

Transitions in the lives of babies and very young children in the daily life of a nursery school

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Abstract

This article is based on research in the field of childhood studies and on contributions from transition studies. Its main objective is to map and discuss daily transitions that take place in modes of being and living of babies and very young children in nursery schools. Conceptually, daily transitions are understood as socio-cultural learnings that require and or generate changes in the lives of very young babies and children in institutional contexts. This means that they are learnings related to how children deal with time, inhabit space, relate with their peers and use socially shared artefacts during their time in nursery school. Methodologically, it is a study with children, with an ethnographic inspiration, which used observation, a field diary and photographic and film registration to generate data. The study was conducted with 10 children from 0 to 2 years old in a municipal school for early childhood education. With the data generated, the article focuses specifically on the transitions related to how the children inhabit spaces, relate with their peers and use utensils when eating. The analyses allow inferring that the daily transitions are linked to sociocultural learnings that occur by means of guided participation of children in daily events of the school, conviviality with children their age, the challenges faced, and the support and structuring received from teachers based on planning that combines foreseeability with flexibility.

Keywords

Early childhood education – Nursery school – Daily transitions – Babies – Very young children.

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Initial considerations

The article is based on a study in the field of social studies of childhood (ROGOFF, 1993, 1998, 2005; HOHMANN; WEIKART, 1997; POLÔNIO, 2005; HOHMANN; POST, 2007; STACCIOLI, 2018) and on the contributions of studies about transitions in early childhood education (BROFENBRENNER, 1996; VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008; CORSARO; MOLINARI, 2005; ALVÃO; CAVALCANTE, 2015; FORMOSINHO; MONGE; OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO, 2016), whose objective is to map and discuss daily transitions (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008; ALVÃO; CAVALCANTE, 2015) that take place in the lives of babies and very young children in nurseries. We define daily transitions as *sociocultural learnings* (ROGOFF, 2005) that require and or generate changes related to the ways that children deal with time, inhabit spaces, relate to their peers, and use artefacts during their time at nursery school.

The transitions concern the “key moments within the process of sociocultural learning, through which children modify their conduct as a function of new knowledge acquired” (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008, p. 9). This is because the learnings of children occur “through guided participation in social activity with classmates who support them and promote their understanding and ability for using the instruments of culture” (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 21). In nursery schools, during the daily transitions, children “advance in their abilities and understanding through participation with others in culturally organized activities” (ROGOFF, 1998, p. 126).

Therefore, we understand that it is important for early childhood education to discuss daily transitions (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008; ALVÃO; CAVALCANTE, 2015), given that they are linked to the “gradual command of cultural tools by children” (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008, p. 12). For this reason, we affirm that it is necessary to look at daily life to “understand what takes place among children and how they function, negotiate and interact in group” (GRAUE; WALSH, 2003, p. 13).

Considering the mapping of the daily transitions, we conducted a study with an ethnographic inspiration (GRAUE; WALSH, 2003) with 10 children from 0 to 2 years old in a municipal school of early childhood education in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre (RS). Methodologically, observations, notations in a field diary and photographic registers were realized as strategies for generating data (GRAUE; WALSH, 2003). The observation took place for a period of six months, and considered aspects referring to the repertoires of practices (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008) which constitute learnings that promote daily transitions. In the field work, transitions were mapped related to: 1) the social interactions of children with their peers; 2) the temporal experiences of the children; 3) the ways that children grasp their spaces; 4) the children’s experimentations during personal care; 5) the responses of children to the teachers’ announcements; and 6) the children’s learnings about using artefacts.

Although countless transitions were mapped, we will focus on the daily transitions related to movements from the main classroom to the cafeteria and to the use of utensils when eating. Based on these considerations, it is important for us to describe the ethical aspects of the research (GRAUE; WALSH, 2003; FERNANDES, 2016). First, there was a meeting to present the study at the institution, with a later signing of a consent forms.

Then, there was a meeting with the people responsible for the children, and with their teachers. At the meeting, the research proposals were presented and the ethical aspects that permeate them, with the later signing of a Free and Informed Consent agreement.

Considering that the study was conducted with babies and very young children who could not consent to their participation with oral language, their consent was exhibited during the entire study, through respect that guided the observations (GRAUE; WALSH, 2003). This is because we agree with Fernandes (2016, p. 766) who affirms that the “acceptance of children towards the presence of an investigator and the recording of their actions takes place during the work”.

