Article

Dossier | Listening and participation in research with (about) children

(In)visibility of ludic-aggressive play in early childhood education: understandings from children

(In)visibilidade das brincadeiras lúdico-agressivas na educação infantil: compreensões a partir das crianças

(In)visibilidad de los juegos lúdico-agresivos en la educación infantil: percepciones de los niños

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Highlights

This study examines plays in early childhood education with ethnography as a method.

The interactions between the children in the plays revealed a ludic-aggressive component.

Assumptions from the Sociology of Childhood were used as a theoretical-methodological reference for understanding playful interactions.

Abstract

This article analyzes the (in)visibility of ludic-aggressive play in Early Childhood Education, in dialog with the theoretical-methodological assumptions of the Sociology of Childhood. Using an ethnography with episodes of interaction, the production of data revealed categories of analysis on listening and children's participation: approaches, records, and dialogues with and between children. As a result, we emphasize that to be recognized, children's cultural productions need to be visible and meaningful, so that it is possible to build bridges and shortcuts with the children themselves, pointing out that daily life can reveal harmony based on differences in perspectives, actions, and understandings.

Resumo | Resumen

Keywords

Play. Ludic-aggressive play. Rough-and-tumble play. Childhood Education. Sociology of Childhood.

▌Introduction

> [...] to keep visible what tends to become invisible again or to make visible again what has already been discovered but we had lost sight of. (Pires, 2008, p. 52, translated by us)

Establishing a dialogue not about children, but with and among them, has motivated the writing of this text, especially when it comes to researching with children and reading their symbolic processes. This requires a search for trust, freedom, encounter, and sharing to mobilize the promotion of active subjects and producers of culture in the face of the adultcentrism still present in pedagogical processes.

The Sociology of Childhood views the social condition and affirmation of children's cultures in their daily lives as a process of intergenerational socialization. It provides children with a voice and builds towards advancements in democratic relations through research (Fernandes & Sarmento, 2023).

The principles of the Sociology of Childhood that this study aligns with view children as independent social actors and citizens. The current comprehensive or interpretive method is given priority. This outlook is rooted in the comprehension of children, "[...] derived from their actions, interactions with peers and adults, and through cultural processes they construct within their social milieu" (Sarmento, 2023, p. 95).

The social function of Physical Education in Early Childhood Education is pertinent in the context of the ongoing debate on the benefits that body practices provide. Professionals with specialized training carry out pedagogical mediations in constructing the curriculum, as supported by research (Mello, Bersch, Ribeiro & Martins, 2021).

From this perspective, the way in which data was produced with and among the children will be the focus of this article. In other words, metaphorically speaking, the use of a "methodological magnifying glass" is something that can see all the details up close, trying to broaden the view of events, making it possible to observe, accompany, and access the children and their logic as the epigraph of this text also suggests. The central point remained attentive and participatory listening to recognize the play, which led to the emergence of their voices.

In her study of rough-and-tumble play and/or playfighting, Barbosa (2018) explores how children interact and express themselves through play. Specifically, she investigates the underlying logic that children use when playing together and how they navigate the creative and aggressive elements of the play.

From this, it was possible to arrive at the understanding that ludic-aggressive plays are disputes or confrontations of a symbolic and physical nature, which show the prevalence of playful elements, together with the search for excitement, power, aggression, combat, nonsense, and transformation. The author realized that letting children express themselves could reveal understandings about the (in)visibility of their play[1].

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1 "Nonsense" refers to actions that may be unclear or negative to adults, but hold significance for those involved in the play context. In contrast, "playing" describes individuals who engage in play as a form of communication, self-expression, and imagination (Barbosa, 2018).

For Qvortrup (2014, p. 25), these invisibilities relate to the denial or resistance to recognizing, guaranteeing, and giving children the opportunity to be seen and heard through their interests and voices. For the author, the question remains: "[...] have they been invisible or insufficiently visible?" At the same time, Pires (2008) points out that invisibility can also occur through excessive visibility. Adults become so accustomed to having obligations to care for and protect children that they end up conflicted about seeing play as a problem. Children, for their part, also find themselves in a conflict between the desire to discover and the need for adults to understand their playful imagination and logic. For this reason, children act camouflaged as a defense mechanism to hide and not be punished. That is why the term (in)visibility is ambiguous.

