



# The pedagogical game and multimodal interactions in teaching

Ana Luisa Feiteiro Cavalari-Lotti

Docente da Prefeitura de Praia Grande (Brasil)

Flavia Medeiros Sarti

Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (Brasil)

## Abstract

This article discusses the interaction between teachers and students, which is outlined through the pedagogical game. New understandings give centrality to the interaction that, in the classroom, becomes the target of educational research. The proposal is explored based on a sample of doctoral research, which sought to identify and characterize the constitutive elements of this game, namely: the roles, the rules, the masks and the scenario/focus. The investigation data were obtained through interviews with two teachers, who work in basic education. Concerning the theoretical basis, the work is anchored in a multidisciplinary conception of interaction, mainly from the Education and Linguistics areas. As for the game, we conceived it based on references of Philosophy, Sociology and History. The aim is to better understand the interaction in the teacher's action and training, and, particularly, in teaching, the ultimate activity of teachers.

Keywords: Pedagogical game. Interaction. Teaching. Teaching work.

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## O jogo pedagógico e as interações multimodais no ensino

### Resumo

O presente artigo discute a interação entre professores e alunos/estudantes, que se delinea mediante o jogo pedagógico. Novas compreensões conferem centralidade à interação que, na sala de aula, passa a ser alvo das investigações educacionais. A proposta é explorada com base em um recorte de uma pesquisa de doutorado, que buscou identificar e caracterizar os elementos constitutivos desse jogo, a saber: os papéis, as regras, as máscaras e o cenário/foco. Os dados da investigação foram reunidos por meio de entrevistas realizadas com duas professoras, que atuam na educação básica. No que tange à fundamentação teórica, o trabalho ancora-se em uma concepção multidisciplinar da interação, principalmente das áreas da Educação e da Linguística. Quanto ao jogo, o concebemos a partir de referenciais da Filosofia, da Sociologia e da História. Objetiva-se, dessa forma, compreender melhor a interação na ação e na formação docente e, particularmente, no ensino, atividade fim da docência. Palavras-chave: Jogo pedagógico. Interação. Ensino. Trabalho docente.



## El juego pedagógico y las interacciones multimodales en la enseñanza

### Resumen

Este artículo discute la interacción entre profesores y alumnos que se delinea a través del *juego pedagógico*. Los nuevos entendimientos dan centralidad a la interacción que, en el aula, se convierte en el objetivo de la investigación educativa. La propuesta se explora a partir del recorte de una investigación doctoral, que buscó identificar y caracterizar los elementos constitutivos de este juego, a saber: los roles, las reglas, las máscaras y el escenario/foco. Los datos de la investigación fueron recolectados a través de entrevistas con dos maestras, que actúan en la educación básica. En cuanto a la fundamentación teórica, el trabajo se ancla en una concepción multidisciplinar de la interacción, principalmente desde las áreas de Educación y Lingüística. En cuanto al juego, lo concebimos a partir de referencias de Filosofía, Sociología e Historia. De esta forma, el objetivo es comprender mejor la interacción en la acción y la formación de los profesores y, particularmente, en la enseñanza, actividad fin de la docencia.

Palabras clave: Juego pedagógico. Interacción. Enseñanza. Trabajo docente.

### Introduction

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In Brazilian Portuguese, but not only in it, the term “game” is widely used to describe various social relationships. Uses such as “political game”, “power game”, “seduction game”, “word game”, as well as expressions such as “knowing the rules of the game” and “jogo de cintura”, are very common and convey the sense of regulated dynamics of social interaction. In other senses, we have sports games, entertainment games, and children’s games, which are related to playing and development. As for the etymology, the noun game has its origin in Latin. Among other possibilities, one of its meanings is *Ludus* (game, play), which is also another word for school (MASSSCHELEIN; SIMONS, 2014). Besides their origin, the terms game and school have other similarities.

We explore this issue by indicating that, between teachers and students, a specific type of game is configured at school, that is: a regulated dynamic similar to many others that exist in society, which is the *pedagogical game* (CAVALARI-LOTTI, 2020). Based on the assumption that the idea of game is related to multimodal interactions, we seek, therefore, in this article, which is part of a doctoral research, to answer the following questions: What elements bring teaching and game closer? How do multimodal interactions act in the



construction of the practice and in the teaching role? In the search for answers to these questions, we proceeded with the investigation that gave rise to the discussion and analysis presented here.