From ecological transitions to daily transitions in a nursery school

Transitions are part of the ecology of human development (BRONFENBRENNER, 1996), and involve changes of “activities, roles, relations, environment etc.” (ALVÃO; CAVALCANTE, 2015, p. 634). Bronfenbrenner (1996, p. 7) coined the concept of ecological transitions, referring to “changes in role or environment that occur throughout life”. In relation to the ecological environment, it is important to note that it has different interactive levels, which are known as microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (BRONFENBRENNER, 1996). This is equivalent to affirming that there is a myriad of transitions through which an individual passes between birth and death, which develop through the interconnections between the various levels mentioned.

Bronfenbrenner (1996, p. 7) cites as examples of ecological transitions “the arrival of a younger brother, the entrance to pre-school or school, being promoted, graduating, finding a job, moving to a new house, retiring”, or even, “marriage, the decision to have a child, divorce, a change of profession, retirement” etc. (BRONFENBRENNER, 1996, p. 22). Bronfenbrenner’s contributions point out “not only the different interactive levels of the environment, but also the fact that the environments influence and are influenced by people in development” (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; LIMA; SOUSA, 2016, p. 57).

Thus, it can be recognized that “transitions occur when individuals get involved and participate in events in harmony with their environment” (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008, p. 36). Thus, the transitions “nearly invariably involve changes in roles, that is, expectations of behavior associated to certain positions” (BRONFENBRENNER, 1996, p. 7).

Although in all definitions about transitions, the reference to Bronfenbrenner (1996) is central and the fact that transitions involve changes in the lives of individuals, through their investigations researchers have described the concept in different ways: as ecological transitions (BRONFENBRENNER, 1996); transitions in school (CORSARO; MOLINARI, 2005); transitions as sociocultural learning processes (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008); discrete transitions (HOHMANN; WEIKART, 1997); daily transitions between the family and school (ALVÃO; CAVALCANTE, 2015); and transitions between educational cycles (FORMOSINHO; MONGE; OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO, 2016).

In relation to their typology, transitions are classified as vertical or horizontal (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008). Vertical ones refer to changes that take

place between institutions, such as “the transition between kindergarten and primary school, between the home/family and the early childhood education center” (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; PASSOS; MACHADO, 2016, p. 36-37). In turn, horizontal transitions are all those that take place in the lives of children within a single educational context (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; PASSOS; MACHADO, 2016).

Among the different denominations presented about transitions, two of them can be classified as horizontal: the discrete transitions (HOHMANN; WEIKART, 1997) and the transitions as sociocultural learning processes (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008). This is because they allude to the ways that children undergo learning that generates changes in daily educational practices. By considering the transitions discrete, Hohmann and Weikart (1997) affirm that the changes that take place in the lives of children in preschool must have support, time and quality spaces, because they understand that “discrete transitions maintain the fluency of the proposals, while they respect the rhythm and style of learning of each child” (HOHMANN; WEIKART, 1997, p. 241). In turn, Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead (2008), although their studies present an overview of concepts and practices of transitions in early childhood, affirm that horizontal transitions, because they guide daily learnings, allow children to expand their repertoires of practices and the use of cultural instruments relevant to their communities.

The scope of vertical transitions includes the denominations transitions in school (CORSARO; MOLINARI, 2005); transitions between educational cycles (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; LIMA; SOUSA, 2016) and daily transitions between family and school (ALVÃO; CAVALCANTE, 2015). The ethnography conducted by Corsaro and Molinari (2005) at a preschool focused on the continuities and discontinuities faced by children in the transition from pre-school to primary school, known as transitions in school. The authors coined the concept of transition events, emphasizing the need for adults to propose events that engage “children in activities that allow them to anticipate certain situations that will be experienced during the school transition” (CORSARO; MOLINARI, 2005, p. 17-18).