Based on this scenario, the text was guided by the following question: how can the visibility of ludic-aggressive play be enhanced through the methodology developed with the children?

Understanding children as active participants in the social construction of their childhoods is a topic worth studying. Children are social actors, and Vasconcelos (2015, p. 32) explains how the interest and possibility of listening and participating can be viewed as an invitation:

> [...] participation is an invitation, and it is done by welcoming others. The children encourage us to consider different perspectives and to be patient while listening and allowing space for those who express themselves uniquely. Participation involves taking time to reflect on previous discussions while also revisiting important points (translated by us).

Therefore, this ethnographic study aims to analyze ludic-aggressive play within the assumptions of the Sociology of Childhood, building bridges with other authors to highlight the intentionality of listening and participation practices in research with children and their cultural productions in active moments of physical education and recess in Early Childhood Education is based on their understandings.

Methodology

This study employs assumptions from the Sociology of Childhood as a theoretical and methodological reference, using ethnography as a qualitative research method to understand ludic-aggressive play in Early Childhood Education.

Using the theoretical-methodological reference of assumptions from the Sociology of Childhood is to recognize children's participation in cultural routines as a method and the reading of social practices to access knowledge in their interactions as their right in its theoretical aspects (Corsaro, 2011; Fernandes & Sarmento, 2023; Sarmento, 2023).

This field of study fosters connections with other authors, enabling knowledge diversification through multidisciplinary approaches and theoretical currents that provide a comprehensive and all-inclusive perspective of children and their experiences (Fernandes & Sarmento, 2023). Thus, integrating of authors from different disciplines is integral to child studies, establishing a dialogue that considers shared and contrasting perspectives (Sarmento, 2023).

On the other hand, Ethnography in school settings implies finding clues to understand daily life and its social actors. Corsaro (2011) emphasizes the

importance of ethnography for the Sociology of Childhood because it is a method that considers the capture of events, actions, and the subjects' understanding of what part of the researched environment it is.

To achieve this goal, our methodology employed various resources, such as field diary entries based on participant observation, reactive entry strategy/method, narratives, enunciations, reflexivity strategies, and feedback from children in interaction episodes (Sarmento, 2023; Marchi, 2018; Certeau, 2014; Corsaro, 2011; Pedrosa & Carvalho, 2005).

The data was gathered from Physical Education classes and playtime in a public Early Childhood Education School in Vitória/Espírito Santo (ES), Brazil. A total of 30 children from two 5-year-old kindergarten classes were considered for the study. The analysis of data production led to the identification of the following categories of listening and child participation: approaches, records, and dialogues with and among children.

▌ Approach: first contact with children

Examining the imaginative world of children and comprehending their conduct, social connections, and language may yield novel approaches to analyzing their play, customs, and artistic aptitude, particularly when they indulge in daydreams concerning their allegorical secondary world. We employed research methods, including participant observation and reactive entry, to advance proximity to truth and insights engendered by children.

"Participant observation" consists of collecting, recording, and interpreting data and, above all, adopting a reflective stance on what is being studied to understand the subjects and their relationships in their cultural contexts (Marchi, 2018, p. 731). In participant observation, children become subjects rather than objects of research and play an important role, especially in interpreting the data and collaborating with the study (Sarmento, 2023).

The "reactive entry" method proposes that the researcher enters the studied environment and waits for the children to react to his presence to establish interactions based on their active and curious actions in this context (Corsaro, 2011, p. 64).

These two techniques complement each other to ground the research in the perspective of being with and among the children. They provide an "inside" observation of daily life, allowing the focus to center on relationships, concrete practices, and the construction of meanings by the children. Furthermore, they recognize the researcher as a member of the social context that is being investigated.