## The game metaphor

The relationship between different perspectives of games and the field of education is not unprecedented. There are several works, in the field of education, that reveal the importance of using play and games as resources for teaching, for example, Kishimoto (2011). This article, however, follows a different perspective, sustaining that the interaction between students and teachers in the classroom is, metaphorically, a game.

Metaphor is a linguistic resource that establishes a comparative relationship between two elements. In the field of Linguistics, however, for a long time now, an understanding of metaphor has been discussed that transcends its use as a linguistic resource, to understand it as a way of structuring thought, that is: metaphors are a cognitive-social phenomenon (LAKOFF; JOHNSON, 1980).

This perspective is in line with the definition proposed by Scheffler (1974, p. 65), according to which “[...] educational metaphors in current use assist in the reflection and organization of thought and social practices, relative to school education, but are not tied to experimental prediction confirmation processes”. In this context, the various uses of the term game do not refer to different understandings or expressions of games, but to a single meaning: social dispute interactions governed by rules.

Consequently, the fact that this kind of interaction constitutes a game is not a peculiar characteristic that occurs between students and teachers, but this is a game with peculiarities. Gauthier and Martineau (1999) point out that teaching work is, like any social relationship, similar to a game. In this way, this is a game developed in the classroom, in a specific context, but in some general way, which follows its own grammar. Thus, we state that:

the interaction that is established between students/pupils and teachers in the classroom takes place through the pedagogical game. This is a typical game of the school environment (the classroom scenario), constitutive of the teaching activity, which is played by specific actors –students/pupils and teachers.



It is governed by its own rules, and, to play it, teachers incorporate masks and roles. Thus, it is pointed out that the learning related to the game is fundamental to teacher formation (CAVALARI-LOTTI, 2020, p. 161).

Beyond the metaphorical view of game, different authors recognize that games are constitutive of man and his social relations permeated by language. In philosophy, Wittgenstein (1989, p. 19) highlights that games are "[...] a way of life". In the field of History, Huizinga (1999, p. 10) argues that games are constitutive of the human condition, besides being a "[...] temporary sphere of activity with its own orientation". In Sociology, Bourdieu (2005, p. 144), when dealing with social games, establishes the understanding of *illusion*, "[...] this enchanted relationship with a game that is the product of a relationship of ontological complicity between mental structures and the objective structures of the social space". The proposed use of the notion of game seeks to articulate the multidisciplinary perspectives assumed by these three reference authors.

4 In this sense, the game presupposes two ideas, which also include metaphorical aspects, that are: the dispute and the rules. As far as the pedagogical game is concerned, the idea of dispute assumes a very peculiar meaning: the teacher does not dispute with the students, in the sense of playing against them. The use proposed here refers to the sense of "fighting for". In this way, the teacher enters into a dispute for the students' learning, thus playing not against the students, but for them (in function of them). It is assumed, however, that in every game, understood as a dispute, there will be winners. In the pedagogical game it is no different, there will indeed be winners, but provided that all players involved in the relationship win: the student, by learning, and the teacher, by the success achieved in teaching ("fighting for" learning). Thus, important aspects of the specificities of this game are revealed. In this way, the pedagogical game assumes an essential collaborative dimension, according to which the dispute is for the victory of all players.

This specificity of the pedagogical game is crucial to understand it, because there is a relationship of codependency in it, that is: when teaching does not succeed, everyone loses. This is the reverse side of the game (lose-lose – even though it is a win-win oriented game).

Just as crucial to the understanding of the metaphor game as the notion of dispute is that of rules, because there is no game without them. They can be understood as a schematic model to interpret and recognize the players. They



define the game situations for those who agree to act accordingly (GARFINKEL, 1963). More specifically about the rules in the teaching work, Altet (2001) states that it is up to the teacher: "to play with the rules and maintain a relationship with theoretical knowledge that is not reverent and dependent, but, on the contrary, critical, pragmatic and even opportunistic" (PERRENOUD, 1993). Consequently, the teacher's formation process is composed by "learning to play" with the specific rules of his/her function, therefore, a fundamental part of the teacher's formation occurs through a pedagogical game with the students in the classroom space having the teacher habitus (SILVA, 2005) as a support, considering that the habitus is the generating principle of the practices and the pedagogical action is mobilized by it (PERRENOUD, 2001b).

From Bourdieu's perspective, it is about the teacher having the rules of the pedagogical game (explicit and implicit, exhaustive and inexhaustive rules), in the sense of Scheffler (1974) in a "practical state" (BOURDIEU, 2005), incorporated as dispositions of practical reason that allow him to play as a teacher. The exercise of teaching thus requires that the teacher has incorporated the pedagogical game as habitus (BOURDIEU, 2005).