Formosinho, Monge and Oliveira-Formosinho (2016) present the concept of transitions between educational cycles. These researchers portray investigations that focused on the transition of babies from their respective families to the nursery, of very young children from a nursery to pre-school, of children in pre-school to elementary school, and finally the experience of children in primary school. The authors affirm that the transitions are dependent on context, interactions and processes of welcoming. For this reason, “transitions are associated to a time of changes, discontinuities and new demands” (MONGE; FORMOSINHO, 2016, p. 146). This is because time in the life of a child is related to demands that increase and supports that decrease, allowing the discontinuities to be manifest in different ways (MONGE; FORMOSINHO, 2016). During time at school, for example, discontinuities occur in the period of adaptation, in the complexity in a passage from one environment to another, in the change of roles and the establishment of relations. Nevertheless, educational transitions “may be, depending on how they are lived and supported, generative or degenerative” (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; PASSO; MACHADO, 2016, p. 36).

A study by Alvão and Cavalcante (2015) addresses daily transitions between family and school. The study sought to understand the changes in environment, relations and roles at the beginning of school life of 3- to 4-year-old children in early childhood education. In relation to the process of transition of children, Alvão and Cavalcante (2015, p. 633) argue that, with their entrance to the institution, the “ecological environment expands, and a new microsystem is presented to them, which has its own pattern of activities, relations and roles” which will have to be learned.

It should be clarified that the concept of daily transitions was first used by Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead (2008) in their study about concepts of transition. The concept was later mentioned by the researchers Alvão and Cavalcante (2015) in their study about daily transitions between family and school. However, in this article, without disregarding contributions of these authors, we use the concept of daily transitions with a focus on sociocultural learnings. We concur with Rogoff’s (1993, p. 34) affirmation that development “refers to transformations of a qualitative and quantitative type that allow a person to effectively address daily problems”. Therefore, we understand that daily life in a nursery school is rich with fertile actions of children (STACCIOLI, 2018), which can generate learnings.

Daily transitions improve children’s repertoire of social practices, given that they are marked by changes that reveal their learnings. From this perspective, daily transitions are horizontal and are related to “contextual and processual factors” (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; LIMA; SOUSA, 2016, p. 60), such as time, space and relations that influence how children learn and experience changes. Daily transitions involve continuities and discontinuities (MONGE; FORMOSINHO, 2016) that are manifest in the time that the changes require. Because they occur regularly, daily transitions require support and structure (ROGOFF, 1993), as well as a *responsive and ethical attitude by teachers* (GUIMARÃES; ARENARI, 2018).

This next section will discuss indications about transitions present in Brazilian curricular policies for early childhood education.

Transitions in curricular policies for early childhood education

Based on the presentation of conceptual discussions about transitions in early childhood education, we consider it opportune to share an overview about how transitions are addressed in Brazilian curriculum policies for early childhood education, especially in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI) (BRASIL; MEC, 2009b) and in the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (BRASIL; MEC, 2017). We highlight that the first indication about the need to discuss transitions was referred to in the National Policy for Early Childhood Education (BRASIL; MEC, 2006, p. 36, emphasis ours): “*Articulate early childhood education with basic [primary] education, to avoid the impact of the passage from one period to another in terms of early childhood cultures and guaranteeing a policy of temporality of childhood*”.

The reference to transitions concerns the articulation of early childhood education with primary education. Under the term articulation, the document refers to transitions between levels of schooling. Although the constant mention of transitions in the document

did not specify how this work could be undertaken in early childhood education, the merit of its inclusion should be emphasized.

In 2009, Parecer [report] CNE/CEB n.º 20, of 11 November (BRASIL; MEC, 2009a, p. 17), presented strategies for how early childhood education institutions could accompany the continuity of processes of educating children. The document reiterated the importance of recognition of the changes experienced by children in school. This concern for the need to provide support and structure for successful transitions to occur in school life is essential, because despite the competence of children, the quality of transitions depends on the contexts (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; LIMA; SOUSA, 2016). Based on these presumptions, it is important to present the orientations registered in the Parecer [report] CNE/CEB n.º 20/2009:

Institutions of Early Childhood education should thus: a) plan and undertake the welcoming of children and their families when they enter the institutions; b) give priority to the careful observation of children and mediate the relations that they establish among each other, with adults, and with situations and objects, to guide the changes of classes by children and *accompany their process of experiencing and development within the institution*; c) plan the pedagogical work by bringing together staffs of the nursery and pre-school, accompanying the descriptive reports of the classes and children, their experiences, conquests and plans, to give continuity to their learning process; d) preview *forms of articulation among the teachers in early childhood education and primary school (encounters, visits, meetings)* and provide instruments to register them (...) that allow the primary school teachers to know about the learning processes experienced in early childhood education, in particular in the pre-school and the conditions in which they took place, *whether this transition takes place within a single institution or between institutions* (BRASIL, MEC, 2009a, p. 17, emphasis added).