Even though we maintained a neutral position in front of the children, it did not take long for them to notice the presence of an unfamiliar adult in the school spaces they frequent. As a result, they started to cast curious glances, followed by a barrage of questions such as *who are you? Are you a teacher too? What are you doing? What is your name? Stop writing, Miss., look at me! Do you live in the playground?* And *are you here again, Miss.?* (Pupils, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education). These dialogues facilitated initial discussions, comprehension of the research objectives, a cordial reception by the children, and acceptance of their participation role in the group (Corsaro, 2011), as delineated in the subsequent report:

> While I was watching the children in PE class, some of them approached me and asked me various questions about my presence in the school: *Are you a teacher? What are you doing here? What are you writing in that book?* During so many questions, I tried to answer them so that they would understand why I was there: *yes, I'm a teacher, but I'm also a researcher. You will always see me at school (...) I write in this book [it was a small notebook] what you do.* Then a girl interrupted me: *but what does a researcher do?* And I replied: *She observes and writes everything you're playing with.* She started laughing and said, *you must be here all the time!* (Ariel, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

As happened in the episode, the children's curiosity took over the conversation with the children. The researcher needed to inform them about the research and their consent to participate. Permission to enter the field and their acceptance of the research occurred fluidly, and with an explanation the children understood. Marchi (2018) points out that at the beginning of the reactive entry, from an ethical point of view, the researcher needs to introduce him/herself to the children and talk about his/her presence in the research environment so that they understand what he/she intends to do (the research) and how he/she intends to do it (participant observation and various records).

Thus, the acceptance of the researcher's presence in the "places practiced" by the children (Certeau, 2014, p. 184) - (re)appropriated and (re)signified by them - as well as the recording of episodes and the children's contribution with their narratives about the sequence of events produced in the games, allowed the researcher to become an "atypical adult" in the children's terrain during the research, going through and living activities that would hardly circulate with parents and teachers (Corsaro, 2011, p. 64). An example was the children's invitation to the researcher to participate in one of their games, which materialized in an episode observed in the playground with the class:

> While I was watching the kids, some noticed that I was paying attention to how the play was going, but that was no reason to stop or feel embarrassed; on the contrary, they continued to play closer to me. I realized they were playing a "Robot Zombie Tag Game." They were running around. One of the boys strolled with his arms in front of him, his eyes half open, talking like a robot. The others ran away from him toward the wall, fought with each other, or hid among the toys in the playground. In an unexpected situation, a child approached to me and shouted: *Miss., save me!* She asked me to join in the play, and I readily agreed. I asked: *How can I save you?* The child said: *Call him, and I'll run over there*, pointing to the wall. I joined the play and said: *I'm scared! Come and catch me, Mr. Robot Zombie!* The kids laughed, ran off, and leaned against the wall. There were a few rules, like crossing their fingers. I asked: *Why are you showing the zombie your crossed fingers?* One girl replied: *This way, he can't catch us.* The Robot Zombie continued to look for the children. Some ran away, some fought with him, and some told him where others hid. One of them told me: *Climb on the toy here. Robot Zombie can't climb up here. It doesn't have a wheel!* And I said: *I can't go up there, I'm very tall and heavy.* But they insisted. When they stopped playing, I would start a conversation: *Where does the Robot Zombie come from?* One boy answered*: From death! He's evil!* I said: *Do you still like playing with him?* The boy said: *Yeah, I like to play with monsters!* (Tony Stark, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

Watching the children run from side to side could have sounded banal, like a tag game. However, providing an encounter, being available for discovery, approaching them, accepting them, and talking to them created other relationships and meanings for the children's language. Alves et al. (2022) emphasize the importance

of the conversations that take place in everyday life as a way of accessing communication, ideas, lived experiences, "spaces-times" and understanding events because "[...] through conversations we exchange 'making-knowledge,' we 'learn-teach' in daily life" (Alves, Morais, Toja & Brandão, 2022, p. 36, translated by us), highlighting how social actors can express their meanings holistically.

Thus, it was possible to understand that behind the play the children chose was a story: the robot zombie gave a touch of nonsense to the game, accompanied by excitement, combat, and transformation, behaviors discovered after the conversation with the children. The approach, the acceptance, the invitation, and, at the same time, the participation and the recording of the interaction episodes involved both the researcher and the children. According to Marchi (2018, p. 731, translated by us), what is presented is "[...] a double need or double link to be achieved: the participation of the children in the activities of the observer (research) and the participation of the observer in the activities of the children".

