

## Teaching and learning English for children: discursive analysis of language school advertisements

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### Abstract

The present work the objective is to investigate the discursive strategies that are mobilized by language schools to enunciate about the teaching and learning of English for children. As a support for the development of this study, we rely on investigations of Foucault (2008), Garcia (2011) and Vasconcelos e Siqueira (2021). As for the methodology, it is a descriptive- interpretative study of a qualitative nature. The corpus comprises discursive materialities that are contained in websites of two language centers: *Wizard by Pearson e Fisk*. The analysis of the advertisements allows us to ascertain the existence of discursive strategies that advocate a more meaningful learning during childhood, conceived as a phase full of discoveries and enthusiasm, and, therefore, claim that teaching needs to be based on fun and interaction, stimulating an easier learning of English.

**Keywords:** Teaching. Learning. English Language. Discourse

### Ensino e aprendizagem de inglês para crianças: análise discursiva de propagandas de escolas de idiomas

#### Resumo

No presente trabalho objetiva-se investigar as estratégias discursivas que são mobilizadas por escolas de idiomas para enunciar acerca do ensino e aprendizagem de inglês para crianças. Como respaldo para o desenvolvimento deste estudo, amparamo-nos as investigações de Foucault (2008a; 2008b), Garcia (2011) e Vasconcelos e Siqueira (2021). Quanto à metodologia, trata-se de um estudo descritivo-interpretativo de natureza qualitativa. O corpus compreende materialidades discursivas que estão contidas em sites de duas escolas de idiomas: *Wizardby Pearson e Fisk*. A análise das propagandas permitem averiguar a existência de estratégias discursivas que defendem um aprendizado mais significativo no período da infância, concebida como uma fase cheia de descobertas e entusiasmos, e, por isso, afirmam que o ensino precisa pautar-se na diversão e interação, estimulando um aprendizado do inglês com mais facilidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Ensino. Aprendizagem. Língua Inglesa. Discurso.



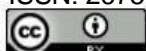
## 1 Introduction

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In the last decades, in which cultures and economies around the world are interconnected by technological advances, financialization of capital and access to information, the learning of a language that could be considered as universal has become indispensable for communication between speakers of different languages around the globe. Facing such reality, language teaching is a problem that has conquered a lot of space, not only for a learning based on rules or the ability to encode or decode, but to value "[...] its social function, in its instances of meaning and significance, in the development of reality and the possibility of its reconstruction" (MURRIE, 2001, p. 60-61). Thus, we have experienced the demand and supply for language courses, especially when it comes to the teaching of English, since it is considered the most studied foreign language in the world. In summary, Leffa (2001) mentions that there are a number of factors that contribute to the fact that the English Language plays this role, mainly because it is considered a language without frontiers.

Because of this, the number of non-native speakers exceeds the number of native speakers. Anjos (2019), in turn, reports, in line with this, that worldwide there are more than 1 billion and 350 million non-native speakers and if the pace of English expansion continues to grow, there is an estimate that this number will increase, reaching about 3 billion non-native speakers. Currently, having acquired the status of a "lingua franca," the expansion in demand for English language instruction has increased due to the importance of numerous factors that expand a range of opportunities for speakers.

Crystal (2003) believes that English has achieved the status of a global language due to two main factors, namely: one historical, which refers to the colonial expansion of the British Empire, which ruled a quarter of the world's population, and the other refers to an economic factor related to the rise of the United States of America (USA) as the most developed and powerful economy on the planet during the 20th century. In addition to the above, Vasconcelos and Siqueira (2021) emphasize the influence that Brazil had on the



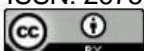


globalization process of two hegemonic English-speaking nations, USA and England, thus associating the English language with "[...] the idea of economic, military and, supposedly, civilizational superiority of these two countries and everything they represent" (VASCONCELOS; SIQUEIRA, 2021, p. 52). About this, Garcia (2011, p. 90) also emphasizes on the representations of language, by stating that "The language and its learning process are represented as ways of access to culture and the global world market or within the leisure market".

Thus, we can see how these representations about the learning of the English language, besides making possible the communication among people, contributes to the acquisition of intercultural competences, besides contributing to social positions, to the labor market and to the personal and professional future, associating itself to a successful language. According to Vasconcelos and Siqueira (2021, p. 53), "In the eyes of the world, English then comes to represent capitalism, success, development, freedoms, free market, Christianity and, above all, democracy.

Considering the strong influence of LI in the market, we think it is valid to point out the increase in supply and demand for English classes for children. About this, Colombo and Consolo (2016, p. 13) claim, "In recent years, the teaching of English as a foreign language for children (ILEC) has aroused the attention and interest of parents, teachers, educational institutions, publishers, researchers, and governmental institutions in Brazil [...]". This demand to start the process of teaching and learning English at an early age is related to certain social representations, namely: a) it is believed that children are easier and faster learners during the process; b) the time of exposure to the target language contributes to the learning process, since from a very early age the child experiences the practice of English.