It is assumed that the teacher *habitus* (SILVA, 2005) provides the teacher with the "sense of the game", his *illusio*. This allows him to apprehend and put into action the explicit and implicit, exhaustive and inexhaustive (SCHEFFLER, 1974) rules of the game in a situation of urgency, elements that are requirements for the teaching work. This is because, as Bourdieu (2003, p. 139-140) teaches: "[...] *illusio* is to be attached to the game, attached by the game, to believe that the game is worth playing or, to put it more simply, that it is worth playing."

These constitutive rules of the pedagogical game must be considered in relation to the space in which they tend to be mobilized: the class. The pedagogical game is developed in the classroom space, which is understood as a discursive genre (CAVALARI-LOTTI, 2020), whose stability is related to the fact that it obeys certain structural and discursive "rules". Mangueneau (2004) uses three metaphors to describe any genre: contract, game, and role. Nevertheless, Mangueneau (2004) has used three metaphors, we can encompass them in only one, the game. That is: the contract is the rules and it condition for the existence of the game (in this case, the *pedagogical game*) and the roles correspond to the different ways in which teachers place themselves for the game.



Moreover, from the perspective of the structure of the wording and the enunciation (BAKHTIN; VOLOCHINOV, 1992), we understand the relative stability of this genre, considering the communicative situation, the immediate action and the social environment. Since there are characteristic elements without which we cannot define it: the teacher-student roles, the contents, the institution and the class space (scenario), the pedagogical relationship and the *pedagogical game*, consequently, there is stability. On the other hand, instability derives from the fact that each teacher acts in different ways, depending on factors such as: role performance, type of institution (scenarios), teaching level, and the discipline that teaches, among other aspects.

Under this prism, we highlight that the classes follow an individual scheme, for each teacher, but that is repeated, almost like a ritual, in their practices. In this way, the discursive genres and their relative stability seem to guarantee the presence of the game. Without the contract, the game and the roles, the *pedagogical game*, does not occur. Thus, “[...] it is possible, then, to state that the class is a discursive genre and that the game occurs in it, but, within this game space, each teacher, with their respective classes, constructs variants of *pedagogical games*” (CAVALARI-LOTTI, 2020, p. 158).

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We also point out the ritualistic perspective of the class, which inserts it (among other aspects) in the conception of discourse genre, that brings it closer to the universe of theatricality that, in turn, is present in the game metaphor. In this way, this metaphor offers us elements of theatricality for the understanding of classroom interaction. These elements are discursive and structural. The discursive elements linked to the theatricality are recurrent in the educational field: roles (the teacher’s role and the student’s role); the teacher’s and the student’s leading role; class rhythm, (as a scene rhythm); focus (focus on the teacher and focus on the student) and the idea of improvisation. The structural elements of this universe can be considered as the configuration of the classroom space, as a scenario (CELA; PALOU, 1997). The arrangement of the desks and the teacher’s posture; the presence of students and teachers (all acting, assuming their roles); the teacher’s focus and empowerment; the sound signal to enter the class as the signal to start the class/show and the use of masks. It is these elements that we intend to focus on.

From this structural point of view, we are interested in four aspects: the scenario, the focus, the masks and the roles. As we have already stated, based on Cela and Palau (1997), the classroom is configured as a scenario, a game



space, which influences it, in the same way that a scenario influences a scene – they help to elaborate the scene and the game. External and internal elements are influential to the play dynamics that occur during the class.

We underline, if we consider the Italian type of stage, it is possible to find physical similarities between the configuration of a classroom and that of a theater. That is: the arrangement of the seats in the audience, placed in front of the stage, like the students' desks in front of the teacher in a lecture class, makes the teacher appear to be the protagonist (in a monologue) and his students appear to be the audience. However, since students and teachers play their own roles in a single scene, this is not a play, but a theatrical game. Boal (2007) states that there are no actors and their audience in plays, they are all "spectactors" (actors and spectators at the same time). Therefore, students do not constitute an audience and teachers are not the actor-protagonists, each one occupies his or her role as they construct the scene/play (or the class) with and through interaction.

Therefore, even if apparently the students are, in certain classes, in a "passive" position, they are in the scene and always play a role without which the class (or the scene) does not happen. After all, without a student, there is no class. The passivity (or not) of the student in the class is not, therefore, related to his or her role, since this will always be played, but to the focus, which is a fundamental element in theater and in the class. We consider, we point out, that the actor is still on stage even if he is not in the focus. So, from the perspective of focus, it is possible to promote the alternation of role relevance (protagonist and supporting actor) and make the student the protagonist, since he is the one who is in the focus, without ever having ceased to play his role as a student.