A significant portion of playful learning in school environments is co-created with children. These experiences and opportunities are seamlessly integrated into play and daily school routine, often only observable by those who can connect with their imaginations. The following episode demonstrates the spontaneity of a child in revealing interests and playful experiences:

> I was watching the kids in a Physical Education Class when a girl came up to me and started talking: *Miss., did you know that my mother gave me a punching bag?* I was surprised and asked: *A punching bag? What's in it?* She replied: *Some things in it make me hit hard, do you know? Wonder Woman has a whip. She swings, hits, and fights*. And the one who hits the hardest wins! I quickly asked: *Did you bring this box to school?* The girl replied: *Yes! I play like that with them (making playfighting gestures and pointing at her school friends), but Miss. doesn't like to do it* (Diana Prince, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

Based on this narrative, it is possible children may incorporate their aggressive needs and mix them with fantasy, which takes pride of place and materializes in their creations and play. The playful clues left by the children led us to play characterized by the prevalence of playful elements, aggression, and nonsense, which we call ludic-aggressive play. As the research progressed, we realized that these playful manifestations could be a way for children to express themselves playfully and give new meaning to the culture to which they belong.

The ludic-aggressive play became more and more visible as the researcher was able to get closer and listen to the children. However, Baitello (2005, p. 85, translated by us) points out that "[...] every visibility carries with it a corresponding invisibility". What was visible to the researcher in a depth relationship did not always follow the same perception for those observing or were in the same environment. This perception is more profound and more illuminated look, and recording (coming out of the shadows) only happened because of the credibility of the children's voices and the (re)knowledge of the play context.

According to Velho (1981), it is necessary to adopt a process of estrangement from the familiar and approach the exotic to gain a perspective of otherness regarding children's experiences. Through this approach, we can learn and understand more accurately the familiar, eccentric, known, or unknown actions that occur in the daily micro-practices of children at school. For the author:

> What we always see, and encounter may be familiar but not necessarily known, and what we do not see, and encounter may be exotic but known to some extent. However, we always presuppose familiarity and exoticism as sources of knowledge and ignorance, respectively (Velho, 1981, p. 5, translated by us).

In this sense, visibility is approaching something clear and prominent that requires credibility to be consumed and shared. The sensitive observation of the researcher made all the difference in (re)discovering the children's interests. However, other adults, whose observation is focused on caring for children and preventing them from getting hurt or things from getting out of hand, do not always have the same perception of ludic-aggressive play, generating superficial and fragmented perspectives of playful actions. Phrases like "[...] the Miss. never likes us to play like this and she punishes us" and "[...] the Miss. will teach him a lesson because he fights" (Pupil, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education) may be due to the adult's lack of knowledge about how children think and play, making the understanding of ludic-aggressive play (in)visible.

Thus, from the experience with the children, it was fundamental to be close to them, to have the opportunity to hear their voices, and to go beyond "[...] giving (granting, allowing) them a voice" (Marchi, 2018, p. 729, translated by us). That allowed us to recognize the visibility of their logic, curiosity, imagination, and experience of ludic-aggressive play.

Record: dynamics of interaction between children in the play spaces

To capture the children's voices and their play experiences during the researcher's time in physical education class and playtime, we sought "[...] ways of listening to them, exploring their multiple languages, based on the belief that they have something to say and the desire to know their point of view" (Cruz, 2008, p. 13, translated by us). To this end, data production was recorded in a field diary, mainly through narratives, enunciations, and strategies of reflexivity in interaction with and between them.

The field diary described the data qualitatively in "episodes of interaction" (Pedrosa & Carvalho, 2005, p. 432). We tried to narrate the course of events in a detailed and ordered way, focusing on the elements that made up the construction of significant experiences produced by the children in their playful moments.

The "narratives" were conversations produced and/or induced by the researcher to produce knowledge in the multiple fabrics of daily life (Alves et al., 2022, p. 37). According to the authors, narrating daily life means communicating sounds of different kinds, images, and creations, an openness to the senses, and incorporating knowledge and meanings.

The "enunciations" (Certeau, 2014, p. 164) also played an essential role in the research, as "speech in action" was captured. In other words, the dialogues that emerged during the play resulted from interactions between the children. Both the interactions and the "doing with" other daily practitioners gave rise to verbal and non-verbal languages that were creative, ordinary, and banal at the same time.