Kawachi-Furlan and Rosa (2020, p. 8) underline such idea when they say that "[...] the process of teaching-learning increasingly earlier is based on a collective imaginary about the possible benefits of such process". Once a child starts learning English during childhood, besides presenting satisfactory results during the learning LI, some authors argue about the advantages of learning this language for the future of



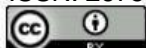


children, aiming at better job opportunities and international insertion, having the English language as a differential. As a result of these possibilities that the language offers, the teaching of English to children has been expanding more and more.

Nevertheless, despite the growing interest in learning English for children (ILEC) in Brazil, there is still no regulation by the educational policies of the public school system aiming at the insertion of ILEC in the early grades of education, since, according to the Law of Directives and Bases of Education (LDBEN/9.394/96), the foreign language is compulsory only from the sixth year of elementary school.

In line with the commercial interests of starting the teaching of CLIL earlier, the expansion of language schools throughout Brazil is remarkable. In recent years the demand for language courses has seen a marked increase. According to Google Trends data projections, there has been a 200% increase from the end of 2020 to March 2021 in the search for foreign language courses. It is necessary to discuss that, despite the significant advance in the search for English courses, the Brazilian scenario still shows that an advance in learning is necessary, since 95% of the Brazilian population still does not speak the language, according to the PES English website. Given this vertiginous demand for learning LI, what could once be considered a strong trend has become a reality in people's lives. Facing this demand, the growth in the number of bilingual schools has increased between 6% and 10% in the last five years, according to data from the Brazilian Association of Bilingual Education (Abebi).

Among the reasons that underlie the increase in the number of language schools in the current scenario, with emphasis on childhood, the preparation of the child for an increasingly competitive market stands out, because as parents argue, the acquisition of this language is a bridge to the future of their children, in which one can improve future opportunities in the child's career. In this sense, Garcia (2011, p. 86) points out that "The child exists in the future as a worker, competitor and competitor who must stand out for their skills, as well as prepare for their activities since too soon". It is possible to identify a discourse built on urgency, internalizing the logic of competition.





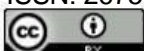
According to Garcia (2011), this competition imaginary is internalized in the child as well.

The logic of competition, of the politics of distinction, appears not only in the discourse of parents who visualize good employment in the future of their children, but also in that of the children themselves, who already project themselves into this place in the labor market, since it is not a question of if, but of when they will get a job. (GARCIA, 2011, p. 86-87).

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Therefore, it is worth noting that this logic of competition appears not only on the part of parents or children, but also on the part of the media, as it calls for parents to feel the desire to insert their children in a place where they can succeed as soon as possible (GARCIA, 2011). Thus, it is possible to identify the importance of the media in our daily lives and the power of influence that the media discourses propagated by the various media products exert on our social life. Tamanini (2006) describes that these discourses "[...] are consumed daily by all of us, teachers and students, and are increasingly influencing behaviors, attitudes, lifestyles, and the construction of social identities" (TAMANINI, 2006, p.2).

In this context of expansion and demand for the learning of LI, there is still an absence of discursive studies about this focus. The academic works produced are mostly concentrated on the media discourses of language school advertisements and on the teaching and learning of English more generally. Studies that analyze the functioning of discursive strategies mobilized by language school advertisements concerning the teaching and learning of English in childhood are absent. Having made these observations, it is relevant to highlight some works that are related to the theme in focus, although not confounded with the specificity of this study, such as: the analysis of the advertising discourse of language courses (MARQUES, 2014; LIMA, 2010); the relationship between English language learning and child development (FERRARI, 2008); the use of ludic activities as a resource that contributes to the learning of the target language (PIRES, 2001). Other studies also problematize the reasons why which make teaching English to children a challenge, exposing the issue of the scarcity of didactic material and the poor training of teachers (TONELLI; CRISTOVÃO, 2010).





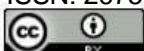
Taking into consideration the strong appeal of language as a commodity/*comodity* linked to globalization (LUCENA; TORRES, 2019) and the realization that many works that address the teaching and learning of English for children have not analyzed it in its amplitude, this paper starts from the following problematic: what discursive strategies are mobilized by language schools to enunciate about the teaching and learning of English for children?

By reflecting on this scenario, we aim to analyze the discursive strategies that are mobilized by language schools to enunciate about the teaching and learning of English for children.

That said, we believe that it is necessary to look more specifically at the discourses that go through the advertisements of English language schools, in order to highlight the child as a targeted group and as a potentially more favorable learner. In this sense, Garcia (2011, p.72) points out: "It is relevant to mention that most of the sayings that refer to children, both in the reports and in the schools' websites, do it in a way to put them in a passive place, as recipients of actions [...]". Having made these observations, the representation of the subject in these discourses is of a child who stores knowledge without much effort, besides projecting this public with privileged places in the market, associating a link between the acquisition of LI with the labor market.

