

Articles

Viable-transformative inclusion: diverse means of agency by an adolescent with Specific Intellectual Educational Needs (SIEN) and his educators

Inclusão viável-transformadora: diversos meios de agência por um adolescente com necessidades educacionais intelectuais específicas (NEIE) e suas educadoras

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ABSTRACT

Analyzing data from a project carried out during the Covid-19 pandemics, this paper is motivated by the viable transformation that the history of a student with specific intellectual educational needs (SIEN) – and the understanding that the educators working with him have of this history - allow for a prospective view of teaching-learning, that focuses

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on possibilities rather than the determinations, which would be the emphasis of a more linear, banking view of teaching-learning (Freire, 1970) and development. It is based on multiple theoretical backgrounds, i.e., discussions about specific intellectual educational needs (Fidalgo & Carvalho, 2020; Carvalho et al., in print; Fidalgo & Magalhães, 2017), critical-collaborative research methodology (Magalhães, 2011, 2018; Magalhães & Fidalgo, 2019), multiliteracies (Magalhães & Carrijo, 2019), transformative agency (Ninin & Magalhães, 2017) – all of which are organized within the Cultural-Historical Theory (Vygotsky, 1924-1934/1993).

Keywords: *specific intellectual educational needs – SIEN; cultural-historical theory; multimodality; multiliteracies; inclusive education.*

RESUMO

Analisando dados de um projeto desenvolvido durante da pandemia da Covid-19, este artigo é motivado pela transformação viável que a história (Freire, 1996) de um aluno com necessidades educacionais intelectuais específicas (NEIE) e a compreensão de educadoras que trabalham com ele têm dessa história possibilitam em direção a uma visão prospectiva de ensino-aprendizagem, que se concentre mais nas possibilidades do que nas determinações – que enfatizariam uma visão linear, bancária de ensino-aprendizagem (Freire, 1970) e desenvolvimento. O trabalho baseia-se em múltiplos fundamentos teóricos, i.e., discussões sobre necessidades educacionais intelectuais específicas (Fidalgo & Carvalho, 2020; Carvalho et al., no prelo; Fidalgo & Magalhães, 2017), abordagem metodológica da pesquisa crítica de colaboração (Magalhães, 2011, 2018; Magalhães & Fidalgo, 2019), multiletramentos (Magalhães & Carrijo, 2018), agência transformadora (Ninin & Magalhães, 2017) - todos organizados com base na Teoria Histórico-Cultural (Vygotsky, 1924-1934/1993).

Palavras-chave: *necessidades educacionais intelectuais específicas – NEIE; teoria histórico-cultural; multimodalidade; multiletramentos; educação inclusiva.*

1. In lieu of beginnings

From the outset of the Covid-19 pandemics, many have been the studies that show how far social inequalities have increased. For some, however, inequalities are not novelty, as Galeano has masterly highlighted in 1971, when denouncing the “open veins” of the World which, in times of crises such as the ones we experience today, reveal “all the vulnerabilities that brand the daily lives of most of the world population” (Santos, 2021, p. 103). These vulnerabilities have been in the World since the constitution of the first societies, but in the last couple of years, it is more intensely that they have been bleeding the veins that have forever been open. This occurs because, as Santos (2021, p. 104) clarifies, the pandemics has added more vulnerabilities and exclusion where they already existed, and so they have further tipped the scales at the already feeble means of survival and life protection. In actual fact, in many cases and places, life sustenance systems have collapsed.

In the field of education, one should undoubtedly discuss the decision for distance learning, which, regardless of its efficacy in terms of the need for physical distancing between people, has clearly shown the deficiency in school infrastructure, as well as the inadequate teacher technological education. This is clearly an example of collapse. We ought to add to this the scarce technological resources of many – if not most – of the students, which, in practical terms, meant that, during remote teaching-learning processes, many families did not even have one cellular phone, or tablet, or computer with internet services with which the children could take part in the actual remote lessons. To add insult to injury, besides material shortages, remote learning has revealed cultural and emotional deficiencies, especially when it comes to the access of people with specific educational needs (SEN) who – as per Decree number 5.296/2004 and Act number 13.146/2015 (Brasil, 2004, 2015) – should have access to the prerogatives necessary to equally exercise their citizenship and fundamental – i.e., social inclusive - rights.