The strategy of "methodological reflexivity" (Marchi, 2018, p. 739) during the production of research data allowed an external awareness of the observation of

the researcher herself observing the children as a strategy of reflection on her presence and critical knowledge about listening to children's voices and rejecting adultcentrism.

From these methodological aspects, it was possible to bring out of the shadows the light that illuminates the ludic-aggressive play in their way of life. The inherent conflict between visibility and (in)visibility, between play and struggle, between playfulness and aggression, and between adult and child perception is found in overcoming intergenerational domination (Fernandes & Sarmento, 2023).

From this perspective, it is possible to see the importance of continuous reflection on the field and the data to use more appropriate strategies to capture children's play, inventiveness, and protagonism. An example of this can be seen in a dialogue between the researcher and a group of children:

> The children were gathering to play when I noticed them: *Miss., film us here! We're playing monsters.* I joined them and started recording and said, *I'm going to record, and then I want you to tell me everything you did, OK?* Before they went to the cafeteria, I asked the group: *What did you do there?* I was interrupted by a boy who asked: *Where's the video, Miss.? Come and see, guys, she recorded us playing. Look at this part: she recorded it! [...] we were playing the monster who fights and catches everybody [...]* (Clark Kent, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

The children's daily lives were visualized, shared with their peers, and opened to an adult in this episode. We gained access to their knowledge and logic when they became "reporters" of their playful actions and "great helpers" in the research, as Corsaro (2011) called them. For the author:

> Children can also serve as research assistants and informants, assisting adult researchers with interviews, providing an understanding into their cultures, and aiding in data analysis. These understandings allow children to be co-producers of data and conclusions (Corsaro, 2011, p. 68, translated by us).

It is essential to strengthen children's presence and role as collaborators in research regarding recording and capturing their voices, recognizing their actions and (re)meanings. It is crucial to research not on children but, above all, with and among them (Rocha, 2008) to see them as social actors in their world and as protagonists and reporters of their experiences and understandings. In this sense, the following episode confirmed the meanings produced by ludic-aggressive play:

> A group of boys was near the playground, and I saw them running, fighting, unleashing powers, and shooting at whoever was in front of them. Sometimes, they kicked the wall as if it were someone else, and sometimes, they kicked the wall to gain momentum and kick the air. From where I was, I could hear phrases like *he hit you! You're dead! Lie down! You can't get up now! And you'll have to wait a while to fight again!* Meanwhile, the others exchanged punches and kicks, sometimes in the air. Soon, they started throwing themselves at the guy who was lying down. The teacher saw this and told them to stop. At that moment, they stopped climbing. They moved away from the teacher and started to do the same thing to another boy, now in a toy house in the schoolyard, away from the teacher's eyes (Students, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

The episode illustrates that it may not be necessary for the playing subjects to say anything. Movements, behaviors, and relationships speak for themselves in expressing their desire to play. It was noticed that as the research progressed, the

children's narratives took shape in a context of enunciation as something "[...] that can neither be said nor taught, but should be practiced" (Certeau, 2014, p. 149, translated by us). In other words, the children contextualized and appropriated verbal and non-verbal actions. These languages can be seen in the following episode:

> At playtime, I realized that the children were building a play with various cartoon characters from the "Justice League" and the "Avengers." Everyone picked their favorite character. Some children entered the toy house, and one of the boys stood in the doorway with his legs spread and arms outstretched, blocking other children from entering and challenging anyone who tried to push him: *You can't come in! The heroes are here! You can't get in unless you do this!* Some tried to push the boy but soon gave up, preferring to remain spectators, looking out the window of the little house in the schoolyard. Meanwhile, inside the toy house, the boys were teaming up and playfighting in a kind of superhero UFC. Furthermore, the kids outside were cheering and encouraging the game. You could hear shouts of *get him! Finish him off! He won! No, it was a draw!* The fight went on until someone gave up. The reason was extreme fatigue. No adult/teacher noticed what happened, only the researcher (Student, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

Outsiders, unaware of the context of the play, could see a great deal of commotion inside the toy house: shouting, many children grabbing each other, and kicking and punching everywhere. We know how subtle the fine line separates play from a disagreement between children, but the playful dialogue shows a "conflictual harmony" running through the play (Maffesoli, 2012, p. 6). For the author, this concept is constituted by the search for balance and coordination of heterogeneous elements, manifested in social life by forms and expressions that move between harmony and conflict, revealing a "desire for evasion" that constitutes the ephemerality of daily life.