Moreover, advertising discourses tend to construct certain representations of the child as subjects modeled within power relations. One can glimpse the concern about what the child will become in the future, with the belief that he needs to improve his human capital (FOUCAULT, 2008b), and in this sense, the learning of the English language becomes an investment in the child's competences, since it aims to develop several skills that later on will bring returns - especially financial - to children and their families.

## 2 Methodology







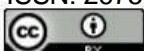
Regarding methodology, it is worth mentioning that this study is characterized as a descriptive-interpretative study with a qualitative approach. The interpretativist research is conceived by many scholars as a pertinent way to produce knowledge within the social sciences and humanities. Thus, Moita Lopes (1994, p. 332) states that "in addition to being more enriching because it allows knowledge of a different nature to be revealed due to its innovative approach." According to Minayo (2001, p.22), "Qualitative research answers very particular questions. It is concerned, in the social sciences, with a level of reality that cannot be quantified." Qualitative research, besides being concerned with the social world, aims to observe and understand the system of beliefs and values. Since this is qualitative research, the analysis was carried out by means of a description of the verb-visual aspects that mark the discursive strategies in the advertisements of the language courses under analysis.

In order to be able to observe the strategies used by language schools in different discursive instances, the corpus of the research is composed of advertisements of two different language schools, namely: Wizardby Person and Fisk. We selected advertisement discourses from each school, making a total of four discursive materialities. The advertisements are available on the websites and YouTube accounts of the respective franchises. The choice of the different franchises was made because they are considered the largest and best known language schools in Brazil.

### 3 Some theoretical notes

#### 3.1 Discourse, discursive formation and discursive strategy

This study is based on the theorizations undertaken within Foucauldian discourse studies. To this end, we initially ponder on the notion of discourse, as postulated by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984), who considers it as an event manifested in a given time and place, being conceived from the relationship with other concepts, such as knowledge, power and subject. In his work "The Archaeology of



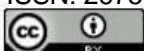


Knowledge ", the French philosopher also emphasizes the idea of detaching from the interpretation of discourse as a set of signs. In this view, the discourse pre-exists beyond the reference to things or the use of words, phrases and letters and "[...] cannot be understood as a phenomenon of mere expression of something: it presents regularities intrinsic to itself, through which it is possible to define a conceptual network of its own" (FISCHER, 2001, p. 200). In the voice of the French professor,

[...]I would like to show that the discourse is not a narrow surface of contact, or of confrontation, between a reality and a language, the intricacy between a lexicon and an experience; I would like to show, by means of precise examples, that by analyzing the discourses themselves, we see the apparently so strong ties between words and things unravel, and a set of rules, proper of the discursive practice, stand out. [...] no longer treat discourses as a set of signs (signifying elements that refer to contents or representations), but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Discourses are certainly made of signs; but what they do is more than using these signs to designate things. It is this more that makes them irreducible to language and the speech act. It is this more that must be made to appear and that must be described (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 56).

In face of some definitions of discourse undertaken by Foucault, the thinker still designates such concept as a set of statements: "We will call discourse a set of statements that rely on the same discursive formation" (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p.135). According to this logic, it is convenient to discuss the utterance, which is understood as the elementary unit of discourse, as "[...] like a grain that appears on the surface of a fabric of which it is the constituent element" (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 90). In short, the enunciation is characterized as an event, that is, as something that appears in a certain time and place, given the existence of certain historical conditions of possibility.

It is an "[...] element susceptible of being isolated and capable of entering into a game of relations with other elements similar to it" (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p.90). In this way, to analyze an enunciation means to observe its correlations in the midst of other enunciations, thus resuming the various meanings produced in each context and conjuncture (MARQUES, 2014).





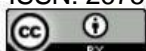


According to Foucault (2008a), there is no enunciation that is not supported by a set of signs, and this enunciative function is described from four properties, namely: a) referential - which concerns the relation between the enunciation and the laws of possibility, not being constituted of facts or beings, but, of laws of possibilities and rules of existence that allow describing them; b) subject position - it is not about a grammatical subject, since the subject of the enunciation is not inside the linguistic syntagma, but of a positioning to be assumed in the enunciation; c) associated domain - refers to the fact that the utterance does not exist in isolation, but connects to other utterances already said or yet to be produced; d) repeatable materiality - makes the utterance appear with a specific object that needs a date, a substance, or an institutional space. "While an enunciation can be restarted or reevoked, while a form (linguistic or logical) can be re-actualized, the enunciation has the particularity that it can be repeated: but always under strict conditions" (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 118).

