


## Reflection of scientific initiation in research with children in early childhood education

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### Abstract

The present article aims to present in a descriptive reflective way the research moments conducted with children in a Child Education Center - CEC, in the countryside of the state of Ceará (CE), and the process as researchers in scientific initiation. For this, Passeggi (2016), Costa and Astigarraga (2021), among other authors compose the theoretical basis to support these reflections. We analyzed the photographs and videos recorded in the first phase of the research, in 2020 and 2021. The children have much to tell us and the ludic inspiration for an Alien-interviewer puppet, based on research by Passeggi; Lani-Bayle (et al, 2018), has contributed greatly to proposing a new research methodology and pedagogical practices.

**Keywords:** Children. Narratives. Scientific initiation.

### Reflexão da Iniciação científica na pesquisa com crianças na educação infantil

### Abstract

Este artigo objetiva apresentar, de forma descritiva-reflexiva, os momentos da pesquisa realizada com crianças em um Centro de Educação Infantil – CEI, no interior do estado do Ceará (CE), e o progresso das pesquisadoras de iniciação científica. Para isso, analisamos as fotografias e os vídeos da primeira fase dessa investigação, entre 2020 e 2021. Nesse sentido, Passeggi (2016), Costa e Astigarraga (2021), Bruner (1997), entre outros, compõem o embasamento teórico que fundamenta essas reflexões. Por fim, pôde-se chegar à conclusão de que as crianças têm muito a nos dizer e a inspiração lúdica de um boneco Alien-entrevistador, baseada em pesquisas de Passeggi; Lani-Bayle (et al, 2018), contribuiu muito para propor práticas pedagógicas e uma nova metodologia de pesquisa.

**Palavras-chave:** Crianças. Narrativas. Iniciação científica.



## 1 Introduction

### The beginning of the journey: embarking on a journey halfway

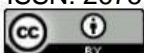
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At first, it is important to highlight that the process of admission of one of the authors of this research work as a Scientific Initiation (CI) scholarship holder occurred through the project entitled "Narrativas(auto)biográficas das crianças em espaços escolares sobre resercriança, vivera infância, escola e processo ino-learning", which began in 2019. After the completion of the course of this researcher in training, it was necessary to replace her by the other author of this article, upon the invitation made by the project coordinator. Thus, despite the sudden invitation and all the bureaucratic procedures necessary to ensure a safe academic trip, the embarkation was successful. Therefore, the gratitude and confidence for the opportunity remains.

Thus, based on the videos, the transcripts, the photos shared, the readings done, and the analyses made here, it was possible to identify aspects that can help in the pedagogical practices. In this vein, when asking why do we do research? Passeggi (2016, p. 75) justifies "[...] research as an integral part of training and not alien to it, because research is what makes possible the process of awareness of forming oneself with and through research."

For this reason, the importance of CI for academic education is given mainly by the incentive to research, because it gives rise to a researcher's look, which makes one better understand how to do and what justifies scientific study, in addition to the perceptions that it awakens about the project in which it participates. Thinking about this, Pinho (2017, p. 662), based on the normatization (RN-005/1993), mentions some points about the importance of CI activities, among them: "[...] learning scientific techniques and methods, [...] the development of scientific thinking and creativity [...] awakening in the scholarship holder a new mentality towards research and prepare him for graduate studies."

Given this perspective, the data collection of this research was conducted between November and December 2019, through conversation wheels conducted by the





researchers that preceded the entry of one of the fellows in the research. Thus, narratives were collected from Infantil IV and V children of a Child Education Center located in Sobral (CE), using the alien protocol during the process.

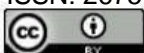
However, this beginning was only possible thanks to the academics/researchers and the teacher/orientator, who went to the field (CEI), before the necessary social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting interviews and data collection, essential for the realization of the project. Thus, with the data collected, the previous Fellow transcribed the videos. Adamaís, beginning fellows participated in planning meetings, together with other fellows, and under the mediation of the supervisor. In this way, the recommended readings were done, the transcriptions were reviewed, and the recorded videos referring to the narratives of Infantil IV and Infantil V children were analyzed.

Therefore, the main objective of this article was to present, in a descriptive-reflective way, the moments of the research carried out with children in a Child Education Center - CEI, in the countryside of the state of Ceará (CE) and the progress of the scientific initiation researchers. Finally, the research methodology was qualitative, with a focus on children's narratives.

## 2 Methodology

In the data collection, which took place between November and December 2019, in the conversation wheels with the children, the researchers before the new scholar joined the research used the alien protocol, "[...] inspired by the protocol of the project 'Racontar l'école en cours de scolarisation' [Talk about school during schooling], coordinated by Martine Lani-Bayle" (PASSEGGI et al., 2018, p. 54, emphasis added).

According to the cited authors (Idem, p. 55), the conversation wheels are "[...] structured around three moments: opening, development and closing." In the opening, the researcher introduces the children to the Alien doll, explaining that it comes of a





planet where they have no schools and asks the children to tell everything they know about this institution.