The sharing of strategies in the report refers nearly entirely to vertical transitions (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; PASSOS; MACHADO, 2016). The text focuses on the transition of children from the family to school, the transition between classes for different age groups within an institution and the transition from pre-school to primary school. The document addresses the need to guarantee the continuity of the educational process in early childhood education during the transitions by organizing meetings of teachers and articulation between teachers of early childhood and primary schools. Horizontal transitions are mentioned generically when the report highlights the importance of accompanying processes of experience and development of children within an institution.

The National Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI) (BRASIL; MEC, 2009b), emphasize the commitment of schools to creating “strategies suitable to the different moments of transition experienced by a child”, as can be seen in articles 10 and 11 of the Curricular Guidelines (DCNEI) (BRASIL; MEC, 2009b, p. 4, emphasis added):

Article 10. The institutions for early childhood education should create procedures to accompany pedagogical work and evaluate the development of children without the objective to select, promote or classify, guaranteeing:

[...] III – the continuity of learning processes through the creation of strategies suitable to the different *moments of transition* lived by children (*transition home/institution of early childhood education, transitions within an institution, transition nursery/pre-school and transition pre-school/primary school*);

Article 11. In the *transition to primary school the pedagogical proposal* should include ways to guarantee continuity in the process of learning and development of children, respecting age specificities, without the anticipation of contents that will be worked with in primary education.

Thus, the theme of transitions is present in the National Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI) (BRASIL; MEC, 2009b). Specifically, when the document emphasizes transitions within an institution, it is referring to horizontal transitions. For this reason, an advance is seen in relation to what had been described in Parecer [report] CNE/CEB n.º 20/2009 (BRASIL; MEC, 2009a). On the other hand, it does not indicate which transitions take place within an institution and much less shared strategies of pedagogic action that could serve to support them. From this perspective, there is an evident need for teachers and administrators to discuss ways to promote *successful transition processes* (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; LIMA; SOUSA, 2016) in the institutions. This is because “the educational capital that strengthens the child for the transitions is constructed in the experience of the multiple challenges that the child faces in the transition” (OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO; PASSOS; MACHADO, 2016, p. 37).

Thus, to observe and register how the horizontal transitions take place means paying attention to what children say about how these moments of changes, within school, affect them. Moreover, it is important to accompany the horizontal transitions that take place in school so that they can be experienced by the children considering “people, contexts and cultures” (FORMOSINHO; MONGE; OLIVEIRA-FORMOSINHO, 2016, p. 9).

With the enactment of Resolution CNE/CP n.º 2, of 22 December 2017, which instituted and guides the implementation of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (MEC, 2017), the vertical transitions were emphasized, while ignoring the horizontal ones. The emphasis on the transition from pre-school to primary school is indicated below:

Art. 11. The BNCC for the initial years of Primary School points to the *necessary articulation with the experiences lived in Early Childhood Education*, foreseeing a progressive systematization of these experiences and the development of new forms of relationship with the world, new forms of reading and formulating hypotheses about phenomena, of testing them, refuting them, of elaborating conclusions (BRASIL; MEC, 2017, p. 8, emphasis added).

The focus of the transitions is the change between phases. Although the National Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI) (BRASIL; MEC, 2009b) referred to transitions within institutions, the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (BRASIL; MEC, 2017), highlights the importance of guaranteeing continuity of the learning processes of children in the passage from early childhood education to primary school. Considering that the National Common Curricular Base (BRASIL; MEC, 2017) reiterates the concept of curriculum determined in the guidelines, defining the proposals

that value the daily activity of children, the absence of references to horizontal transitions is contradictory.

The next section examines how children learn to inhabit spaces through their movements in a nursery.

Spaces inhabited: movements

Children experience space as a territory-space (ARENHART; LOPES, 2016), in such a way that the space becomes “endowed with meaning and value when human and affective relations are established with it” (ARENHART; LOPES, 2016, p. 21). Classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, schoolyard, bathrooms, parks, and other spaces in a nursery become places through relational feelings that are attributed to them by their users (GARIBOLDI, 2011). Even spaces not considered by adults, such as “dark corners, passageways, storage space, openings inside or below furniture, empty spaces on higher levels etc.” (ARENHART; LOPES, 2016, p. 19), are also transformed into spaces by children.