Thinking about these descriptions about the enunciate, it is convenient to recognize their specificities and understand that they belong to a discursive formation, understood by Foucault (2008a, p.82) as "[...] a complex bundle of relations that work as a rule: it prescribes what must be correlated in a discursive practice, so that it refers to such or such object, so that it employs such or such enunciation [...]".

In this sense, it is verified a discursive formation within a discursive field, formed by types of enunciation, concepts, objects and strategies (SILVA, 2021). From this point of view, the discursive formation presents a correlation with the utterances, which, when described, characterize certain regularities within a given dispersion. Then, "To define in its singular individuality a system of formation is thus to characterize a discourse or a group of utterances by the regularity of a practice" (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 82). These formations dialogue with different fields of knowledge. As an example, we can observe the functioning of advertising discourse, the focus of this study, which crosses several fields of knowledge, such as scientific, economic and sociological.

The discursive formation can be better described when investigating the formation of discursive strategies, according to Foucault (2008a). According to the author,





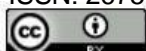
these strategies are linked to discourse decipherment points and can be ascertained through the following aspects: (a) points of incompatibility - occur when two objects of discourse or types of enunciation appear in the same discursive formation, but cannot, at the risk of appearing contradictory, integrate the same enunciative series; (b) points of equivalence - the two apparently contrary elements from before can become equivalent, because they were engendered from the same conditions of possibility; (c) points of linking a systematization - as a consequence of the equivalence of hitherto incompatible elements, concepts, themes and approaches are generated through which discursive subsets are erected.

### 3. 2 Teaching and learning English for children

The teaching of foreign languages (FLs) is a theme that has conquered a lot of space, especially when it comes to the teaching of English (IL), as it is a language that has expanded throughout the world. Paiva (2003) assures that since ancient civilizations there has been an interest for LEs, in view of the need to learn other languages, since languages serve as mediators between peoples, political and commercial actions, thus building an interrelationship between them. However, it was only in 1837 that foreign language teaching started in Brazil.

Leffa (1999) points out that English, French and German were the languages that gained more attention and there was a need for the school to choose only one language to be taught, since students could not study two LEs at the same time. The Law of Directives and Bases of National Education - LDB n. 9.394/96 (BRASIL, 1996) establishes the mandatory teaching of a foreign language from the sixth year of elementary school, and the choice of the language to be taught is up to the school community.

Thus, with the increasing choice of English as the foreign language to be taught, the demand to guarantee language learning has been growing not only in elementary school, but also in language schools, all over the world, due to learning of LE make it



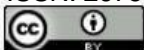


possible to the student a range of opportunities in the current socio-historical conjuncture. "The teaching of a foreign language in school plays an important role as it allows students to come into contact with other cultures, with different ways of seeing and interpreting reality." (BRASIL, 1998, p. 54). Therefore, we noticed that the child had no contact with the foreign language in the early years of education. According to Amarante (2009), there is no foreign language teaching/learning policy for preschool children in the political-educational discourses in our country. Still according to the author, the "[...] silencing about LE teaching/learning for children ends up inscribing in the discourse the optional character of the foreign language for the integral formation of the subject" (AMARANTE, 2009, p. 221).

Graddol ponders that (2006, p. 88) "[...] the age that children start learning English is increasingly younger all over the world," thus describing that it is something that has occurred as a worldwide trend. But, it was not always like this, because, at the beginning of this 21st century, the demand for the provision of foreign language teaching for children (LEC) was still something that occurred with little expressiveness.

Garcia (2011) stresses that, although the offer of English to children has had a substantial increase, such teaching is not yet regulated at the federal, state or municipal level. And from this, one can understand the increase in the offer of English for children (EIC) in language courses. Taking advantage of this demand for EIC, language schools invest in advertisements in order to attract the attention of parents with the intention of emphasizing the need for learning English from an early age, thus producing several effects of meaning through media discourses.

Lima, Paulista and Preto (2010) state that advertisements aim at persuading people to buy a product. However, according to the above, it is possible to identify that the advertisements of language schools, because they are institutional advertisements, aim to sell an ideology and not a product. In this sense, Gracioso (1995, p. 23) points out that "Like all forms of advertising, the Its function is to influence people's behavior by creating, changing or reinforcing mental images and attitudes".





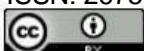
Thinking about the discourses of advertisements in language schools, it is possible to notice the strong appeal in relation to learning English language for children in a fun way. According to Amarante (2009, p. 222), "[...] the teaching of foreign language to children is empowered by also being anchored in representations that refer to playfulness, which we often find in discourses referring to early childhood education". In this sense, Batista and Oliveira(2013) argue that we are surrounded by a network of discourses and they constitute us as subjects, and thus, the media discourse is part of this constitution as subjects and establishes identities and possibilities of enunciation in the process of teaching and learning English. Moreover, the authors also state that language schools are considered influential in the identification of the subject.