If we view this scene as a mosaic, it becomes clear that there is overall coherence and a distinct configuration. Maffesoli (2012) argues that such conflicting harmony, based on differences, can exist within this example. During the hectic classes and playtime, the playful events organized by teachers and accompanying adults may have additional effects and perspectives.

How do we deal with this in school? Is it coherent for children to play this way but not for adults? Why is this kind of play so frowned upon in school? Is the way out to make ludic-aggressive play impossible with punishments? Or should we create space to listen, hear, and see what children have to say? Maffesoli (2012) comes close to aspects of the Sociology of Childhood when he understands that children need to be listened to, valued, and have their knowledge recognized. These understandings are very different from vertical education, which makes play and symbolic worlds invisible because children go against the rules imposed by adults.

Understanding children's daily lives through play can facilitate creativity, the development of meaning, and the (re)construction of daily life by children within the context of their play.

▋Dialogues: feedback from playful experiences

We engaged in collaborative daily life readings and extracted interpretations to facilitate dialogue among the children. Separating playful practices from their perceptions of the social context in which they live is impossible.

Thus, it was necessary to go beyond the adult observations and records through the adult's lens. Direct communication with the children was required to obtain feedback and individual perceptions of the interactions' ludic-aggressive play.

From this perspective, according to Barbosa (2018), the "feedback" was based on photographic records and audio and video recordings to complement the narratives and enunciations and capture details of the verbal and nonverbal dialogues between the children and/or those who interacted with them. In addition to these resources, the same recordings were presented to the children so that they could tell us their own stories. Their impressions of the play were audio recorded and later transcribed into a field diary. Based on the interpretation with the children, the following episode unfolded:

> A group of boys and girls were playing a mixture of tag games, playfighting, and police procedures (putting someone in front of a wall and frisking them). At the same time, you could hear phrases like *the cops are going to break in! The shooting is going to start!* As well as punches, kicks in the air, the positioning of weapons with the hands, and the sounds of gunshots. After a moment of dispersal, I asked one of the children involved a few questions: *What were you playing at?* The boy quickly replied: *guns, cops, and robbers, jumping on each other and playfighting...* Curious about how the conversation was going, I asked: *What happens when everyone runs away?* One of the boys said: *We're playing war. It's the bad guys trying to catch the cops (...) We shoot and fight them!* (Peter Parker, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

The episode highlights violent contexts of daily scenes that children experience and their ludic-aggressive interests in playfights and rough-and-tumble, wars, and running. However, we obtained this knowledge only after receiving their feedback. By actively listening, having dialogue, and understanding their context post-game, we gained another perspective on their behavior and symbolic universe, which transformed our understanding; we realized that there was much more to their conduct than aggression. There was competitive and culturally significant play, including rituals, regulations, nonsense, and surprisingly, supervised risks controlled by the children.

With this comprehension, the children assisted us again: a "playful engineering" (Barbosa, 2018, p. 27) was created that formed play as a way for children to build their logic in their playful actions. "Play engineering" produced various forms of expression, contexts, and reasoning by organizing play, interaction, creation, peer relationships, respect for the rules of the play, selecting themes, characters, and roles (Barbosa, 2018). The following episode demonstrates this development:

> During a Physical Education class, I saw some pupils play differently from the teacher's proposal. Specifically, during a circuit class, after completing the first round, some pupils dispersed and began playing near the boundary line. Despite the teacher reminding them to return to the activity and disengage from any altercations, the children persisted in their behavior. I asked one of the boys what they were doing during the class. The response was: *I am playing Iron Man. He wears armor. You should wear the armor, pretend to fly, and defeat the invisible villains. My armor is red, and he has a yellow one, can you see? Then you play with them!* (Bruce Wayne, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

Capturing such an episode made it possible to confirm and/or discover actions observed and (in)visible in the school environment. However, through the feedback

of the children involved in the interaction episode, their voices, (re)significations, and playful appropriations were evidenced.

