


SEMIOTIC MEDIATION, PRODUCTION OF MEANINGS: SCENARIOS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**MEDIAÇÃO SEMIÓTICA, PRODUÇÃO DE SENTIDOS: CENÁRIOS DE EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA****MEDIACIÓN SEMIOTICA, PRODUCCIÓN DE SIGNIFICADOS: ESCENARIOS DE EDUCACIÓN INCLUSIVA** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.030-010>

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ABSTRACT

Numerous linguistic expressions are produced by professionals in the areas of Education and Psychology to designate the subject with disabilities. Our gaze focused on the discourses that are based on an analytical and heuristic language belonging to the universe of the normality of analytical reason. Contrary to this proposal, we dialogue with Wittgenstein and Vygotsky.

Keywords: Production of Meaning. Semiotic Mediation. Disability. Inclusion.

RESUMO

Inúmeras expressões linguísticas são produzidas pelos profissionais das áreas da Educação e da Psicologia para designar o sujeito com deficiência. O nosso olhar se debruçou nos discursos que se balizam numa linguagem analítica e heurística pertencente ao universo da normalidade da razão analítica. Na contramão desta proposta dialogamos com Wittgenstein e Vygotsky.

Palavras-chave: Produção de Sentido. Mediação Semiótica. Deficiência. Inclusão.

RESUMEN

Numerosas expresiones lingüísticas son producidas por los profesionales de las áreas de la Educación y Psicología para designar al sujeto con discapacidad. Nuestra mirada se centró en los discursos que se balizan en un lenguaje analítico y heurístico perteneciente al universo de la normalidad de la razón analítica. En contra de esta propuesta dialogamos con Wittgenstein sobre producción de sentido y de Vygotsky sobre mediación semiótica.

Palabras clave: Producción de Sentido. Mediación Semiótica. Discapacidad. Inclusión.

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1 ON THE TRADITIONAL DISCOURSE ATTACHED TO NORMALITY IN ANALYTIC REASON

"Disabled person", "disabled person", "disabled person..." There are many linguistic expressions produced by professionals in the areas of Education and Psychology to designate the subject with disabilities, as well as multiple ways of experiencing the world. The dynamics of this semiotic game can be seen as the movement of the individual to approach the world and reinvent it.

Taking these epistemological concerns as a reference, we observe that the discursive history about subjects with disabilities in Brazil seems to show us that, more than the real existence of subjects deviating from normality (which also constitutes a discourse), this history is that of a constant appropriation by an order (psychiatric, psychological, pedagogical, political) of the object "disability", re-instituting itself at every step.

In a quick allusion to Dr. Itard and his relationship with Victor, the "wolf-boy" found in the forest of Aveyron (1801). The fact that that child was the object of medical care and follow-up for a few years inaugurates and ratifies something new: the modern belief in the perfectible character of man through education or re-education. There were the rudiments of a vast (modern) program of producing the pedagogizable Other. It is not a matter of simply and expeditiously understanding such a program as a rationalizing measure of everything and everyone, submitting the scouring gaze of the Enlightenment power, for whom the other of non-reason would represent a threat. It is a matter of observing a change in the way in which discourse will treat, from then on, with care (in a double sense of being attentive and curing) and with instituting the "other", the "deviant" as an object of institutional action.

In Brazil, the organization, based on the concept of normality/abnormality, determined forms of clinical-therapeutic care strongly anchored in psychometric tests that, through diagnoses, defined school practices for students with disabilities. Consequently, we had serious problems in the training of teachers and professionals who worked with the students, prevailing an inconsistent intervention based on trial and error, on the availability of professionals, and on improvisation.

2 VYGOTSKY AND WITTIGENSTEIN: MEDIATION GAMES

In opposition to the Pedagogy of Exclusion, we can rescue in broad lines, the assumptions defended by Vygotsky, in his book "Fundamentals of Defectology" (1989), which refutes the theory that the child with a disability or whose development was impeded by a "defect" did not have educational/professional opportunities similar to those of other individuals. In this way, this child is not simply a less developed individual than his peers, but a child who develops differently. The proposal defended by Vygotsky and his companions

(Luria and Leontiev) is based on the perception of disability as a particular variation or special type of development and not a quantitative variant of normality. In this sense, Vygotsky (1989) asserts that the problems of individuals with disabilities are not of a biological nature, but of a social nature, as well as the nature of the child's processes with disabilities must be social and not biological.