[...] Language institutes are influential in identifying learners with the foreign language and this is done through the discourse of advertising their courses. [...] language schools are recognized as the only places where the teaching of a foreign language is efficient and this idea is legitimized through their billboards and advertisements in the media (BATISTA; OLIVEIRA, 2013, p. 280).

From the perspective of the quest for LEC teaching, Tonelli (2013, p. 297) stresses: "[...] One of the justifications for the strengthening of this framework lies in the fact that the increasingly accessible economic power and technology make this language a fundamental instrument in social participation at the global level." The National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) justifies this importance of learning the English language by guiding:

[...]the study of the English language can give everyone access to the linguistic knowledge necessary for engagement and participation, contributing to the students' critical agency and to the exercise of active citizenship, besides expanding the possibilities of interaction and mobility, opening new paths of knowledge construction and continuity in their studies. (BRASIL, 2017, p. 241).

Pires (2001) emphasizes that this search for EIC has become a necessity for two reasons: 1) the concern of parents to offer an education to their children, as a way to guarantee them a better future or even already thinking about the opportunities on labor

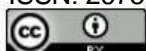




market and personal qualification; and 2) and also the schools' concern in starting to offer English language courses as a differential to influence the parents' choice, when deciding which school to enroll their children in. So this growing demand and concern on the part of parents drew the attention of school principals as well. Rocha's (2007) study states that there is a controversial discussion about what would be the best age to learn a foreign language and this discussion has been taking place among researchers, psychologists and scholars. According to Rocha (2007, p. 73), "[...] the pressure to start learning LE in childhood has its origin in the assumption that children can learn it more easily. From this perspective, children have an easier time learning the language and developing their skills during childhood. For Ferrari (2008), in language learning, children have more ease and sensitivity when compared to adults.

Also according to Ferrari (2008), the ideal age for language acquisition occurs until the age of ten. In this logic, Leffa (2016, p. 22) highlights, "Learning is understood as the formal and conscious development of language, usually obtained through the explicitness of rules." Thus, exposing the differences between learning and acquisition. "Acquisition is the informal and spontaneous development of the second language." (LEFFA, 2016, p. 22). In view of this, it is worth noting that when talking about LE teaching for children, it is important to emphasize that it should happen after the beginning of the mother tongue (LM) acquisition process. Tonelli (2013) explains that, according to some studies on learning the LM, children develop language skills from social interactions, and not only sitting at desks with pencil and paper or isolated from their peers. Based on this assumption, it is possible to see that, for the learning of a foreign language to occur, the child needs to use language interactively.

Following this line of reasoning, some authors argue that the language teaching-learning process is inherent to the development of cognitive, social, cultural and even psychological aspects of the learners (CAMERON, 2001). From this perspective, Ellis (2004) points out that the main goal of teaching LE in childhood is the development of the learner's intercultural competence. In this sense, the teaching of FL is related to the development and growth, be it physical, intellectual or socio-cultural of the child. On this





same perspective, for children to develop language learning, they need to be exposed to language skills, developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in the language in question.

Brown (2001, p.86 cited by ROCHA 2007) defines the child as "[...] a learner who needs to expend less effort". Therefore, it is understood that when learning a foreign language, the child will consequently have more opportunity for success during the learning process when compared to adults. For Rocha (2007), it is necessary to keep in mind that there are several factors that influence the LE teaching-learning process, such as confidence, motivation, personality, and also self-esteem. Considering that the teaching of LI to children has been the focus of several researches, some scholars (MOON, 2000; MCKAY, 2006) point out that other factors influence the results of learning a new language for children, such as, the exposure time to the language, the adequacy of the objects of study and the teacher's skills.

In view of the above, we can see that, although studies prove that children find it easier to learn a new language during childhood, EIC is a teaching that requires care and dedication. Furthermore, there are two fundamental problems that hover over the teaching of English to children. According to Tonelli and Cristóvão (2010), the most common problems are related to the use of teaching materials, which are often used incorrectly, making teaching a more challenging task, and another problem is the training of teachers who will work with children.

Salas (2004) defines teaching materials as everything that is used by teachers or students to help them learn the target language. Thus, we understand that teaching materials are everything that enriches students' learning, and that the use of these teaching materials are indispensable tools in the process of language teaching and learning, since they help both the teacher and the development of students' abilities.

Thus, Leffa (2007, p. 15) argues that "The production of teaching materials is a sequence of activities that aims to create a learning." Therefore, it is up to the teacher to use teaching materials that develop language skills and have real meaning for children. It is notorious that some teachers make adaptations of existing materials to the reality from





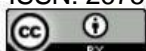


many times, these adaptations are poorly done and end up jeopardizing the teaching, since these erroneous adaptations occur precisely because of the poor training of the teachers. Thus,

A person who finishes an undergraduate degree in English or a good free English course and has a great background in the language may be well prepared to teach adults and adolescents, but may not have the slightest knowledge about educating children under the age of six. On the other hand, someone who has a degree in teaching or pedagogy and/or some other training course in early childhood education may be an excellent teacher for children up to six years old, but may not have enough knowledge of English to avoid making pronunciation and grammar mistakes that could jeopardize their students' future as foreign language learners (PIRES, 2004, p. 20).