According to Neto (2020), children need the freedom to face risks and not be restricted the whole time. For the author, children's lack of time, overprotection, and autonomy generate a "terrorism of no." In other words, adults say no to everything without discussing what is happening with the children. Neto (2020) adds that to play is to confront the body with risk, nature, and the unpredictable. For him, it is a form of learning. A proactive attitude on the part of the teacher to get closer to the children's world of play could yield much more knowledge than fixed plans that do not consider the children's interests.

Actions such as working with children, deconstructing the classroom to learn with them, providing environments for them to engage in controlled risk, working cooperatively to create play, providing environments for expression with the freedom to create, stimulating their curiosity, giving them the freedom to learn with their peers, as well as providing free time for children to be children and play can transform the lesson and motivate them much more. The circuit class proposed by the teacher could be much more involving and engaging if, for example, the setting and story made sense to the children.

Based on these perspectives, through ludic-aggressive play, children make us visualize their leading roles. We do not exempt adults from their pedagogical duties by valuing their authorship and childlike productions. We do not disregard the teacher's mediation and role in showing the world to children through targeted activities. However, the idea of making ludic-aggressive play visible is to show that children's fantasies and interests can also be a form of child expression. The following episode shows a play developed among children during their playtime:

> A group of six boys were playing near the toy house in the schoolyard during their playtime. They ran, fought, and then returned to the toy house with some boys tied up with their hands behind their backs. Inside, they ran, jumped, and fought. They also picked up leaves from the trees in the yard, took them back to the little house, and ran away. I noticed that some boys were police proceeds, taking leaves out of their pockets and attaching them to the poles that hold up the awning of the backyard. When I had a chance, I asked them what they were doing. One of them told me: *We play cops and robbers and play war. We must steal things. Then, the cops will come after us.* I asked: *What did you steal?* Another boy said: *Money [the leaves]. Here is safe [the toy house]*. In the middle of the "play war," as they called it, you could hear children's voices like *quick, get everything! The cops are going to invade! Run! The cops are coming. Hide all the money, go!* Moreover, I heard gunshots (pow-pow) (Pupils, 5 years old, Early Childhood Education).

Watching children play cops and robbers can be problematic to some adults as it may promote aggression and violent behavior. However, it is essential to acknowledge that it is a commonly enjoyed game that reflects a playful aspect of children's culture.

It is necessary to seek a sensitive reading of the actions undertaken with the children and and their "playful engineering" (Barbosa, 2018, p. 27). In other words, to recognize the visibility of ludic-aggressive play and their different forms of expression from the child's point of view and understanding. Oliveira (2018, p. 137, translated by us) points out:

> [...] teachers must understand that there are other ways of seeing and perceiving reality and that they need to be sensitive to the different dimensions of this reality. The sensitive observation brings them closer to the process of self-knowledge, which leads them to identify where we are in this perception, to identify our feelings and non-feelings, our limits, and potentials, and thus to realize through sensitivity that we are human and that we are immersed in socio-historical, political-cultural and ethical situations and problems, among other human dimensions, and that this is an innovative observation for educational scenarios.

Sensitive observation means giving meaning to children's knowledge production and giving them opportunities to explore what they see, experience, create, and share in class and play. It can also encourage a reading of symbolic processes. According to Carmo (2022, p. 59, translated by us), "[...] establishing a dialogue implies an effort to converge, to find and search for common denominators, a minimum platform for mutual understanding and comprehension".

Based on Charlot's (2000) studies and the theoretical application to children's studies, we highlight the author's understanding of children who do not display the expected behaviors demanded by the school, suggesting a different understanding of these playful subjects, knowing that they are social beings, singular and plural at the same time. This different understanding means that "[...] it is not only, nor fundamentally, to perceive acquired knowledge alongside deficiencies, it is to understand more accurately than others can do it as lacking through negative reading" (Charlot, 2000, p. 30, translated by us). It is necessary to question assertions, that is, to take an epistemological and methodological stance on the child's relationship with his peers and his play behavior, to understand the process that leads to play in a contextualized way so that play can be visualized and understood.

Therefore, recognizing children as knowledge-producing subjects was essential for us to know what is involved in ludic-aggressive play. By observing, recording, and sharing experiences with and among them, we could capture (in)visible meanings and understand the playful experiences lived in daily school life.