By corroborating with this, Polonio (2005, p. 51) affirms that “human inhabitation is conducted on the basis of interaction between space and people”. Polonio affirms that this involves an “interplay of exchanges” between human beings and their surroundings (POLONIO, 2005, p. 51). Children, by initiating their life paths in nursery school, must have the opportunity to move expansively, freely and safely through all the spaces, not having their field of action limited only to their main classroom. The appropriation of spaces by children requires that they learn to move from one space to another.

For this reason, we understand that the movements of children constitute sociocultural learning (ROGOFF, 1993) that is found at the core of what we have defined as a daily transition in relation to the forms of inhabiting spaces. We understand that the “space is an essential element in the process of humanization of children and a mark of alterity of children’s cultures” (ARENHART; LOPES, 2016, p. 19).

We agree with Polonio (2005, p. 52) that inhabiting spaces implies “an interlinking of realities placed in interaction, through mechanisms of exchange and transformation between the subject and its surroundings”. The children must truly inhabit spaces in the creche, so that, in this way, they can become territory-places (ARENHART; LOPES, 2016). It is important to recall that children relate with spaces to the degree that through their movements, they affect the spaces and in turn perceive to be affected by them (GARIBOLDI, 2011).

Thus, we believe it is opportune to present an episode that illustrates the beginning of the process of daily transition from one space to another in a nursery school:

I observed the children being invited by the teachers to wash their hands so that they could go to the cafeteria and have a snack. As I perceived, this action became a ritual, through which the teachers announced in advance to the children everything that would happen. After the announcement made in the classroom that they would wash their hands to be able to go to the cafeteria, some children cried in unison. At that moment, I saw that Livia (1 year and 5 months) was the child who cried the most. Upon perceiving her discomfort and that of two other girls, the teacher Clara decided to go first to the cafeteria with the other 5 children. Soon afterwards, the

teacher calmed down the children who were crying and explained that she would take only one group to the cafeteria. After the warning, the teacher became a guide for the children who had already washed their hands, on the route from the classroom to the cafeteria. While they walked towards the cafeteria, the teacher presented the trajectory to the children. The other children in the group remained in the classroom with the intern, who tried to speak with them, explaining where they would go after washing their hands. Then, the intern helped the children wash their hands and later followed the same procedure as the teacher. The intern, Ana, spoke with the children during the trajectory from the classroom to the cafeteria and presented the places they passed by. (Field diary, 09/03/2018).

The way that the teacher and the intern combined foreseeability and flexibility (HOHMANN; POST, 2007) in the teaching supported the children's learning and helped them to "learn the spaces in their experiential scales" (LOPES, 2009, p. 129). The announcement of all the proposals, actions and movements that occur, as well as the "organization of the children in groups, allows them to maintain the meaning and control of the proposals" (HOHMANN; POST, 2007, p. 202).

Another highlight is the exercise of guided participation (ROGOFF, 2005) through the teachers' actions, informing the children, during the movement, the points of reference on the trajectory. In this respect, Rogoff (1993, p. 42) defends that guided participation "involves adults or other children stimulating and supporting the children in the process of presenting and resolving problems, both through the material organization of the activities, and by means of interpersonal communication". To undertake guided participation, the child must have time and support to "observe and participate, at a level that is comfortable, but that in a certain way is always challenging" (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 42).

In this way, we continue the analyses revealing the process by which the children move from one space to another, constituting "territory-spaces" (ARENHART; LOPES, 2016):

The teacher Clara announced to the children that, after washing their hands, they would go to the cafeteria for a snack. I observed that Livia (1 year and 5 months) stopped what she was doing and paid attention to the announcement. The teacher used the strategy of leading the children in groups to the cafeteria, which decreased the children's waiting time and denoted respect for their temporalities. As soon as Livia heard the announcement, she went to the door of the bathroom to wash her hands. As soon as her hands were washed, Livia went to the cafeteria holding the teacher's hand. I perceived, from my observations, that the girl is more confident. In the cafeteria, Livia expressed her desires, raising her finger to request more juice. In addition, she got down from the bench readily when the teacher said that everyone would go to the yard after snack. Given this, I infer that Livia began to better understand this ritual of washing hands, leaving the classroom, crossing the entrance hall, reaching the cafeteria table and choosing a place to sit. (Diário de Campo, 15/03/2018).