We can also add that, in Brazil, educational practices are deliberately based on public policies aimed at maintaining teaching-learning encapsulated in school content (Magalhães & Carrijo, 2018),

that is reductionist and individualistic by nature, especially regarding goals and knowledge production. In other words, educational goals are supported by a traditional process that sees learning as homogeneous, thus excluding individual histories and uniqueness of subjectivities. Needless to say that, in such contexts, there is little or no room for SEN, and even less room for SIEN (Specific Intellectual Educational Needs) Students.

This paper aims at discussing possible ways to at least partially transform the situation depicted here, drawing data examples from an extramural program and project (Fidalgo & Ghirardi, 2013) carried out by two of the authors in the peripheries of São Paulo, focusing on teacher education for those working with SEN students (Fidalgo, 2017; Fidalgo & Carvalho, 2020; Carvalho et al., in print) – a matter that is, in rare cases and in few universities, the objective of pre-service and even in-service teacher education. We discuss viable transformations (Freire, 1996) or what we have termed strategies of viable-transformative inclusion for students with SIEN, as well as the educators working with them, moving away from a practice that is based on the banking educational metaphor, term coined by Freire (1970).

In order to meet our aim, we divide the paper into three parts. In the first, we describe the contexts where the data was produced, and introduce the research participants. In the second, we will discuss some aspects of SIEN, as well as our theoretical background, i.e., Vygotsky's views about the education of people with disabilities (1924a, 1924b, 1928, 1929, 1931a, 1931b, 1934/1935), and especially his theoretical-methodological ideas on human development. Data shown here will refer to the work with one adolescent with SIEN and his development over the pandemic period, which drew on aspects of multiliteracies (NLG, 1996; Rojo, 2012; Magalhães & Carrijo, 2019) and multimodality.

Thirdly we will discuss the role of language to promote collaborative and meaningful move forward, based on multiliteracies and multimodality and allowing the SIEN student room for his agency development. We believe that our focus on critical-collaborative language (Magalhães & Fidalgo, 2010, 2019) should organize teaching-learning interactions. This will become more evident when we analyze

data referring to the young students still attending High School, but already in their researcher-teacher educational process of development within the Program and Project that focus jointly on teacher/researcher development and the SIEN student's language teaching-learning (Fidalgo & Carvalho, 2020; Carvalho et al., in print).

Throughout the entire paper, we will bring excerpts from data produced in the contexts that comprehend the background frame for this paper. We close with final remarks that do not represent the end of the investigation, but show an excerpt of what has been attained during eighteen months of the period of the pandemics.

2. Contexts, Backgrounds and Settings

As stated above, there is more than one context where the data was produced for this paper, and in the last year and a half, these have been implemented through internet applications due to the onset of the pandemics and consequent physical isolation. The entire work was organized as part of the University Extramural Project “Reading the World and the Language”, designed as a High School Scientific Initiation (HSSI) Project, based at the Federal University of São Paulo, UNIFESP (Guarulhos Campus), and one of the projects that composes the Extramural Program “Continuous Linguistic-Didactic Teacher Education”. From July 2019 to August 2021, the project was developed in the state school attended by a couple of students with intellectual disabilities and by a couple of HSSI students, i.e., students who received CNPq⁵ scholarships to carry out the investigation as High School Scientific Initiation Researchers, supervised and supported by two of the authors of this paper. The Program and Project excerpts analyzed here are from the second year of HSSI work, when we had our second student with SIEN. The first had dropped out when the pandemics began because he fell into the category discussed earlier, i.e., of students without equipment and/or internet services to access classes online. As for the HSSI, we had two High School students working with us on their teacher and researcher education in the first year – one of whom was a voluntary researcher-teacher – and two

5. National Council for Scientific and Technological Development.

who shared the HSSI scholarship in the second year. We will refer to the SIEN student as Victor, and the two HSSI students as Vera (who stayed with us until the end of her scholarship in January, 2021), and Kate (who continued until August, 2021, when her scholarship also came to an end)⁶.