In view of this, the elements of theatricality, scenarios, and focus, are fundamental for the elaboration of game strategies, which generate different versions of the pedagogical game. This means that, depending on factors such as the institution in which the teacher works, the relationship with the students/pupils, the issue of conflict, arising from degraded and/or violent environments (belonging to the scenario/focus category) may be practiced by teachers in different versions of the game.

As for the masks, we understand them as representation, that is: accepting that the *illusio* of the game corresponds to accepting its representation (or the theatricality). Defined as: "[...] matrixes of practices that construct the social



world itself" (CHARTIER, 1991, p. 183), they are also present in the games. It becomes necessary, therefore, to understand in what way.

For this purpose, we invoked to the theory of faces (GOFFMAN, 1980) that defines it as a representation present in any interaction, including the classroom. Thus, we can consider that the masks worn by teachers relate to faces (GOFFMAN, 1980) and are dressed like the *habitus* (BOURDIEU, 2003), in the sense that they are necessary to representation and incorporation (of the body). However, not only that, they are a set formed by these elements and more, the knowledge of the game, the theatricality, the context, the students, the rules, the improvisation, the teacher's experience and action; besides these, the definition of which mask (or masks) the teacher will use is a result of the interaction.

Moreover, we emphasize that mask can be any element capable of producing representation, something capable of producing meaning within that context and, at the same time, of constructing the teacher identity that differs, in some way, from the identity of that being outside the classroom. Therefore, the "choice" (linked to the sense of the game, in the Bourdieu's sense) that the teacher makes about the masks is a constitutive element of the *pedagogical game*.

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Finally, we emphasize that the *pedagogical game* allows the teacher to incorporate a specific role, but there are also several other roles embedded in the teaching role that are constructed by the elements that make teachers social and historical persons, at the same time that insert them in specific relational environments – classes and scenarios. The confluence of these several elements is responsible for the elaboration of the teaching role and of the other roles arising from it.

## Multimodal interaction in the classroom

Currently, both the field of language sciences and the field of education have converged their studies to give centrality to investigations on the theme of interaction. In the context of these conceptions, there are discussions about professionalization and teachers' knowledge (TARDIF, 2002), as well as Bakhtin's interaction and dialogism (1993).

In the 1980's and 1990's, an international movement for the professionalization of teaching emerged, which proposed to analyze and understand the teaching work in order to initially contradict the current view that teaching is a





simple task, accomplished through the mere transmission of knowledge developed outside the classroom.

In this sense, Perrenoud (1993) argues that teaching should be understood as a rational and complex activity, in which the whole person is mobilized (body and mind). In fact, it is necessary to clarify that the teacher is a whole being, inseparable, body/mind. This article, therefore, is situated in the perspective that understands interaction in a multimodal way. That is: gesture and speech only have meaning as a sequence, in a specific context, they have no meaning in themselves, but emerge in the dynamics of signification. Thus, multimodal interaction occurs inseparably between speech and gesture, between body and mind.

From the perspective of multimodality and the body, we highlight the studies of Silva (2005), from which comes our understanding of the teachers' and students' *corporal hexis*. According to the researcher "a harmonically repeated gesture". Besides, for Bourdieu, the *habitus* is corporeal and this can be observed through the speeches and through the *corporal hexis*. However, for both Philosophy and Ethnomethodology, corporeality or body has a broader meaning than the *hexis* for Bourdieu, that is, the action of the teacher's body can be justified by *habitus* and observed in the *corporal hexis*. However, it seems that there are practices of teachers, observed through the action of their bodies, which are guided by other instances. We infer, then, that what guides these actions besides the *habitus* are the interactions that take place in the classroom, that is: the *pedagogical game*.

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## **The *pedagogical game* and teaching strategies**

The theoretical and conceptual considerations presented in this article guided the doctoral research, finished in 2020, that sought to investigate the interaction between students and teachers in the classroom. The specific contexts of *pedagogical games*, which we selected as empirical references for the studies, were Middle School and High School. This was done through class observation and interviews with two Middle School teachers: Larissa (fictitious name), then teaching Physics in the first year of High School, and Cecília, also fictitious name, who teaches Geography classes in the sixth year of Middle School. The reports were produced by the researcher during the classes of both



teachers during eight months. Two interviews were conducted with each of the teachers. These interviews – we will stick to them – and the reports, provided us with the necessary clues for the investigation of the *pedagogical game* in the classroom, which we discuss below.