Final considerations

Through the analysis of ludic-aggressive play, children were empowered to take a leading role by providing a safe space to express themselves. These express possibilities allowed for discovering previously hidden (in)visible practices at school, made visible through their participation in the research and understanding of the context investigated.

In this sense, the assumptions of the Sociology of Childhood have played a concrete role in understanding children's cultural productions, in this case, ludic-aggressive play. Thus, for this playful manifestation to be recognized, to have visibility, and to make sense, it is necessary to build bridges and shortcuts with the children themselves to point out that everyday life can reveal harmony based on differences in perspectives, actions, and understandings.

We recognize that children's cultural productions can be revealed through ludic-aggressive play. In that case, it is worthwhile to discuss how engaging in scenarios with heroes and villains, which often involve confrontation with peers, can facilitate socialization, meaningful learning, and expressing their interests.

Connecting with what happens among children, their protagonists, and their cultural productions creates bridges with them. When teachers adopt alternative perspectives on ludic-aggressive play, it is possible to bring languages closer together, build bonds, facilitate dialogues, and unite cultures, leading to reduced conflicts and harmony in relationships without walls or distances to separate them.

Shortcuts can be created using them, which means that teachers can learn from observing the dynamic classroom and free play in the playground. They can learn to "playful engineering," organize logic and personalize ludic-aggressive play for a didactic context. Inserting new actions into teaching activities with pupils' participation allows for the creation of rules, sharing of imaginations, and management of play. These actions can transform the classroom into a playful and meaningful space.

So ludic-aggressive play, like so many others, is not perfect. They have features and aspects that clash, mix, and limit each other. However, this research has shown that the children choose the most appropriate configuration for ludic-aggressive play in a cohesive manner and by mutual agreement. By assuming the role of mediator in pedagogical activities, teachers could broaden their worldview to understand the social role of play, the imaginations that run through the context of play, the contradictions, unpredictability, and conflicting harmony that exist in the observations, actions, and understandings about the (in)visibility of ludic-aggressive play in school.

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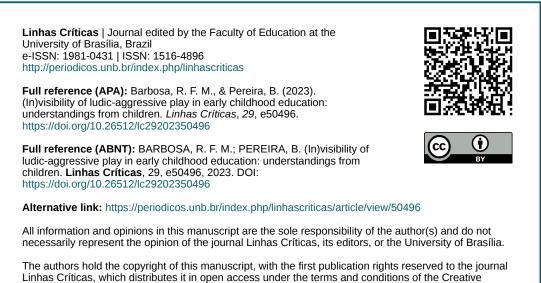
Resumo

Este artigo analisa a (in)visibilidade das brincadeiras lúdico-agressivas na Educação Infantil, em diálogo com pressupostos teórico-metodológicos da Sociologia da Infância. A partir do uso etnografia, com episódios de interação, a produção de dados evidenciou categorias de análise sobre a escuta e a participação infantil: aproximações, registros e diálogos com e entre as crianças. Como resultado, destacamos que as produções culturais infantis para que sejam reconhecidas, necessitam de visibilidade e precisam fazer sentido para que seja possível construir pontes e atalhos com as próprias crianças, a fim de sinalizar que o cotidiano pode revelar uma harmonia a partir das diferenças de olhares, ações e compreensões.

Palavras-chave: Brincadeira. Brincadeiras lúdico-agressivas. Brincadeiras de luta. Educação Infantil. Sociologia da Infância.

Resumen

Este artículo analisa la (in)visibilidade de los juegos lúdico-agresivos en la Educación Infantil, en diálogo con los presupuestos teórico-metodológicos de la Sociología de la Infancia. Utilizando la etnografía, con episodios de interacción, la producción de datos reveló categorías de análisis sobre la escucha y la participación infantil: abordajes, registros y diálogos con y entre niños. Como resultado, destacamos que para que las producciones culturales infantiles sean reconocidas, necesitan ser visibles y tener sentidotengan visibilidad y sentido, de modo que sea posible construir puentes y atajos con los propios niños, para señalar que la vida cotidiana puede revelar armonía a partir de diferentes perspectivas, acciones y comprensiones.

Palabras clave: Juegos. Juegos lúdico-agresivos. Juegos de Lucha. Educación Infantil. Sociología de la infancia.