Besides these participants, Victor's mother, Denise was also an important member of our working group. Without her, we might not have had any access at all to Victor. She was the one who helped him with his homework, turned on the computer (or tablet) for him and stayed around during the class, intervening when she thought it was necessary, either to tell us something about Victor or to motivate him to continue, when he seemed distressed or prone to giving up due to the difficulty that the lesson posed.

It is important to mention that, when we started, in July 2020, with Victor (prior to that we were with another student with SIEN, as mentioned), the 16-year old adolescent could verbalize very little. Most of his answers were monosyllabic (*yes, no* or *uh-oh*, when he thought he might be in trouble because he could not complete or understand the task). We began by asking him what he did when he was not at school; how he liked to spend time. His mother answered many of the questions after allowing him time (and even encouraging him) to speak. In these instances, he nodded to confirm (but we also interviewed the mother to see what her expectations were). With this exercise, we were trying to work with Freire's (1970) notion, when the author spoke of generating words, i.e., words from the student's daily lives. We were hoping to work having these words as starting points, promoting learning moments. It took a while, a lot of work showing him how much he could do. We doubt, at least in a school environment, that he had ever been told how good he was or how much he already knew. The emphasis seemed to have been on how much he was at fault, how little he could do until that moment, how deficient he was.

But we learnt that Victor liked kites; he made and flew them. We also learnt that he wanted to be a Youtuber. So, Marcia (one of the researchers and authors of this paper; also his English teacher) created a private Youtube channel for him to practice. After a few lessons talking

6. For preservation of identities, the names are fictitious.

about the process of making and flying kites, Victor was ready. His task was to work with a descriptive text – he was to explain to the public how to make a kite, and record this on Youtube. He was very excited about this task. The data below exemplifies this. It is an excerpt of his rehearsal at using Youtube to describe the process of making a kite. His mother supports him as this was a homework task – and this was carried out in Portuguese.

Victor 1: I will imitate a youtuber, now... hi folks... I am Victor... join my channel and click on the bell for more news... I... I will make a kite in the format of paper (he folds a piece of A4 and explains) then... you will fold to fly...

((his mother gives instructions in the background))

Denise 1: Are you going to explain?

Victor 2: Uh?... then... you... can... fly ((he keeps folding the paper)) a capucheta ... a kite... ((folds the paper)) then look ... it's in the middle, right, mom? at this point?

Denise 2: oh my God... let's pause...

((after a while, they return))

Victor 3: then... you fold the “capel ”... ((folds the sides of the paper)) it's too small...

Denise 3: ((speaks in a low voice in the background)) show them...

Victor 4: there:... (shows where paper was folded)

Denise 4: now... tell them about the other side....

Victor 5: fold the other side...

Denise 5:so... that's what it will look like, everyone...

Victor 6: It's going to look like that... look, everyone....

Denise 6: ((whispers)) now tell them...

It is clear that Denise's actions allow Victor to continue; they support him in his learning; she provides him with hints as to how the descriptive text should continue (*Are you going to explain?; show them...; now... tell them about the other side...*). Our data indicates that, without parent support, Victor might not have worked with us for as long as he did, or even developed as much as he did. This can be confirmed by the other SIEN students that dropped out, their parents explaining that there was no one to help him.

Apart from these participants, Sueli and Marcia (two of the authors) also took part in the investigation and lessons. In the study, they are respectively, supervisor and co-supervisor of the HSSI students, besides

Marcia's role as the English teacher of both the HSSI and the SIEN students. Therefore, many of the classes with Victor are conducted by her. We believe that everyone involved was undergoing a process of transformation – which is what education is all about. We were all being educated, learning something about SIEN students (Marcia, Kate, Vera, Sueli), learning to observe students (Kate and Vera), learning how to teach (Vera and Kate, as well as Marcia and Sueli, though at different points in their careers), learning how to write and read (Victor), learning how to teach students with SIEN (Sueli, Marcia, Vera and Kate), learning English (Victor, Kate, Vera). The teaching-learning relations are many, and no matter how much experience or knowledge one has accumulated, we believe that we are still learning. After all, as Freire (1996) states, those who teach learn whilst teaching. And those who learn, teach whilst learning. We are in complete agreement with this belief. In every situation, there is someone that will conduct the learning-teaching. This is not always the teacher or the supervisor.