The path of analysis begins with the presentation of what the teachers understand to be their roles. We discuss the rules, and we present the elements of theatricality: the masks, the scenario, and the focus. Finally, we analyze the different versions of the game. Now, we highlight the aspects related to the teacher's role in the pedagogical game.

Excerpt 1 – Larissa – Interview 2

I keep a differentiation between student and teacher. I don't take it to the affective side. These students are not my friends. [...] I try to put myself in the role of a teacher. [...] Regardless of that relationship, which is teacher and student, they can also count on something closer. Maybe, not friend, but that relationship of 'I have someone else to count on too' with other expectations (LARISSA, 2018).

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Larissa presents how she understands the role of a teacher and how she perceives how should be the relationship with the students, for her it is important that the students recognize and enter this established game. With these findings, Larissa highlights, first, the issue of roles and how she sees them, not only she places herself in this role, but later defines what her attributions would be. Thus, we state: Larissa shows herself to be a teacher concerned with delimiting for herself what she understands as a teaching role.

The interview excerpt indicates that there is an expectation of being closer to the students, without, however, changing her role. At this point, the game gets complicated, complex, with inexhaustive rules (SCHEFFLER, 1974). There is also a certain tension in her speech, she delimits the teaching role, but seems to have some difficulty in reconciling teaching and "proximity". Thus, the rules do not seem to be clear to her. This is a more nebulous, unknown zone, something close to what Schön (2000) calls the "indeterminate zone of practice". The level of "proximity" (or intimacy) with the students seems to configure, for her, an "undetermined zone", which is also marked by non-exhaustive rules (SCHEFFLER, 1974). We can infer, therefore, difficulties inherent to the pedagogical game, as a game in which there are more indeterminate zones, as Schön (2000) teaches. We also point out that Larissa makes bets when moving through this space



of inexhaustive rules, she decides in uncertainty (PERRENOUD, 2001a). We state, finally: *the pedagogical game* has elements of a betting game, the moves are not always clear, nor are their results.

We will now analyze some of Cecilia's game strategies.

Excerpt 2 – Cecilia – Interview 2

Then I have to go back to the initial idea, which thorough work, that the teacher plants a seed. But it is difficult to germinate. [...] Maybe, in public school, they have more need, in quotes, to have this critical view of things, because I feel that they accept everything. [...] Changing this idea or planting a seed, this a more critical look about things, for me, I think my work is done (CECÍLIA, 2019).

From this excerpt from Cecília's interview, we want to emphasize the idea of "planting seeds" and waiting for them to "germinate". The "germination" is part of the uncertain character of teaching – acting in uncertainty, as Perrenoud (2001a) states –, but the teacher announces an even more flagrant uncertainty: it is difficult even now to "plant". If "planting the seeds" is an integral action of the *pedagogical game*, by stating her difficulty at the moment of "planting", Cecília seems to suggest that she is having difficulty to enter the game. Such difficulty is evidenced by the subjective understanding of her role, since "planting seeds" or forming critical individuals is beyond what she can see as an achieved goal (after all, she says she leaves in second place the concern to manage to the content). When Cecilia delimits her teaching role in a sphere other than the teaching of more conventional contents related to Geography, she seems, like Larissa, to act in an "indeterminate zone of teaching practice" (SCHÖN, 2000), acting under the aegis of inexhaustive rules (SCHEFFLER, 1974). Thus, the idea that it is difficult to "germinate" until "planting" seems to configure, for her, the perception that the *pedagogical game* is difficult to be established.

However, the two teachers remain in their delineated roles in the interaction with their students and establish game strategies, decisions and actions that, understood in the Bourdieu's perspective (2003), are guided by the meaning of the game, at a pre-reflexive level. Based on these strategies, different moves are elaborated and, together, they can produce different versions of the pedagogical game, which will also be influenced by the rules, the masks and the scenario/focus. We will subsequently analyze these elements of the game.

At first, it is necessary to state that, although rules are a condition for the realization of games (without them, there is no game), there are different types of rules that underlie the pedagogical game. In this sense, the *pedagogical game* is governed by rules that are more specific to it and by others that, external to it, impact it. These are rules related to the interaction teachers-students, teacher-field, and teacher-teachers. We explain: *the teacher-students'* rules are those agreed upon between teachers and their students, from the pedagogical contract (AQUINO, 2005), besides the work agreements (SOUZA, 1999); the teacher-field's rules are those external to the *pedagogical game*, but are present in the field of education, and the teacher-teachers' rules are those that the teacher determines (coming from his morals, from his training, and from the way he sees and executes his practice).