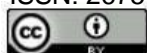
In the development, the dialogue is mediated through immanent questions asked by the researcher. The children then spontaneously answer these questions. Finally, the closing is the moment when they say goodbye to Alien, for he will return to his planet. At this moment, one can freely make a message or a drawing for the alien to take with him. In this perspective, Passeggi (2018, p. 107) points out:

The presence of the alien in the group responds to the desire of provoking the necessary distance between the child and the researchers, to summon the child's imaginary, the playfulness and the critical reflection of the child in face of the need of cultural negotiations with the Alien and the researcher. The role of mediator of the narrative construction, played by Alien, [...] is to help the child deal with possible conflicts and develop means of seduction and persuasion to involve them in what they tell.

The aforementioned author clarifies the importance of using this protocol, not only by stimulating the creative imagination and the playful-reflexive aspect, but also by the very movement of feeling more at ease with the puppet, which consequently makes the child feel free to spontaneously narrate about himself and his experiences in the classroom. This is reflected in the very associations they make with the puppet with characters from animations they know, or in the affective exchanges at the moment of farewell. In other terms, as Passeggi (2018, p. 108) calls it, in the "closing (Alien's return to his planet)".

Taking into account that these narratives are the main tool for the research, it was essential to understand the need to present a "researcher's look"; a look beyond the ordinary observations, impregnated with meaning, since all the nuances present in the teaching-learning process, with the contributions and specificities that each child brings, are important aspects for the development of this research.

However, it is important to emphasize that there is a phase that precedes this study, called "introduction to the research context". It is in this introduction that the researchers introduce themselves, talk to those children who come to them – without insistence and imposition on them - allowing them to feel free to do and say what think,





besides being the ideal moment to get to know the space where the research will take place.

### 3 The importance of listening to children's narratives in early childhood education

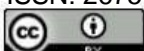
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Bruner (1997, p. 78 apud PASSEGGI, 2016, p. 72-73) states that "[...] the human's 'most powerful' capacities, from infancy, are to 'reflect' to evaluate what the culture offers him or her and to 'design alternatives' to (over)live in that culture and eventually transform it." (emphasis added). Therefore, it is part of one of the educational goals to break with harmful practices culturally passed on, seeking to educate in a bias of mutual respect - to the other and also to the spaces that are theirs by right. Therefore, working on sensitive listening to children is an initiative that contributes to the effectiveness of this value, as well as to the children's learning process and to make them feel valued in the school context.

The performance of the alien puppet worked as a dynamic object in the interview and facilitated this contact. Moreover, during the performance, we observed different perspectives of the children about the puppet. Most of them were excited about the toy and, when asked if they liked new friends, they said yes. There were also those who made associations with Alien from the Toy Story movie and ended the interview hugging the doll.

#### 3.1 Revelations of the path: what we observe at the threshold

In one of the meetings held by the first authors/researchers, along with other beginner fellows and with the intermediation of the teacher/advisor, photos were presented, from the first visit to the school, through the experience of riding the tram for the first time, to the interviews. Through this exhibition, we traced image descriptions, bringing perceptions about the observed content.





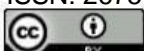
In the first image shown, the teacher/advisor is seated in one of the little chairs belonging to the enclosure, while establishing a contact (conversation) with a child x who presents the researcher with a candy, which denotes cheerfulness and receptivity towards the visitor's presence. Next to the teacher/orientator is the school coordinator. It is noticeable that both are in horizontal position with the child, because when they bend down, they are at the same height as the children, showing understanding of the importance of this gesture in building bonds, since it conveys to the child interest in what he has to say (sensitive listening). In this bias, it was noticeable that even the way this contact is established is significant and can bring mutual benefits: trust, appreciation, respect, among others; besides making the children not feel inferior.

Thus, it was discussed that agreements were established between the researchers and the school management for a better organization in the division of days and classes (collaboration of the school management with the research). For this, a schedule was drawn up deciding the best days and times for the research to be carried out.

Then, the classes of twenty-eight (28) children were divided into two (2) groups, with fourteen (14) students in each. This process facilitated the progress of the interviews/talk rounds, since the classes were not so large. In addition, it was also required by the management that all children were part of the research, an attitude that was supported by the researchers and the supervisor. So, everyone's participation was the main criterion.

In the subsequent images, the children, together with the class teacher, are sitting on the floor, arranged in a circle, which already "breaks" the organization in rows, one behind the other, commonly used in classrooms. This attitude causes those present the feeling of unity and of being "on equal footing", which contributes to a learning based on cooperativity, within a pleasant and interactive environment.

That said, it is important to emphasize that the path taken by the children from the classroom to the interview environment was through single file, a method of further order





used by the teachers of the institution and that the researchers kept, since they cannot determine how the school should behave.