Carvalho (2005) analyzed the discourse of an English language teacher for children aged approximately 2 to 3 years old. The objective of the study was to interpret how a teacher interacts with the students in the classroom and, by observing the actions performed among them, the author believes that the teacher should stimulate the child's interest for learning during the class, thus arousing their attention, since she believes that children have a short attention span. With this in mind, to attract the children's attention, the teacher can use different teaching methods that arouse the child's attention and interaction in the class, implementing materials that make the classes more attractive. According to Vygotsky (1993), it is through playing that the child develops the zone of proximal development, and this development zone acts on the children's current abilities. Following this line of reasoning, we understand the importance of inserting didactic materials that allow children to play, that is, to create a stimulus for learning and developing foreign language skills. With children, we cannot limit ourselves to teaching grammar, rules, and repetition, because young learners do not have the cognitive maturity to learn abstract norms and concepts. (BROW, 1994, p.129 apud Dimer and Soares, 2012).

In this sense, Teixeira (1995) emphasizes the importance of playful activities as a resource to be used.





Playful activities integrate the various dimensions of personality: affective, motor, and cognitive. As a physical and mental activity that mobilizes functions and operations, playfulness triggers the motor and cognitive spheres, and as it generates emotional involvement, it appeals to the affective sphere. Thus, it can be seen that playful activity resembles artistic activity, as an integrating element of the various aspects of the personality. The being that plays and plays is also the being that acts, feels, thinks, learns, and develops (TEIXEIRA, 1995, p. 23).

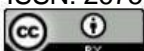
These dynamic and attractive educational activities need to be present in English language classes in order to help children in the teaching-learning process. This way, students will have opportunities to learn the language without being intimidated and will feel more motivated, besides making the classes more communicative, because, during the interaction and in the dynamics, the teacher has the opportunity to use real communication situations in a way that will contribute to meet the students' needs.

## 4 Results and Discussion

In this section, we analyze the advertisements of the two language schools chosen: Wizardby Person and Fisk. The analytical look directed at the corpus of this study was anchored on the assumptions of Foucauldian discourse studies and on authors who discuss the teaching of English to children. It is important to point out that this section is divided into two parts. Each one of them refers to the analysis of a different advertisement.

### **Wizkids: Wizard's English for Kids with the Little Wiz gang!"**

The advertisement analyzed here is entitled "Wizkids: Wizard's English for Kids with the Little Wiz gang! Presented in video format with 2min38s of duration, it was broadcasted through the website and YouTube channel of the "Wizardby Pearson" franchise. The video was posted on YouTube on August 3, 2018 and has 43,630 views. In addition to the video, several utterances were analyzed, which are present on various pages of the franchise and integrate the advertising field of such franchise. From start,

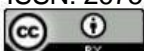




this materiality presents a family composed of a mother, a father, and a son. The members of this family arrangement considered traditional are seated on a sofa in a space that we can consider as a living room. In this materiality, the images are presented in animation format, as a video marketing strategy used by the company to attract the attention of children and parents. The fact that the video has been produced in an animated format brings to mind aspects from the children's universe, besides being able to explain and convince parents of the possible advantages of enrolling their children in the school in question.

The dialogue begins with a parent's question about what would be the ideal moment for their child to learn English. At first, the concern of parents with the education of their children is put on the agenda, and it is possible to observe this through visual devices that appear in the scene and serve as legitimization techniques of the product. Such imagetic artifacts refer to thought balloons with images referring to music courses, computing, swimming, wrestling, and, finally, the U.S. flag, referring to learning English. Such mobilization seems to point to an attempt to affirm that these courses, and not others, would develop skills that will be useful for the labor market, to which they will be inserted in the future, besides ensuring the children's interaction with the world around them. In this sense, the fact that the US flag appears in the video leads us, via associated domain, to the predominance of American culture as a form of representation of native English speakers through a certain collective imaginary (CABRERA, 2021).

Thus, there is an intensification of a truth effect regarding the learning of English based on this representation of native speakers, associating English as a language that belongs to countries that have it as their mother tongue. Thus, as Leite, Oliveira and Coura (2020) clarify, the native speaker is seen as the great knower of his or her language, since he or she supposedly masters phonetics, phonology, morphology and semantics, seen as a model to be continuously imitated. It is important to mention that this agenda is at odds with the approach of English as a lingua franca, that is, as the one that no longer belongs to a native, once idealized by the owners of the language, but to the various ways of using that language in different spaces of the world.