Hereafter, we examine three excerpts referring to the interviews with Cecilia.

Excerpt 3 – Cecilia – Interview 2

I always made the contract, talking to them about the rules. The school has certain rules. I never said "the school has a rule that says you can't chew gum". [...] I said: "What were the rules that you voted on?" [...] But this contract, however, is only effective if I have a support from the board (CECÍLIA, 2019).

[...]

Excerpt 4 – Cecília – Interview 2

I always try to talk to them. I always tell them that dialogue is the best thing. Suddenly, if I notice that there is some student fighting with another or arguing with another, bullying, I try to call and try to get them to talk to each other. This in a more specific way. But the general conflict, a mess in the classroom, I try with the pedagogical contract that I make at the beginning of the year (CECÍLIA, 2019).

[...]

Excerpt 5 – Cecilia – Interview 2

What is my position? Me, as a teacher? [...] I had a professor in college who used to say: "It's the system". I took a long time to understand what the system was. Today, in practice, I see that the system was very well done. It really managed to do away with the little bit of structure, of criticism that existed (CECÍLIA, 2019).

From these excerpts of the interviews (3 and 4), we can evidence two game strategies related to the rules: the use of dialogue to solve problems and the pedagogical contract (AQUINO, 2005), as well as the establishment of



work agreements (SOUZA, 1999). These strategies seem to be of the game, but also to start the game, that is, for the game. We also emphasize the appearance of two types of essential rules for the *pedagogical game*: the teacher-students, when she refers to the pedagogical contract (AQUINO, 2005) and work agreements (SOUZA, 1999) and the teacher-field, when Cecília refers to the support of the direction. In view of this, the pedagogical game foresees, among other aspects, the establishment of a contract, which can be explicit, like Cecília's, or tacit, which seems to happen in most cases and occurs with Larissa.

Moreover, to play means to accept a certain social vision (LYOTARD, 2010). It seems to us that part of the conflict in which Cecilia is inserted, beyond that of the game with the students, lies in the fact that she has accepted the rules of the game, what they represent and this social vision for being a teacher (these rules would be teacher-teacher), but this means having her work built under the aegis of the "system" (excerpt 5), however she disagrees with the rules imposed by this "system", she disagrees with what these rules represent and the worldview they impose (teacher-field rules). Therefore, the conflict is established to the point that she even questions the continuity of her work and her role as a teacher "the one who plants seeds" (excerpt 2) that do not germinate.

As far as the use of masks is concerned, we must immediately reaffirm its fundamental character for the elaboration of the role of teacher, at the same time that it is constitutive of the game. Without the mask, there is no game, by taking off the mask, the player breaks the game, even if momentarily. It is not unique, it is diverse and linked to the scenario, since, as we will discuss in relation to the roles, it may be revised, reformulated, put on and taken off depending on the elements of the game and on the scenarios in which the teachers use them. In this way, different scenarios may require the use of different masks.

Excerpt 6 – Larissa – Interview 2

"Start dressing in a more social outfit" [says the board of directors], but here, in High School, I can't. I think I would be much further away from them if I start coming too formal. In college, for example, at the very least, I put on a sandal that has a certain heel. [...] To have a little bit of "the teacher". Here, at school, I wear something more like pants, t-shirt, simpler things. Sneakers, in most cases (LARISSA, 2018).

[...]

Excerpt 7 – Cecilia – Interview 2



The first one is because I don't like it. [...] That sensation of me leaving school with a dirty chalk clothes. [...] There is also the issue that, I think, I look like a teacher, and I like to use it. [...] Suddenly, it is an attempt to make them recognize me. An identity. [...] And this shame of showing what I have, my body, is as if I shielded myself. I feel a protection. [...] And this Portuguese teacher wore the lab coat (CECÍLIA, 2019).

The mask can be understood as any element that, when "dressed", helps the actor to embody his role. For Cecília, the mask is the lab coat, for Larissa it is a style of dressing. Although in different ways, that is, with different masks, both seem to feel that dressing these elements is also dressing their roles.

Larissa differentiates her professional performance, in the institutions where she works, by the way she dresses. At the University, she wears more formal clothes that help her build her identity as "the teacher". However, in High School, she wears pants, t-shirts and sneakers. Therefore, we can evidence the differentiation of the roles Larissa plays in the institutions where she works, by the use of her masks. In this perspective, the choice of the mask seems to be strategic, but the fact of assuming it is a constitutive element of the pedagogical game.

