek to act and understand the relations and instruments that the culture shows them, giving them a new language (QUIXADA; LINS; TAVARES, 2018, p.189).

## 5 Closing remarks

This study derives of a research project that, in 2019, investigated practices of/with languages in a Early Education Center located in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. Based on the data we collected, we can infer that written language was conceived by the teachers as knowledge that children should interact with and appropriate. They also point to the perception, in this object/instrument of knowledge, of specificities relating to teaching/promotion by educators and learning/development by children, as it is a piece of knowledge from the socio-historical heritage of important social value.

Though being included in the children's everyday practices, written language needs to be taught and, thus, it is not enough to interact, it is necessary strategies and resources that promote its learning. It is possible to affirm that there was an appreciation of the children as active and participative subjects since the teachers listened to their demands and interests to propose the activities. In this sense, it is possible to understand that those practices had possibilities of signification by the children, such as the calendar practices, the use of the workbook, the storytelling, and so on. Those experiences, therefore, must match the children's interests in a contextualized way.

In the observed practices, it was not possible to identify other more significant moments in which the written language was approached inside a literacy proposal, in other words, of the social use of the writing. We did not witness, for example, the building of a



collective story along with the children or the writing of a card to the parents. Besides that, we highlight the appreciation of the children's spontaneous writing as an interesting practice when the children sign their drawings.

Therefore, the manifestations of language use in the writing modality by children were related to experiences that they had so far with this cultural tool, inside and outside the school. Another possible comprehension is that those manifestations, besides indicating the knowledge that the children already had about this language, supported the development of other ideas about it, enabling children to elaborate, in a more sophisticated way, their ideas about the construction and functions of writing as a tool for interaction and self-construction.

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