Based on these arguments, we can see that Vygotsky envisioned an education that would guarantee the involvement of children with disabilities with life, enabling them to compensations and, thus, altering the social link with life by some other means. This is Vygotsky's prospective view that leads us not to emphasize the "less" of disability, but the "more" of compensation, that which can become.

The field of Soviet Defectology proposed by Vygotsky et al. began to enter the agenda of Western psychological, pedagogical and academic discussions from the 1990s onwards (Freitas 2004; Carvalho 2000). This is because, in the world scenario, world education, special education goes through several paradigmatic changes due to some factors. In the first place, in many countries, the child is considered an "educable" being, in an inclusive context, and should include, indistinctly, in the school environment, children with "disabilities" and those considered "normal", as highlighted by Correr (2003) and González (2002). In practice, this requires, as mentioned by Daniels (1994) and Coll (1994), specialized training and qualification of teachers, equipping them for the schooling of all children.

Secondly, this theoretical-methodological framework was adapted to slogans; - "diversity"; "inclusive school"; "potentiality"; "difference"; "equal educational opportunities"; which quickly achieved success in the academic ideas of the 90s, constituting a kind of pedagogical dictionary consensual and shared by professionals in the areas of education and psychology, as analyzed by Moreira (2003; 1997) and Freitas (2004). Thus, many of the conceptions considered avant-garde in this decade, in relation to special education, rest on the conceptual contribution of Vygotsky and other authors of education, such as Geurdreau (2003); Figueiredo (2002); Jannuzzi (1992), among others.

Within the scope of these reflections, it is possible to resume, more specifically, the main contributions of Vygotsky (1996), articulating them to the reality of Special Education, which emerged in a Soviet scenario that prioritized the biological approach, behaviorism and psychometrics as an instrument for screening "normal" and "abnormal" children (in the clinic and at school). It is in this environment that, as Van der Veer (1999) analyzes, Vygotsky opposes the thesis in force at the time that the development of the abnormal child obeys particular laws. Let us rescue the ideas of Vygotsky apud Knox and Stevens (1993). In his understanding:

"The child whose development is not simply a child less developed than his peers, more precisely he has developed differently... a child at each stage of his development, at each of these stages, represents a qualitative singularity, that is, a specific organic and psychological structure, exactly in the same way a disabled child who qualitatively represents a difference, a unique type of development". (p. 16).

Taking Vygotskian propositions as a reference, we can assure that the "disabled" child, as we mentioned earlier, is seen from a qualitative perspective and not as a quantitative variation of the normal child. For the aforementioned author, disability would generate a compensation process, stimulating a (re)direction of the subject. It would be up to defectology to study the cycles and transformations in development, the compensatory processes that would allow the overcoming of disabilities, and its object of analysis would be the physical and psychological reactions of the disabled person.

The uniqueness of the development of the disabled person would be in the positive effects of the disability, that is, in the trajectories taken to overcome the deficit. From this point of view, the disabled person is not apprehended as inferior to his peers, but as one who presents a qualitatively different and unique development.

Corroborating this argument, we can argue that the proposal designed by Vygotsky deconstructs the crystallized and rigid conception still in force in Brazilian special education about the conceptualization of mental disability. This variety of conceptions (limitations, delays, stagnations and impossibilities) has been engendered, throughout the history of humanity, in the social fabric, undergoing transformations in relation to the denomination of the so-called "mentally disabled" ("idiocy", "imbecile", "retarded"), as well as in the way of understanding this subject ("crazy", "inhabited by the devil", "incapable"). However, even today, we observe emblematic marks of these conceptualizations and we are always faced, as Ferreira (1994) discusses, with concepts and impressions, for example, of intellectual disability that emphasize the deficit, the incapacity, the impossibility of the subject of inclusion in regular school, in society: in life.

In the midst of these propositions, the social environment is perceived by the aforementioned author as the element that can facilitate or hinder the creation of these development paths. The defect, therefore, is not in the individual, and neither is the child who has a "defect" necessarily "disabled", and his degree of normality is conditioned to the social interactions established by the subject throughout his or her existential path.