While Larissa uses her mask to get closer to the students, Cecilia uses it to get away from them, in the sense of differentiating herself. In this way, although both teachers choose the masks as a strategy of play and role-playing, they use different masks, with different intentions. For Cecília, the mask is also a resource to bring an element she considers essential to the game – respect – which would come through the identification of elements that distance her from the students, that characterize her in the teaching role.

Cecilia presents four reasons for wearing the lab coat: 1) to protect her clothes – it is essential to note that by protecting her clothes she also protects her identity: Cecilia, the one who leaves school and goes to pick up her children, without necessarily being identified as a teacher. 2) Identify herself as a teacher (in the role of a teacher), build an identity – in the same way she uses the lab coat to protect the identity Cecilia, she uses it to build the identity "teacher". Thus, the incorporation of the role is evidenced. By wearing a lab coat mask, Cecilia wears the role of a teacher. The lab coat, for her, is part of the *pedagogical game*, which is played exclusively at school, it is situated. The lab coat only makes sense in the context of the game. 3) Protect her body: again, there



is an attempt here, by Cecilia, to protect and differentiate her identities: the woman and the teacher. 4) The Portuguese teacher, a reference for her (Cecilia mentions her in other moments of the interviews as having been important in her formation) also wore a lab coat.

The choice of which mask to wear is defined by the teacher based on the elements already discussed and, also, according to the scenarios in which she acts. The scenarios are understood by us as the spaces in which the *pedagogical games* take place. These spaces are composed of the classroom and its physical elements, that is, the configuration of the physical space. However, we also consider the scenario, the institutions (in the sense of set of moral and social values) and the marks they leave on their students through their rules. The scenario is also composed by the ages corresponding to the level of education of a given class and by how these students relate to each other and to the institution.

The scenarios in which the teachers work could not be more different. Larissa works in a clean and organized environment, while Cecilia faces disorganization and problems with depreciation of materials and furniture. These considerations may explain, for example, the depredation that Cecilia's students do and Larissa's don't at the same time that there is the conflict that Cecilia tries to overcome in order to play the game, which does not occur with Larissa. These elements may refer, once again, to the fact that Cecilia's are pupils (establishing a heteronomous relationship with school tasks) and Larissa's are students (more autonomous). However, this explanation does not seem to be sufficient.

We could argue that these issues occur because Larissa's students are older and go through a rigorous selection process to enter that school, since it is a State Technical School. We can oppose that by stating, even if this is true, that the environment, the scenario, contributes to the construction of these relationships. We base this statement on what has been called "Broken Windows THEORY", from the Chicago School (KELLING; COLLIS, 1996), roughly speaking, this theory suggests that environment disorder generates more disorder in the behavior of individuals who attend these environments. Although this Theory is associated with public safety issues, it seems a way for us to understand this relationship between scenario and game. In this perspective, the scenario would be, then, one of the factors that could contribute to generate the conflict that Cecilia tries to overcome to perform the pedagogical game with her students, a fact that does not occur with Larissa.



Finally, we explore focus. We emphasize that we do not treat it as an integral category of the game, but as a subcategory of the scenario, since the focus is dependent both on the physical elements of the scenario, such as the arrangement of the desks (in circles or in rows, for example), as well as on other more subjective elements related to the way the teacher understands his role, besides the fact of who are, students or pupils, the members of the room. It is necessary to consider, even if the focus changes, the role is maintained.

We explain, from the analysis of one of Cecilia's classes. In this class, Cecilia organizes a wheel in which the students must present the research they have done about oil. Since this is a presentation by the students, the focus is much longer on them than on Cecilia. Crucially, she continues in the role of the teacher, who yields the focus to the students and then takes it back for herself, which displaces is the focus, not the role.

This displacement also occurs when the student asks a question or participates in any way during the lesson. This process (of shifting the focus or even when the focus is put into play), seems to bring to the student a sense of belonging to the game, of being an integral element of the action and, thus, he tends to engage more in the elaboration of the game.

Having concluded the analysis of the constitutive elements of the pedagogical game, we undertook a discussion about the game versions. To do so, we start exploring an excerpt from the interview with Larissa.

Excerpt 8 – Larissa – Interview 2

It's a nice environment. The students give us a response, a warmth [...]. The contact that we end up having inside the High School and the identity that the student has with the school, here, is much greater.