Upon announcing that the children would wash their hands, the teacher offered "time and support in the transition from a regular event [personal care] to another [eating]" (HOHMANN; POST, 2007, p. 203). The teacher's actions provided support and allowed the children to develop to form positive relations (HOHMANN; POST, 2007) with

the actions that would be undertaken. This influenced Livia's confidence when going from the classroom to the cafeteria with the teacher. The girl's movement, even if accompanied by the teacher, denoted the "experience of space as interaction and as process" (LOPES, 2009, p. 129).

Once again, a process of guided participation was found, which is linked to how the teacher organizes social action, "distributing tasks among the children and creating the structure and opportunities for them to participate" (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 44). To understand this effort, in the next episode we demonstrate how the children "in the experience of the space, produce still non-existent spatialities" (LOPES, 2009, p. 129):

The teacher announced to the children that they could begin to put away their toys so they could go to lunch. Livia, Bernardo (1 year and 6 months) and Bruno (1 year and 6 months) went to the door, but were told by the teacher that first they had to wash their hands. I saw that every day Livia always went to the door whenever an announcement is made about a meal. On the other hand, today, unlike the other days, she was accompanied by the boys Bernardo and Bruno. At the door, the three children interacted with each other. Livia practiced taking the boys hands to accompany them to the cafeteria. While the three children continue to interact at the door, the intern entered the classroom and helped the others put away toys. At that time, the teacher asked the children to sit on the floor. Livia, Bernardo and Bruno returned from the door and sat on the rug with the group. A few moments later, the children got their books and began to look at them, while the assistant teacher helped one group wash their hands. Then the teacher decided to go to lunch with the children who had already washed their hands. The teacher opened the door, and one group went to the hallway. On the way, some children stopped to look at the murals, others walked holding hands, and others held the teacher's hand. I noted that most of them displayed interest in going alone. Livia went to the cafeteria accompanied by her colleague Bernardo. Going to the cafeteria is no longer a challenge for Livia and the other children. Soon, they all reached the cafeteria, sit and wait for the announcement of what would be served. (Diário de Campo, 19/03/2018).

In this episode, the participation of the children in the social activities related to the uses of spaces is evident. It can be seen that "the children seek, organize and ask for help from their peers, to learn to resolve all kinds of problems" (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 40). The way that the teacher communicates with the group gives structures to "the role that each one of them must perform through a division of responsibilities" (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 44).

Initially, the shift from the main classroom to the cafeteria was a challenge for the children. It was through a process of guided participation (announcing the proposals, presenting physical references for the movement etc.) that the children developed autonomy and became guides for their peers in the learning involving the movement from the classroom to the cafeteria.

In this regard, we highlight the moment when Livia realized the guided participation (ROGOFF, 2005) of Bernardo, accompanying him to the cafeteria. In other moments she took this trajectory in the company of the teacher, who had created situations of support in which Livia had the opportunity to "apply, at a level of greater competence, the skills and knowledge that she had" (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 129). We understand that the children

are “apprentices of thought” (ROGOFF, 1993), because they face challenges “through observation and participation in relations with their colleagues and with the more skilled members of their social group” (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 30).

The daily transition from one space to another is complex, given that the production of spatiality involves a repertoire of experiences that allow the constitution of the space as territory. This transition requires that the teacher understand that the children need to have their social action guaranteed by freedom of expression, interaction and movement through all the spaces (POLÔNIO, 2005).

Small diners: the use of utensils

To think of the “pedagogical quality of moments for eating” (GUIMARÃES; ARENARI, 2018, p. 7) is a challenge in nursery school, given that the act of eating, in addition to its nutritional character, is constituted by aspects of a social and cultural order that operate in children’s socialization processes (LESSA; VALLE; ROCHA, 2016). Every day, at regular hours, the children find themselves in the cafeteria to eat. This indicates the “centrality and centralization of moments for eating in the routine of the nursery school” (RICHTER; VAZ, 2011, p. 492), revealing that the times of the meals offered to the children “organize the institutional time” (LESSA; VALLE; ROCHA, 2016, p. 11).