3. SIEN Stands for Specific Intellectual Educational Needs – and they vary

We need to firstly highlight that with the new world order brought about by the Covid-19 pandemics, the situation of students with SEN (and more so, those with SIEN) was significantly worsened in poor regions of Brazil, as is the case of the town where the students that participate in this study live. Moreover, the situation of SIEN students will be as varied as there are cases of specific needs in the country. In other words, it is not possible to find a general rule or a general recipe that will suit all cases. It will vary for many reasons, including parents' availability (or lack thereof) to support the student at home, access to equipment and Internet appropriate services, and evidently, the degree of disability.

Victor has moderate intellectual disability. But the development of SIEN individuals will also vary according to the attention that they receive from the school, and how far teachers will go in order to make the curriculum available to them. As Vygotsky ([1924a] 1993) states, it is important that one bears in mind that the student, regardless of their disability, have the right to the same curriculum as the other students.

However, this must be organized differently. We refer to this need as flexibilized material, i.e., making the material flexible to meet the student's needs (Fidalgo, 2016; Fidalgo & Magalhães, 2017; Fidalgo & Carvalho, 2020; Fidalgo et al. 2020), which is only possible for the teacher if s/he observes the students carefully or talks to the parents or the students themselves to see how they learn.

The data below, from the very beginning of the project, in 2019, when there were other SIEN students and two HSSI, indicate a moment of teacher education and, at the same time, the importance given to observing the students, which is what the research supervisor (teacher educator) is emphasizing in an audio-recorded WhatsApp message:

Sueli: Hi, Everyone, do you remember what we usually say in the course [HSSI students were attending an undergraduate course which focused on teacher education for those working with SEN students]? The first thing to do is always to observe the student... to watch them...see how they learn... notice what kinds of difficulties they may have... I know that Marcia has probably already done that because they are her students... but now you [refers to the HSSI students who are learning how to teach as part of the project] need to do that part when you ask him [the SIEN student] about his experiences...Ask him to tell you an experience and as he does that, you will see if he can build a narrative, if he can tell a story. (...) Ask him to tell you about his holiday for example. (...). This is your first data production as researchers too...

So, in order to make the curriculum available to the SIEN student, one needs to see what they know and what Higher Psychological Functions (Vygotsky, [1924-34]1993) one can count with. This is the first moment in Paulo Freire's method, i.e., that of thematic investigation, in which the teacher finds out what the student already knows in order to probe into that knowledge, and then promote more learning instances, allowing the student to go beyond what they had believed to be their limits until then. This is true for students with or without specific intellectual educational needs. Vygotsky's views about the education of people with disabilities (1924a, 1924b, 1928, 1929, 1931a, 1931b, 1934/1935), and especially his theoretical-methodological ideas on human development were that everyone can learn and develop. This may happen at different paces and by differing means, which is also true for everyone. Vygotsky ([1929] 1993, p.40)

actually states that “intellect, like personality, undoubtedly represents a single entity but is neither uniform nor simple. Rather, it is a diverse and complicated structural unity”. For us, the observation of the student (which includes talking to them and their parents or caregivers) enables the teacher also to adapt (or flexibilize) the task (or the path), but not the curriculum, as argued for by Vygotsky ([1924a]1993).

While working with SIEN students, we have come to realize that one aspect that is often affected is their memories. However, different parts of memories can be affected in different individuals. Most students with whom we have worked show short or long term memory difficulties (or both), but they may also show difficulties with what Westwood (2014) has called episodic, semantic or procedural memories – the first relating to memories that refer to times, events and places; se second, memories relating to meaningful facts, rules, definitions, principles; and the latter referring to memory of a process, a skill, a strategy. It is possible to see in the interaction in which Victor is trying to record a video on how to make a kite, that he definitely shows signs of procedural memory difficulties – and for this reason, his mother keeps reminding him of what he needs to do next (*Are you going to explain?; show them...; now... tell them about the other side....*).