I think this ends up involving the students (LARISSA, 2018).

Larissa states that this atmosphere, based on the identity relationship that the student has with the school, ends up involving her. The lexical choice of the term "to involve" seems to refer to the game. This term is quite polysemic, and among the various possibilities, we are interested in the meanings: to meddle, to connect, to attract, to captivate – all of these presuppose distinct elements put into relation. This perception is very close to the notion of *illusio* (BOURDIEU, 2003, p. 139-140), especially when the author states: "[...] this enchanted relation with a game that is the product of a relation of ontological complicity between the mental structures and the objective structures of the social space".





There is also another issue: Larissa's students are in that room because they want to be there, they have worked hard to study at a State Technical School. This makes that "response" she refers can also be understood as the willingness to play. So, Larissa's students are for the game, she doesn't seem to need to convince them to play, as well as she seems to be involved by the game. The involvement in the game is reciprocal. Thus, one of Larissa's strategies is complicity.

Excerpt 9 – Cecilia - Interview 2

I think this conflict thing is constant. For me, it is. There is not a day that I leave the classroom without saying: 'Why did this happen? What do I have to do?' [...] So it is a conflict that I live every day and I have been living it even more (CECÍLIA, 2019).

Cecilia's versions of play are different, since, for her, there is the challenge of conflict. It is part of the teacher's job, at any level of education, to convince the pupils/students to be there and be interested in the lessons. We need to consider that Cecilia's 6th grade students are children. They are taken into the game and it is up to the adults to win them over by convincing them to play. They enter the game in a heteronomous relationship – they are pupils – as time goes by, they must become students, playing in an increasingly autonomous way. Therefore, the conflict comes from the clash with the challenges that are set, since the dispute is not with the pupils, but for the pupils, for their attention and engagement in the class and in the discipline.

Cecilia's case, her conflicts and her moves, point to what are perhaps the main and most complex tasks that the teacher has to accomplish: to stay in the game and to get the students to play. It is, in this sense, up to the teacher to convince the students to play, a not trivial task, since the daily convincing is exhausting. Although the task is exasperating, it must be performed, when the teacher cannot convince the pupils to play, he/she still needs to stay in the game.



## Conclusions

In this article, we have discussed the interaction between teachers and pupils/students, in the classroom, that is delineated through the *pedagogical game*. This game, typical of the school environment, articulates multidisciplinary perspectives, from philosophy, from Wittgenstein (1989), from history, with Huizinga (1999), and from sociology, from Bourdieu (2005). These authors recognize that games are constitutive of man and his social relations permeated by language. Moreover, we seek to elaborate a multidisciplinary view of interaction, with references both in the field of education and linguistics, recognizing it in its multimodality.

Besides this multidisciplinary perspective of the game, this article conceives it as a metaphor to understand the interaction between teachers and pupils/students in the classroom. This was done according to Lakoff; Johnson, (1980) and Scheffler (1974).

As for the constitutive elements of *pedagogical games*, we state that there are, embedded in the teaching role, several other roles. The roles influence and are influenced by the masks, the scenario, and the focus. These elements are crucial for the elaboration of strategies that, in turn, create different versions of the pedagogical game. Another condition for the existence of a game is the presence of rules, which are not only necessary to play, but are present in the definition of the term game, in its literal and metaphorical sense.

In this way, teaching is at stake when teachers and students play the pedagogical game in the classroom on a daily basis. Unveiling the game and its constitutive elements allows us to better define the necessary conditions for its configuration, including the training of teachers who are better prepared to play it.



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Prof.ª Dr.ª Ana Luisa Feiteiro Cavalari-Lotti

Docente da Língua Portuguesa da Prefeitura de Praia Grande (São Paulo – Brasil)

Grupo de Pesquisa Docência, Formação de Professores e Práticas de Ensino  
(DOFPEN)

Orcid id: 0000-0001-9457-6358

E-mail: [alfc.lotti@unesp.br](mailto:alfc.lotti@unesp.br)

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Prof.ª. Dr.ª Flavia Medeiros Sarti

Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (Campus Rio Claro - Brasil)

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação

Líder do Líder do Grupo de Docência, Formação de Professores e Práticas de Ensino  
(DOFPEN)

Pesquisadora do Centre de recherche international sur la formation et la profession  
enseignante (Brésil)

Orcid id: 0000-0003-2926-5873

E-mail: [flavia.sarti@unesp.br](mailto:flavia.sarti@unesp.br)

Recebido 1º maio 2022

Aceito 7 set. 2022