In the next image, a student approaches the guidance counselor to continue talking when she is already leaving. In the meeting where all these images were presented, the teacher/guidance counselor reports that she didn't really understand what the student was talking about and asked the coordinator what he had. She replied that she believed he had autism, but that she had no diagnosis yet. However, this student participated in a dynamic in which he showed more intelligence than the others, despite his speech difficulties.

The playful dynamic occurred as follows: the class teacher simulated that she was frying an egg in a pan (made of paper) and it contained some letter. Each child had to go to her, pick up the egg, and say which letter was in it. Everyone got it right, except the boy, but he was the only one who joked, saying, "Oh, Auntie! You're burning the egg! Hurry, auntie! Shake the egg, it's burning! He was the only child who played while learning (principle of Early Childhood Education). In this sense, based on studies and a research by Passeggi (2014), Lani-Bayle (2020, p. 23) cites:

[...]The children, in their narratives, are situated in this tension between a way of being a child and a way of constituting themselves as students by the injunction inherent to the need to study, to learn, according to future projects created by the adult for them. This representation of themselves is opposed to the freedom to be themselves and to do what they like, "to experience the well-being".

In addition to this case mentioned above, when asked about what she liked best about school, one of the children answered that she didn't like school, and the justification given by her classmates - and not by her - contained the pejorative noun "he's dumb! Many others also reported that they suffered aggression from their schoolmates. In some cases, when the question was directed to one of the girls, the boys answered for them (silencing/blocking their speeches) or interrupted them. In other words, we noticed that the systematic practice of acts of symbolic aggression and structural machismo are still perpetuated in these spaces and that, although the focus of the research is not on these aspects, they are factors that end up revealing themselves.





Furthermore, "keeping quiet, getting good grades, and doing evaluations" was what was good about being a child at school, according to the answer of one of the children. In this bias, we can fit here the criticism made by Conceição, Silva, and Costa, to whom

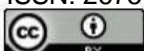
[...]it is worth noting that standardized evaluations impose on schools a level of concern, often linked more to the final result that will be obtained - and that will interfere in the IDEB and in the transfer of financial resources - than with the learning of the students themselves. (CONCEIÇÃO; SILVA; COSTA, 2022, p. 7)

Therefore, it can be seen that subjection, content and codification increasingly stand out in front of the playful dimension that should exist in childhood, especially in the current educational scenario that progressively moves towards a technological/digital scenario, away from the action of playing, where the achievement of goals is the predominant factor in pedagogical actions. The playful, autonomous, and critical-reflective aspects of teachers and students - which should be strengthened - are weakened.

It is noticed that the fun and learning present in playful practices - in games and significant pedagogical actions, in homeopathic doses, are dissipating and consequently narrowing the spaces and concrete experiences for children's spontaneous exploration and interaction with the world around them. From this perspective, Costa and Astigarraga (2021, p. 15) make the following criticism:

[...]the school can be considered a space that does not take into consideration the children's culture, because when they enter school, an intense work begins that aims to qualify them, thus making them suitable for internal and external evaluation processes. It is at this moment that the sense of having childhood as a constituent part of the children's education process is undermined.

When it was time to say goodbye, the hugs to the Alien-interviewer doll were full of affection and, thus, some hugs took longer than others. We observed that, besides the proposed hug, one of the children even distributed kisses on the toy, another kind of affection that shows how pleasant this contact was. Despite the fact that the doll was







made precisely because of the possibility of children to touch him, the idea of the hug goodbye was not something planned, the proposal came up during the process.

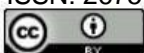
One of the main reasons for the research is to show that children can think in their own way. For this reason, it was proposed that each child should draw a picture for the alien to take back to his or her planet. Through these drawings, the children traced their individual perceptions about what school is and what it is to be a child - issues fundamental to the research context. Some children drew E.T..

## 4 Final considerations

As far as the children's narratives are concerned, it is worth emphasizing the importance of listening, through their speeches and the perceptions they have. This is noticeable from the use of the Alien doll, as a tool to approach the child's imaginary, seeking the ludic aspect - primordial of this phase - to the way the interviews were conducted and the children's own narratives. All these aspects were essential for a more effective investigation and analysis.

Therefore, children have a lot to tell us, and this is also present in their silences, in their impartiality, and in their more withdrawn behavior. It is enough to pay attention to this and to notice what their silences reveal. In this context, the teacher/educator/researcher can also do some self-reflection, working to improve their pedagogical practices. In this way, we start from this sensitive look to the said and the unsaid, to reports that matter, from the first years of life, in early childhood education, to the moment in which the child realizes itself in the discovery of the self and the other.

Finally, the integration of a beginner scholarship holder who was just starting her undergraduate studies, and another, a creator of the project and an active researcher since the beginning of the research, made it possible to approach the process that the student goes through when inserted into a research context with a more experienced researcher. In this way, learning that exceeds the technical aspects was propitiated, as creativity and criticality are further boosted. This is what motivates.



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