The excerpt below - already discussed in Fidalgo and Carvalho (in print) - indicates that he also has trouble with semantic memory:

Marcia8: you try to tell the story... now you are the narrator⁷... I will show the story on the screen... and ... you need to say... *firstly*... to show what happened first; *then*... to indicate how it follows and::: *finally* to show the end (...)

Víctor6: ok... I'll try...

(...)

Márcia10: Let's go, Víctor... this here is... (the teacher indicates the beginning of the video with the mouse)

Víctor8: it's the bicy

Márcia11: it's the beginning...

Márcia12: It is the bicycle... you are right... but it is the beginning of the story... what do we say then? We say *firstly* for the first part of the story...

Víctor9: fis...le...

Márcia13: firstly... firstly...

7. Note that, here, the student is not working on descriptive texts – as previous data showed - but on narratives, which is one extra step into his literacy project.

Mãe4: do you understand?

Vítor10: no...

[Marcia explains once again and even gets closer to the camera so he can see how she says the word *firstly*].

Vítor11: it's... firs.... What?

Márcia15: FIRS::::-TLY...

Vítor12: FIRS-LY...

Eventually, Victor is able to say the word *firstly* and even tell the entire story. However, this lesson was a revision. He had already told this story and used these very words in English a couple of weeks earlier. Therefore, it seems that his semantic memory was affected too, making it difficult for him to remember what he had been able to apparently master previously. This is acknowledged by the group, when after one of the lessons in which Victor seemed to have forgotten a lot of what had been taught, Sueli explains to the HSSI student-teachers:

Sueli 15: (suggestion as to how the *Minecraft* game⁸ that they had just learned that Victor liked to play could be used) (...): the game allows for a lot... but we don't have to hurry to do everything... to use all the material... all the ideas.. right? We can go slowly... allowing him to internalize the concepts, right? Because the most difficult for Victor is internalizing concepts, correct? Internalizing and retrieving them. He... sometimes he even seems to have internalized them... but then, the next day... he can't retrieve them to talk to us about them anymore. So we need to use this movement all the time (she moves her hands forward and backwards indicating retrieval or going back and forth) with him in order to help him to internalize and retrieve... so... introducing the game ... the vocabulary that we can see in the game... this needs to be little by little too... this is what I think ... this is just my opinion...

As Fidalgo and Magalhães (2017) put it, Vygotsky's discussion on the development of individuals with specific educational needs was a very important part of his ideas on human growth. For him, the development of higher psychological functions, which involves thinking in concepts, reasoning, logical memory, voluntary attention among others, occur through historical and social relationships that need to be meaningful for the individual in order to be internalized.

8. <https://www.minecraft.net/en-us/about-minecraft>

Because they are based on social relations, we can focus on their collaborative nature.

4. Bound by concepts that base our discussion and actions

About collectivity or collaborative work that may lead to development, Vygotsky ([1931] 1993, p.192) says that “only collective social life develops and elaborates all those higher forms of intellectual activity which are characteristic of humans”. And he further advances his ideas about the importance of social, collaborative work by saying that:

Observation of the development of the higher functions shows that the construction of each of them is clearly subsumed under one or another lawful regularity. Specifically, every higher psychological function occurs twice during the process of behavioral development: first, as a function of collective behavior, as a form of [collaboration] or [collaborative] activity, as a means of social accommodation (i.e., on an interpsychological plane) and again, a second time, as a means of a child’s individual behavior, as a means of individual adaptation, as an inner process; that is, on an intrapsychological plane.

(...)

In order to follow the transition from the collective form of “working together” to the individual form of a child’s behavior, we must understand the principle for building the higher mental⁹ functions in the making.

The principle can only be understood when the individual process of learning is observed in the teaching-learning moment in which it is taking place. And because of this collaborative essentiality, we must admit that it is only possible through language – or at least, it is strongly supported by language in order to occur.

9. In this translation of the Vygotsky’s text, we find the term *higher mental functions*. In other translations and other works by Vygotsky’s followers, we find *higher psychological functions*. We have decided to adopt the latter as does the ISEF (Social-Educational Inclusion and Teacher Education) Research Group at UNIFESP and the LACE (Language in Activities in School Contexts) Research Group at PUC-SP.