In line with this assumption, Leontiev, cited by Ferreira (1994) defends the notion of activity, which is the relationship that the individual establishes with objective reality. However, we emphasize that the term "activity" implicitly carries in itself the nature of a social process

and is related to semiotic mechanisms. It is observed that the Leontievan Activity Theory advocates that individual action, in itself, and without insertion in the collective system, loses meaning and does not qualify as an object of study for the understanding of psychological processes.

In this sense, it is verified that the possibilities of development and learning are expanded when working with heterogeneity, with significant activities for the student in his relationship with the world, and, mainly, with a conception of disability, perceived as an engine of change; as difference and not as a "less", as Vygotsky points out in his "Fundamentals of Defectology". Corroborating this postulate, Ferreira (1994) explains that: "The socio-historical approach to disability revolutionizes the conception of disability (...), seeking the development of potentialities, of compensatory processes triggered by disability, emphasizing capacity and not deficit".

In this direction of analysis, Vygotsky goes on to defend the idea that the laws of development should be the same for all children and to highlight, primarily, the social aspects of learning; preparing the ground for an educational approach that emphasized not only pedagogy, but also the means to develop and perfect pedagogical skills.

In this way, Vygotsky's conceptual theses are linked, as Coll (1994) points out, to the so-called compensatory approach in education, which takes into account not only the severity of the difficulty, but also the efficiency of the pedagogical strategy used to help students overcome their limitations. In this network of understanding the compensatory elements used by the sociocultural environment, Vygotsky (1996, p.221) highlights that "(...) In the course of the experience, the child learns to compensate for his natural deficiencies, based on defective natural behavior; cultural techniques and skills come into existence, dissimulating and compensating for the defect. They make it possible to tackle an unfeasible task by using new and different paths." In other words, Vygotsky postulates that the behavior compensatory culture overrides defective natural behavior; This idea is embodied in the Adlerian conception (apud Vygotsky, 1996), that there is overcoming of serious "defects" in specific organs of the human body.

Based on the above, we cannot fail to highlight that this compensation process is singular and sui generis, as there can be not only the compensation of "congenital weaknesses", but also the overcompensation of them, such as people who are born with poor hearing become musicians; People with vision impairment become artists and people with speech difficulties become speakers. The basic mechanism of compensation and supercompensation follows a logical sequence, as Vygotsky (1996) himself elucidates:

"The defect becomes the center of the individual's concern and a certain 'psychological superstructure' is built on it, which seeks to compensate for natural insufficiency with persistence, an exercise that, above all, with a certain cultural use of its defective function (if it is weak) or of other substitutive functions (if totally absent). A natural defect organizes the mind, it is disposed in such a way that the maximum compensation is possible." (p. 222).

In this process, as Sacks (2001) and González (2002) advocate, there is a concentration of attention on the defect and a neuropsychological direction towards it, denoting an imbrication between the areas of knowledge of neuropsychology, defectology and special education. In the midst of these conceptions, we observe that the assumption defended by Vygostky

- Education is a driving element of development and socialization in childhood - is based on the premise that education should lead students from their current state of development or learning, to a future level, qualitatively different, and compatible with the socio-historical realities of the culture or science of the time. In other words, in its conceptual model, as evidenced by Fonseca (2002) and Geaudreau et alli (2003), there is a prospective emphasis on the socio-historical factors of education.

In the midst of these propositions, we find the emphasis given to the teacher, as a fundamental element in the teaching-learning process by playing the role of mediator of the world for the child. This appears in Vygotsky's second fundamental psychological law, investigated by Davydson and Zinchenko [apud Daniels (1994)]. Let us return to these conceptions: "(...) any function appears twice on the scene in the cultural development of the child on two levels: first, in the social and then, in the psychological; first among people (.)

then, within the child itself" (pp. 162-163). According to these authors, this psychological law manifests itself mainly in the domain of what Vygotsky called the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD).