These images still trace the path of parents who find themselves in situations that must include courses in the education of their children. In this sense, this set of cultural stimuli received by a child, as pointed out by Foucault (2008b) are elements capable of forming a human capital.

18

Figure 10 - "Wizkids: Wizard's English for Kids with the Little Wiz class!"



Source: Propaganda from Wizardby Pearson no YouTube.

Still in line with the concern of parents in deciding the right time for their child to learn English as presented in the video, it is possible to observe that on the website of "Wizardby Pearson", there are several statements that make an appeal to this aspect. The WizKids homepage reinforces this discursive positioning by emphasizing, "Childhood is considered the best phase to start the first contacts with English" (WIZARD, 2019, s.p.). This resumes a knowledge to construct a discursive positioning according to which at this stage of life the child is developing its skills and would be able to learn a new language more easily (ROCHA, 2007). We verify in this advertisement a discursive regularity when emphasizing the child as a subject abstract and generic learner, whose learning difficulties are erased, as if all children had the same conditions and skills necessary to learn a second language.

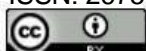


In this situation in which parents question about the phase of learning the English language, it can still be seen in the video that the parents only had this doubt until the moment they got to know WizKids, because when they got to know the methodology addressed in the franchise, they knew that "Wizard" would be the right place for their child to learn English, because as the speaker of the video states " The parents of Matthew (the child) had no more doubts, his place is at WizKids". (WIZARD, 2018, s.p ). Another discursive strategy present in the website advertisement shows "Wizkids, the right time for a bilingual future!". Therefore, the wills of truth in this materiality construct the language course as legitimizing English language learning as that which should be learned from childhood. For Pennycook (2017), the idealization of English as an international language finds echoes in aspects such as naturalness, according to which it is inevitable to learn English in the current context, neutrality, which tends to obscure a critical view on the learning of this language, and the rhetoric of benefit, to make subjects conceive English as a communication channel between all peoples of the so-called global village. In the discourse of propaganda, these aspects can be flagged in order to sustain a discursive strategy through which linguistic ideologies are sustained.

As discussed in the previous paragraph, we emphasize that the analysis of these enunciations resume the English language as a power value and reinforces in a social context the need for the acquisition of this language, convincing parents of the need for their children to learn it in order for the child to be successful in the future. Thus, the child's future success depends on the acquisition of a product (English) that, as we have pointed out, is considered pressing; moreover, this same learner becomes responsible for the success or failure of his or her future, in a frank alignment with the designs of neoliberal rationality.

In parallel to this, there is also the construction of the child as a subject who learns by playing, and it is possible to see this through a series of statements in the advertising discourse:

Wizkids, English classes for children from 3 years old on. With Wizard, your child learns English through playing, in a playful and fun way. [...] A





kids learn english having fun! English with fun activities, games, songs and play! (WIZARD, 2019, s.p)

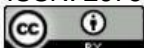
According to the subject position enunciated in the Wizard advertisement, the child needs stimulus for learning development. In this sense, playfulness triggers the children's motor and cognitive spheres, and in this way, the being that plays is also the being that learns and develops. Moreover, learning is built on materials and activities that are considered innovative to make language learning lighter and more fun, building through this a discourse produced in the illusion of easy learning, of a playfulness created by the market, as proposed by (CALDEIRO and BARRIOS, 2021).

Based on a cut of the website, in terms of teaching strategies approached by the franchise, one can assume that it is a personalized teaching. The language school presents itself as the place of clarification about how the classes should be for children, emphasizing that, for each age there are classes, approaches and materials developed for each age group following the child's development.

**“ Hi, my name is Buddy! ”**

Following the same format of advertising previously analyzed, it is necessary to discuss about the statements that are present on the home page of the website and a brief 17-second video that was made available to Internet users on the Fisk channel on YouTube and also on the franchise website, thus constituting verbo-visual discursive materialities. According to Marques (2014), it is urgent to study not only what is linguistic, but also the images as a place of memory. This advocates observing the relationship between verbal language and images, each with its process of signification in this discursive materiality.

The video was published on YouTube on December 1, 2016 and has 22,977 views. The place where the audiovisual materiality takes place is an artificially created environment to simulate an amusement park with a fictional character, thus generating an effect of magic and fun. In this space, there is construction of a place that establishes





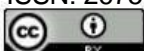


relations that show, from sense effects, the play as a fundamental element for the development of the child.