In fact, language is one of the most important higher psychological functions discussed by Vygotsky (perhaps the most important). However, we ought to consider that the concepts that the author argued in favor were all part and parcel of a whole, i.e., one concept is supported by and supports the others, so much so that, if one fails to acknowledge one of the ideas, s/he will be left with a fragmented, partial idea of the theory. Therefore, language too is internalized from the social to the individual – and dialectically so (there is nothing teleological about Vygotsky’s processes). In this sense, we can return to the concept of collaboration. Language is collaboratively and critically (because dialectically) learnt and internalized.

With this in mind, the educator (and, in our case, the researchers and teacher educators) is/are aware that they are working with a type of language that is dialectically thought to intervene in educational contexts. Linguistically collaborating requires the creation of cognitive and affective conflicts arising from the contradictions found in each speech, and clearly revealed in the moments of probing into words that take place in interactions. We can see this in the excerpts presented in this paper. It is also an aspect that we consider responsible for Victor’s development of new ways to act and feel, responsible for this moving forward.

In these critical collaborative relationships and language organizations, which are actually discussed by both Vygotsky (1924-1934 / 1993), and Freire (1970), the role played by “listening responsiveness” (Volochinov, 1929/ 2017) - which is the responsibility of every interlocutor in the interaction - is fundamental, and allows for the critical-collaborative organization of language to be materialized, since participants (students, teachers, researchers, parents) will have to learn to listen to each other by considering the uniqueness of each interlocutor, their needs and stances, so as to react responsively to each utterance and even to each body movement if we consider that we often speak with our entire bodies (and this is definitely true for students with SIEN, who habitually have trouble to express their thoughts, and even more so for those SIEN students who have traditionally been kept quite in schools for as long as 9 (nine) years, as is the case of Victor, in his first year of High School and apparently never carefully observed or interviewed). How could the school know how he learns? What

difficulties he presents? How he can contribute to the collaborative situation that is in place in each lesson? We can confirm this lack of interaction with the student from the two excerpts below:

Denise 1: wow... let me say something here...I really liked this lesson... I mean...

Márcia 1: Oh... that's great!

Denise 2: yes::: because it was something that you brought to the lesson that he (...) that is important that he knows and that I never discussed with him. There are things that we never talk about, you know, right, Marcia? I don't know how to talk about...

Márcia 2: it's because they are not daily matters.

Denise 3: (...) it was really good... thank you... and congratulations...

Márcia 3: thank you (...) I actually adapted the syllabus material. And I really wanted to know if you and Victor liked it and think we can continue with this (...)

Denise 4: ah::: yes...it is good (...)

Denise 5: (...) last week I went to the school to get his activities, you know?... and I got two: one from the Chemistry teacher and one from the History teacher. The Chemistry teacher understood what inclusion means... (...)

Denise 6: because you can present the content in a way that the student understands....

M7: yes...

Denise 7: (...) the History teacher did not understand... He wrote an R for Renaissance and then he drew several dotted Rs for Victor to cover. This is a pre-primary school lesson...

(...)

Denise 9: This is not correct.

The second excerpt is from the first lessons, in 2020, when we were trying to establish what Victor could do, how he studied, etc. We had a few talks with him and his mother. Part of one of the talks goes like this:

(...)

Vitor 4: I copy everything from the board...

Sueli 4: Ok... and when you come home, do you read everything? Do you read what you have copied?

Vitor 5: uhum... (he nods affirmatively, but keeps an expression of doubt)

Sueli 5: and to remember later... what do you do? Do you draw.. talk to your mum? (...)

Vitor 6: uhum... my mum.

In both cases, we can see that Victor was left aside, unable to take part in the teaching-learning feast in progress in the classroom; he was not invited to be an actual member of the feast. He spends his entire 4-hour period in school, copying from the board. And when he receives an activity to do, sometimes it is an activity that might be more appropriate for pre-primary school children (we could in fact say that not even pre-primary school children should be covering dotted letters, but this is a matter for another paper). This kind of exclusion that takes place in what should be the inclusive environment of the classroom (Fidalgo & Lessa, 2004) occurs because many people think that the individual with intellectual disability should receive tasks that would be given to children with a similar mental age, rather than activities that are appropriate for his/her chronological age (with some flexibilization so as to allow him/her to understand and complete the task).