The meal times can be shaped as moments of fertile action (STACCIOLI, 2018) as long as the children have time to discover and taste both foods and relations shared in the cafeteria. It is precisely for this reason that the children’s moments for eating imply “their contact with the silent languages, impregnated with smells, tastes, colors, textures and pleasures” (RICHTER; VAZ, 2011, p. 498) of food.

Learning to eat is an act that marks the life of human beings, whether because of the taste of foods or the conviviality that eating in groups promotes. “The quality, aesthetics and relationships favor the pleasure of eating” (STACCIOLI, 2018, p. 61), promoting well-being. Moreover, “the space for eating, how it is decorated, how the children are grouped, how water bottles or towels are placed for any need, are all elements that affect the relationships” (STACCIOLI, 2018, p. 61).

In the observation of lunchtime during the research, the process of daily transition of children in relation to the use of utensils stood out, by means of *guided participation* (ROGOFF, 2005). We found that “the children seek, organize and ask for help from those around them, to learn to solve problems of all kinds” (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 40), as can be accompanied here:

In the cafeteria, while the teacher Clara and the intern Ana place bibs on the children, the teacher Malu serves them plates with lunch and distributes them. I notice that all the children receive spoons to eat the meal. I also observe the interactions among the children and teachers, as well as the mediations taken by the teachers at mealtime. The intern feeds Mateus (11 months), who is sitting in a highchair, while Clara accompanies the other children in the challenge of eating with a spoon. The intern, when beginning to feed Mateus, aware of the importance of her mediation in this learning process, gives him another spoon, in addition to the one she is using to feed him.

The boy makes various attempts to use the spoon, facing the challenge of ingesting the food on his own. I see that, in addition to the spoon, the boy, like the other children in the group, has the opportunity to use his hands to eat. I note that all the children who are in the cafeteria eat well, because they have time, freedom and opportunity to use a spoon and to find various ways to eat the food. The children's enthusiasm at mealtime is evident, and they make constant requests to repeat the meal. (Field diary, 19/03/2018).

As can be seen, "the roles that the children and their teachers perform to support development are complementary" (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 40). It is notable how the teachers "affect the children with a look, repetition of gestures and with words" (GUIMARÃES; ARENARI, 2018, p. 9), giving structure to their action during lunch. In this context, the children participate in the moment of the meal because they have the opportunity and the support to face the challenge of eating the meals autonomously. This reveals "the dynamic of partnership and trust that offers the young children the opportunity to attain autonomy and security" (GUIMARÃES; ARENARI, 2018, p. 9).

Although the intern feeds Mateus, she does not deny him the opportunity to use his hands during the meals, and above all, to try to use the spoon. This is because, at the nursery school where the study was conducted, there is an understanding that "children should have support and be encouraged to become independent" (STACCIOLI, 2018, p. 62), as can be seen here:

In the cafeteria, I saw the attempts by Mateus (11 months) to eat on his own. The boy is interested in eating the rice on his plate grain by grain. This interest comes from the fact that this is the best way he is able to put the food in his mouth. To help Mateus during the meal, I see that the intern served only rice on his plate and a portion of mashed potatoes. The intern helps Mateus to use the spoon. At certain times, she places rice on the spoon that the boy is holding. I accompany the different ways that Mateus uses the spoon to reach the objective of taking the food to his mouth. I also observe him looking at the other children who are eating without help. Mateus' attempts to use the spoon reveal his participation, even if he still needs help from the teacher to execute the action. During the meal, the boy receives structure and support from the intern, who assists him in the movement of holding the spoon and taking the food to his mouth. It is a choreography of action between the baby and the intern. (Field Diary, 21/05/2018).

The episode reiterates Rogoff's affirmation (1993, p. 42) that "it is through the child's participation in social life that 'lessons' are provided about the cultural activities that require skills valued in his culture". In this way, we emphasize Mateus' attempts to eat on his own. The synchrony of actions between the baby and the intern are visible. At no time is there an imposition to use the spoon, but it is the boy's initiative to participate in a shared social activity that motivates him to take the challenge of using the artefact. By placing grains of rice on Mateus' spoon, the intern does not conduct

the action for him, only creates the structure and support so that he can continue in his attempts to feed himself.