Vygotsky's investigations did not focus only on the development and learning of the so-called "normals". Attributing great importance to Special Education, she coordinates and develops research in this field, having worked with children and adolescents with disabilities (physical, visual, mental and multiple), at the Experimental Institute of Defectology. He presents a vanguard position in his time, in relation to the "disabled" perceived as "different". However, this difference could not be reduced to the biological/physiological dimension, but should be seen, predominantly, through the social dimension, in the plane of insufficient interaction with the other, with culture. Once this interaction is restored, the disability presents itself in a positive way, now centered on possibilities and prospects and not on limitations.

The notion of semiotic mediation, defended by Vygotsky, is also found in Wittgenstein's propositions in his work "Philosophical Investigations" (1953). Wittgenstein (2003, p.43) starts from the premise that "speaking a language is part of an activity or a way of life". In this sense, he analyzes what he called "language games" or "forms of life". More specifically, the notion of forms of life, as analyzed by Meira (2004), does not find in Wittgenstein a definition per se, but can be articulated with the conceptualization proposed by Lave (1988) and Lave & Wenger (1990) about cultural practices and relations with interactional peers. The process of producing meaning and constructing language games between the interactional partners is also perceived as plastic and dynamic. It emerges, as Vygotsky and Wittgenstein point out, in various discursive and sociocultural contexts that organize our existence, being mediation games that give meaning to the flow of life and the sociocultural activity in which the school activity is inserted.

3 VYGOTSKY, ZPD AND SOVIET DEFECTOLOGY: POSSIBLE IMBRICATIONS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION

The ZPD Concept, described by Vygotsky around 1930, is based on the possibility of understanding a range of assumptions pertinent to the social genesis of the human being, especially with regard to the internalization process, fundamental in the development-learning relationship, in games, in games and in social interactions.

The general meaning underlying this concept expresses that a child at a certain stage of his development can solve a certain range of problems only under the guidance of adults and to some extent with the collaboration of more experienced peers.

The concept of ZPD is relevant for professionals who focus on the study of human development, focusing on the development process, as discussed by Valsiner (2000) in his article entitled: "The Development of the Concept Development: historical and epistemological perspectives; - and not necessarily in development products. In the Vygotskian sense, the concept of ZPD "allows us to delineate the immediate nature of the child and his dynamic state of development, providing access not only to what has already been achieved through development, but also to what is in the process of maturation" (idem, p.113). Thus, in the same way that it is not intended to focus on the mere academic performances of special children, as products of development, in another direction, it is intended to undertake a processual look at the cognitive phenomenon to be investigated – the contexts of dialogicity developed within the inclusive school and the discursive maintenance (observed in the relationships between peers) of the notion of "school inclusivity". Thus, we believe that the concept of ZPD can provide us with a powerful tool,

which enables not only the interaction between special and non-special children, but also to understand notions underlying the reality of inclusive education: notions of inclusivity, virtuality, diversity, prospecting and potentiality – which implies rethinking psychopedagogical practices and models, traditionally based on behavioral models.

Valsiner and Van der Veer (2000) suggest the existence of three possible formulations for the development of the concept of ZPD. The first was based on the elaboration of a critique of the traditional way of investigating and measuring intelligence, through psychometrics (IQ tests) and emphasized the comparative analysis of individual and collaborative performance levels during problem solving, as explained by Meira (2004), in his article "Zones of Proximal Development in Science and Mathematics Classrooms". In it, Meira (2004) analyzes the trajectory of construction of the ZPD taken by Vygotsky in three distinct moments: a) First Moment: Emphasis on Individual Performance; b) Second Moment: Emphasis on Interaction and c) Third Moment: Emphasis on Semiotic Mediation.

Taking the Vygotskian paradigm as a reference, Feuerstein (...) proposes what he called "Mediated Learning", whose evaluation has as its main objective to explore the potential of the subject, through a process of active involvement and interaction with the more experienced other. In school situations, mediation can occur with the interference of an adult or more experienced peer. In the case of the teacher, he is the one who prepares learning situations and, gradually, offers clues to the student in the development of activities in which he encounters difficulties.

With this, it will be able to create some alternative paths for students to advance in academic tasks. This conception was also studied by Fonseca (1995), who presents as the first strategy of therapeutic and psychopedagogical intervention, the identification and diagnosis with the purpose of apprehending the characteristics of the child's learning potential. This process allows us to reflect on the inventory of children's acquisitions and adaptive capacities, flexibility and plasticity of skills.