Contrary to this process that silences SIEN students, in this paper, we consider attentive listening as essential, because it reveals the diverse means by which each speech is taken into account and incorporated in the responsive reactions of the others - teacher, supervisor, student, mother, student-researcher-teacher – (Fidalgo et al., 2020; Magalhães et al., 2021).

To avoid this silencing, actually, to challenge this silence and encourage responsiveness in the class, one ought to collaboratively create possibilities of intervention that allow agents and interlocutors to question the senses presented in the relationships with each other. Thus, differences may be politically discussed and stances can be collectively reviewed and transformed, enabling new means for everyone to act and participate in the world. When the group of researchers noticed, for example, that Victor did not read or write well and did not feel comfortable with reading or with English studies, they tried a number of writing strategies that involved reading the World and the word (Freire, 1970). One of them aimed at showing him how much English he actually knew and could read. We asked Denise what kind of English words he knew – for example hamburger, cheeseburger, milkshake. And planned the lesson with some images on the left-hand side of a PowerPoint slide, and the corresponding word on the right. Here is an excerpt of part of the dialogue:

(...)

Sueli 1: and this, Victor, what is this? (Sueli is sharing her screen where the Power-point slides are shown. There are images such as the M for McDonalds, a milkshake, a package of cookies, a pair of jeans, wi-fi etc. This moment, that is half-way through the lesson, the image is of 4 cookies on a plate).

((three seconds of silence))

Vitor 1: cookies? (the word used is the English word *cookies* and not the Portuguese near-equivalent *biscoito*).

Sueli 2: coo::kies... look... ((inserts another image of cookies on the page)) have you ever eaten cookies like these? The ones that come in this kind of bag, that says “cookies”?

Vitor 2: uhum...

Sueli 3: you have of course. So ... What is this word? What is written here? ((the cursor goes over the word “cookies” that is on the second image))

Vitor 3: cookies... ((he smiles as he answers)).

Sueli goes on to show Victor that he can read a lot of words, that if he could not read, he would not be able to buy the pair of jeans that he likes, or have the milkshake that he wants, etc. His mother would have to do everything for him. She emphasizes that it is not true that he cannot read. It is true that he has some difficulties with longer texts, but he can read parts of what he sees. And highlighted the importance of doing so. The following meeting when Sueli can take part in the lesson is two weeks later. The interaction between Denise, Sueli and Victor was:

Denise 1: Hi, Sueli...

S1: Hello... Hello Victor... How are you? ((She asks in English, and signs a thumbs up))

V1: hello... I'm fine...(he answers in English)

S2: that's good... Well done...(in English)

((the three smile to each other as if to complete the greetings))

D2: Victor is going to the gym ... Sueli.. (she smiles while she makes this comment)

S3: Wow! This is very nice...(smiles) Tell me what you do at the gym.

V2: (difficult to hear)

S4: sorry?

V3: I lift a lot of weight there.

S5: oh! I see... you do weight lifting.

V4: yes:::

S6: You will get very strong won't you? (she flexes her arms as she speaks, pointing at the biceps)

V5: yeah:::

((Vitor and Sueli smile))

D3: tell her you are doing bodybuilding...

V6: I do bodybuilding... (he uses the word *bodybuilding* in English and smiles waiting for Sueli's reaction)

S7: Really:::... bodybuilding... that's very good...

((Victor laughs showing satisfaction at the fact that he has just received a compliment for his statement))

S8: You are speaking English, Victor... this is wonderful... ((He keeps smiling)) bodybuilding is English too... did you know that?

V7: uhum...

((they both smile))

D4: What is bodybuilding? I don't really know, Sueli. He talks about this all the time now... but I don't know what it is...

S8: Bodybuilding... is a word used when you exercise (flexes her biceps as she explains) because you are building a new body..

V8:uhum (he agrees)

S9: that's why we call it bodybuilding... because, in English... it means... to build a new body.

D5: Is that what it is, Victor... that's what you keep trying to show me?

(...)