The sharing of the resolution of the challenge faced by Mateus in relation to using the spoon allows him to participate in processes of thinking that are essential to his development. Nevertheless, for this to occur, it was necessary to promote a context favorable to experimentation during lunch, given that “the act of nourishment affects more than physiological aspects and appetite” (STACCIOLI, 2018, p. 61), but also how children organize their thoughts.

Thus, the children eat better when “the context makes them feel well and when there is emotional and relational affinity with adults and their classmates” (STACCIOLI, 2018, p. 61). The environment where meals are conducted, as well as the mediation by teachers, assures successful daily transitions:

During lunch, I perceived Mateus had greater skill in using the spoons, because he was able to take the food to his mouth without mediation by the teacher. In any case, the teachers always stayed close to him and the other children, presenting readiness to offer help. I observed that Mateus’ skill in using a cup also developed. Previously, he needed the teacher to help him hold the cup so that he could drink something, but now he could use the utensil on his own. I also observed the children taking the dish and cups to the table at which they placed the dirty dishes. The children readily got off the bench, gathered their dishes and cups and had fun on the way to the table where the dirty dishes were left. (Field Diary, 05/06/2018).

Mateus revealed skill in using the spoon and autonomy in conducting the meal. The opportunity for the children to interact during the meals and the fact that the teachers help them to “find connections between the older and new situations experienced, providing them emotional indications about the nature of the situation” (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 44) creates security. In this logic, the teachers are concerned with “what they can do by and for the babies, in addition to what they do with the babies, as well as what they can already do for themselves” (GUIMARÃES; ARENARI, 2018, p. 9).

In summary, this involves considering the children as “subjects in the educational relationship” (GUIMARÃES; ARENARI, 2018, p. 11), guaranteeing support by proposing routines that assure educational continuity and favor “the balanced organization of time and space” (STACCIOLI, 2018, p. 58). For this reason, we highlight the importance of the “ritualistic quality of the routine” (GUIMARÃES; ARENARI, 2018, p. 9), which allows the children to repeat their actions and develop repertoires of practices. After all, to learn to feed oneself is a socially relevant learning, in which human beings find themselves involved since birth.

Final Considerations

Based on our research intention, which was to map and discuss daily transitions in the lives of babies and very small children in nursery school, we maintain that daily

transitions (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008; ALVÃO; CAVALCANTE, 2015) are sociocultural learnings (ROGOFF, 1993). This was exhibited in the analytical sections of the article, which reveal how children create strategies to resolve challenges. To do so, we described the actions of Lívia (1 year and 5 months) in the daily transition referring to her learning in relation to the movements from the classroom to the cafeteria. In this context, we mark the presence of guided participation, mediated by the teacher through her connection with Lívia and later, by Lívia with her classmates during the movements.

We then explored the daily transition pertinent to Mateus' (11 months) learning process in his attempts to use a spoon during lunch. We emphasize the social character of eating, as well as guided participation mediated by the intern during the boy's meals. We demonstrate that the "organization of the problem by the adult can adapt to the child's skill level" (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 131), and that children with more experience "can assume responsibility for achieving certain subgoals, and occasionally controlling the entire task" (ROGOFF, 1993, p. 131).

Thus, we indicate the essential nature of pedagogic action by teachers that promotes time, structure and support in processes of guided participation (ROGOFF, 2005) of children, considering successful daily transitions. In terms of the action of teachers, we affirm the importance of the ritualistic character of the routines, of the continuity of the proposals and the announcement of each action to be taken with the children, seeking to organize the school day and support so that the children "are in synch with the rhythm of their own body and with the rhythm of the day" (HOHMANN; POST, 2011, p. 195). By defending this point of view, we reiterate the affirmation by Guimarães and Arenari (2018, p. 10) that "adults occupy a place of reference for the construction of new forms of action by children themselves" in the nursery school context.

For this reason, we agree with Staccioli (2018, p. 71) who affirms that "it is not easy to maintain a school where children are well because they feel that there is life in all moments". For this reason, we understand that accompanying, giving structure to and supporting daily transitions (VOGLER; CRIVELLO; WOODHEAD, 2008; ALVÃO; CAVALCANTE, 2015) is the only ethical way to recognize the life that thrives in the daily activities of nursery schools.

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