It is interesting to observe that the ideas of "mediated learning" defended by Feuerstein, and of "modifiability" proposed by Fonseca, appear in the discourse of Brazilian educators and reveal a reductionist understanding of ZPD. This is because, by defining it only as a characteristic of the individual, as analyzed by Meira (2004) and Meira and Lerman (2001), they leave aside what emerges from the relationship between the subjects, thus revealing a basically individual view of the ZPD. For these authors, even based on the initial emphasis proposed by Vygotsky to the concept of ZPD, the studies that follow in this direction end up opposing the very theoretical-methodological basis advocated by him, as well as the ideas proposed in the later formulations given to the concept of ZPD.

Considering this criticism of the first formulation of the concept of ZPD and highlighting the relevance of considering this concept both as relational, as constituted by a process of negotiation of meanings by the relational partners, Meira (op.cit) elucidates that in the second formulation about ZPD, Vygotsky prioritizes more the socio-interactional aspects of the collaboration process per se than the resolution of individual problems. More specifically in relation to his work, Meira (2004) highlights the importance of considering ZPD as an emerging phenomenon in contexts of diverse social interactions.

The notion of symbolic mediation, in turn, is associated with the use of mediators, for example, toys, which lend a symbolic dimension to the activity developed. In this theoretical perspective, ZPD is not conceived as "a force field", as something belonging to the child or the adult. On the contrary, ZPD is defined as a relational construction, a privileged space for the negotiation of meanings, based on the engagement of relational partners in social, dialogical, cultural and linguistic activity.

Thus, in this approach, we can see that the ZPD is: "(...) a symbolic space emerging from instruction, from various types of dialogical interactions, self-help, play or fantasy, for the social creation of the processes of development still achieved" (Meira, idem, p.5).

In the third and final phase of the construction of ZPD, Vygotsky emphasizes the symbolic and discursive aspects of various activities, still adhering to interactional formulations, but definitively distancing himself from the comparison of performances. As Meira believes, this is the phase of least theoretical elaboration of the concept of ZPD, although it is "(...) at the same time the one that carries the most original and interesting contribution" (Meira, 2004, p.13). The contributions of contemporary authors who make a (re)reading of the Vygotskian ZPD stand out, among them the following: Wertsch (1991); Valsiner and Van der Veer (1999) and Meira (2001, 2004).

From a perspective of verticalization of Meira's contribution (2004, p.14), it is observed that he builds a model of analysis of instructional activities and the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom, whose conceptual bases evidence the notions of dialogicity and time in the emergence and maintenance of ZPD, as a semiotic-temporal field. In this sense, ZPD is conceptualized as "(...) a semiotic field, a symbolic space of signification, in which interaction and communication promote development guided by learning. In this sense, ZPD's emerge, or not, moment-by-moment, as part of the microculture of the classroom and other learning contexts". In this way, Meira (2004) directs himself to the analysis of the variety of emerging discourses among the participants of instructional situations, particularly in the classroom.

Comparing the historical-cultural perspective with the model systematized by Meira (2004), we can affirm that the relevance of Vygotski's theory lies in the fact that it constructively deals with the educational problems posed by children with special educational needs, seeking solutions within the systems that support the student. For this reason, Evans (1994) assures that different school cultures have different impacts on students' cognitions, and therefore a deep reflection on their organizational and operational methods is necessary. In this sense, schools need to be thought of as microcultures, which add the responsibility of condensing culturally organized human activities.

Maturana and Varela (1995), who proposes an education that envisions a reflection on:

"human condition as a nature whose evolution and fulfillment is in the encounter of the individual BEING with its ultimate nature, which is the social being. Therefore, if individual development depends on social interaction, one's own formation, the very world of meanings in which one exists, is a function of living with others. Acceptance of the other is, then, the foundation for the observing or self-conscious being to be able to fully accept himself." (p. 50).

Based on this philosophical principle, we believe that a proposal for inclusive education can contribute to the constitution of a more egalitarian and more supportive society and, therefore, committed to its most significant purpose: HUMANIZE.

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