This is one of the very important moments in the one-year work that the group had with Victor, with half-an-hour weekly meetings because it shows that Victor was improving his semantic memory – and let us not forget that voluntary memory is one of the Higher Psychological Functions that Vygotsky states we can all develop, though at different paces and through different methodologies or paths. Besides, he shows that he is actually really happy to be learning, to be moving forward; his mother is happy and proud of him – stating that he keeps trying to explain to her what Sueli explained about the word *bodybuilding*. And we could all see that the fact that we worked with him, by using words and games and other aspects that were part of his daily life (as Freire would suggest) made a real difference in his learning-and-developing process.

Some elements are therefore extremely important to us: 1) listening to others, seeing them as equals – this allows everyone to say what they

think and believe, and allows everyone to feel respected and valued, regardless of the possible hierarchical, political or epistemological positions occupied by some; 2) understanding that each one is unique, whilst at the same time, being socially, culturally and historically constituted; 3) making sure that what is being discussed is appropriate.

In the critical collaborative approach, language is essential for construction, and for the transformation of society. It is only through language that individuals dialectically constitute each other and language itself. This movement is marked by the inexhaustibility of human activities, which do not remain the same because they too are situated in a specific time-space scenario, and change with (and as) everything else in the world. Besides, since the constitution of each activity unfolds in social transformations, the modes of language repertoires, and their uses develop and become different in its developmental process, becoming more complex in each activity.

Activity and development complexity are related to the continuous flow of time-space transformation. Therefore, our contemporary world is marked by changes in the means of communication and in the circulation of information; by the broadening of access to digital technology; by the crossing and meeting of cultural, social, linguistic borders. Considering these aspects is what enables our work with Victor, especially in a remote learning moment. In this time-space organization, language acquires new forms, composed by what is known as the multi- aspects (multi-modal, media, cultural and literacies) (NLG, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000/2006; Rojo, 2012).

In other words, the fact that Victor is not a fluent reader of Portuguese should not stop his teachers. The English teacher and the Portuguese teacher, for example, can use the reading of images as icons that he associates with the words (as the example we showed here, with words such as *cookies*). Today, Victor's English test shows that he can actually read words such as milkshake, jeans, wi-fi, notebook. Initially, he associated the words with the images of these objects that he sees daily – and even refers to them orally. Then, from the association, he memorized the format of these words. Now he can read them. Does he get all of them right and without any help? No. He still needs support, as does any SIEN individual. However, he has developed by leaps and

bounds. We can certify to that. He is not illiterate as he was considered previously. He is not fully literate either, but he knows that he uses English words in Portuguese speaking contexts and can recognize these words; he knows how a descriptive and a narrative text are organized. He has even begun to give opinions – i.e., he has started to organize argumentative texts, as we have discussed in another text (Fidalgo & Carvalho, in print).

This is proof that it is very important that pedagogical practices “become less and less preoccupied with limited and unified actions typical of content transmission in teaching-learning processes, and increase the instances of social practices that create possibilities of student engagement in the world.” (Magalhães & Carrijo, 2019, p. 215). We could broaden this and state that it is essential that education be less concerned with limited and limiting actions that look at the other – the student in general - but especially the student who is somehow different from the educators’ or the policy makers’ expectations (which they often build from their own histories) as just that: a monolith of difference. This notion of difference as a monolith makes us see all SIEN students as one single individual or block of individuals (i.e., as if they all had the same features); all deaf students as another monolith – all of them the same; all students in the autism spectrum as the same. But we are not equal. People vary in every aspect of humanity (the way they dress, speak, eat, think, learn). As Adichie (2009) stated in her famous TED: “The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult.” Let us recognize the different in each one and let us walk the extra mile to meet them (at least) halfway.

Conflict of Interest

We state, to whom it may concern, that there is no potential conflict of interest in the study here presented for publication.

Authors Contribution

We, Maria Cecília Camargo Magalhães, Sueli Salles Fidalgo, Viviane Carrijo and Marcia Pereira de Carvalho, hereby state, to whom it may concern, that there is no potential conflict of interest in the study here presented for

publication. We all worked together to conceptualize the text and to analyze the data; the study, the methodology and the data production were envisaged and carried out by two of the authors. The four authors are in agreement with the final version and are responsible for all the aspects found in the text, attesting to its truthfulness and integrity.

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