The materiality mobilizes as a discursive strategy the use of a talking bear read as a kind of mascot for English teaching aimed at children. The mascot introduces himself thus: "Hi, mynameis Buddy, I am Fisk mascot" (FISK, 2016, s.p). The speech is produced in first person and the speaker speaks in English. It can be perceived that "Buddy" presents a pronunciation related to the intended ideal of English in order for the learner, in this case, the child, to create the habit of communicating early on in the English language. This raises a question: what would this ideal of English be? Well, this position is at odds with the discussion of English as a lingua franca, since, from this point of view, there is no pure English. As Crystal and Mccarthy (2021) point out, several global varieties of the English language will continue to develop and consequently each speaker will develop his/her own variety.

The discourse is still based on the need for speech and the expectations in relation to language learning, since parents seek an education that will provide their children with the necessary knowledge to use English for communication, expecting as a result that, just like the bear, the child will speak English fluently, provoking in the imaginary the possibilities of the child being a speaker who dominates the English language.

Fisk uses "Buddy" as a discursive strategy that focuses on learning as something fun, inviting users to learn about the games and activities on the site, thus associating learning to the ludic method. This invitation provides enthusiasm and excitement for children, since it presents entertainment when surfing the site of the franchise. Moreover, this discourse makes us understand the words of Melo and Urbanetz (2008, p. 115), for whom "[...] the school should work with everyday knowledge, closer to the students' reality [...], and this is what Fisk does by using discursive strategies that point to the dynamism to be part of the children's daily lives.





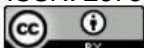
Have fun browsing through our site and find cool games and activities. Come visit a Fisk school and discover that learning can be a lot of fun. Join us at Fisk (FISK, 2016, s.p).

In this sense, it is still possible to identify dynamic strategies in the site's statements that focus on the construction of the child as a subject that uses the power of imagination, fantasy and creation as a form of play. As these elements are specific to childhood, we can also notice that this materiality presents the bear as a mascot of the franchise that aims to help children in the learning process, thus becoming a friend of the child, which emphasizes the meaning of the word "Buddy".

"Buddy" means friend, colleague or companion in English. No wonder this is the name of the Fisk mascot, a big, strong, smart bear, just like you. (FISK, 2016, s.p).

In the enunciation present in the website, the franchise tries to interpellate the student, qualifying him as a strong and intelligent being, with the purpose of motivating him, producing in the subject the effect of security in relation to the announced learning. The formulation "like you" still provokes in the imaginary of the learner subject possibilities of engaging with this franchise to become a smart kid who will master the English language. This individualization in the process of foreign language teaching and learning is related to the neoliberal rationality, in that it focuses on the learner, leading him/her to believe that English will favor certain characteristics that are already inherent to them. From this point of view, the language is conceived as an asset to complement the students' human capital production, for if they are already strong and intelligent, they will be even more so when they learn English.

Thus, it is necessary to situate the reader on the various clippings presented on the site, which relate to the learning of the English Language with the help of the mascot and dynamic classes plays, in this advertisement, the role of a necessary tool for children to achieve learning. Therefore, the need for fun is constructed to facilitate the acquisition or development of the child.



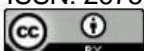


## 5 Final considerations

Throughout the study, we sought to answer the following question: what discursive strategies are mobilized by language schools to enunciate about the teaching and learning of the English language for children? To this end, we analyzed advertisements of two language schools, namely: Wizardbyperson and Fisk. In general lines, the interpretative gesture directed at the corpus showed the operation of discursive strategies that aim at influencing the parents about the advantages of the consumption of English, seeking to create the need of consumption of the English language through the several effects of meaning that are linked through the advertisements. Even though the franchises' materialities present common goals about teaching English to children, it is possible to understand that each of them presented discursive strategies that allow us to understand their differences, making them particular to each language network.

Such advertising discourses still act on the way parents, as consumers of language schools, projecting the child as a future professional for the labor market. Thus, a relationship is established between language schools and parents who want to see in the linguistic development of their children the return on the financial investments made for this purpose. Thus, the aspects related to the child and the learning of LI emerge from discourses that are aligned with the sayings of the neoliberal market (GARCIA, 2011), in which language is reified as a commodity, subject to domination by the learners.

The analyses also lead us to reflect, as teachers in training, about the discourses that convey the English language as a prestigious and powerful value. From this point of view, we identify some regularities that define the conditions of exercise of discursive formations about English belonging to native speakers. Once it is possible to recognize the English language as a property of several cultures, we question the discourse present in the first materiality ("Wizkids: Wizard's English for Kids with Little Wiz's gang!") in which it associates English to a language that belongs especially to countries that have it as their mother tongue.





Thus, as the ones responsible for the educational formation of many students, it is necessary to question this imaginary that associates English to an ideal model that repeatedly produces power relations that plaster L1 and induce inequalities and exclusions. This questioning opens paths for the study of other future materialities, problematizing power relations and discourses about the child in the English language teaching and learning processes.

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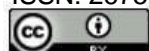
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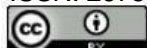
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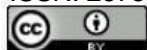
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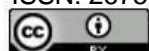
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