THEMATIC SECTION: VIGOTSKI TODAY:
EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Contributions of Vigotski to Thinking about Intercultural Education

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ABSTRACT – Contributions of Vigotski to Thinking about Intercultural Education. This study aims at analyzing the possible contributions of Vigotski and the cultural-historical theory to intercultural education. Thus, it discusses interculturality, based on contributions from cultural psychology and a model on critical multiculturalism. Then, it presents concepts of cultural-historical theory that contribute to the consideration of practical possibilities for intercultural education. Finally, it analyzes concrete experiences from educational contexts in order to exemplify how the discussed concepts can be turned into practice. Hence, it seeks to understand experiences of interculturality in the light of the cultural-historical theory, based on the method proposed by Vigotski.
Keywords: **Interculturality. Vigotski. Cultural-Historical Theory. Cultural Psychology. Critical Multiculturalism.**

RESUMO – Contribuições de Vigotski para Pensar uma Educação Intercultural. Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar as possíveis contribuições de Vigotski e da teoria histórico-cultural para uma educação intercultural. Para tal, discorre em um primeiro momento sobre interculturalidade, trazendo aportes da psicologia cultural e do modelo de multiculturalismo crítico. Em seguida, apresenta conceitos da teoria histórico-cultural que contribuem para pensar a organização de uma educação intercultural. Por fim, analisa experiências concretas de contextos educativos a fim de exemplificar como os conceitos discutidos podem ser trabalhados na prática. Assim, busca compreender vivências de interculturalidade à luz da teoria histórico-cultural, a partir da proposta de método de Vigotski.
Palavras-chave: **Interculturalidade. Vigotski. Teoria Histórico-Cultural. Psicologia Cultural. Multiculturalismo Crítico.**

Introduction

Diversity has been a constitutive aspect of Brazilian identity since its foundation. The country currently has more than three hundred different ethnic groups of indigenous people, quilombolas and gypsies, and also has a huge cultural variety beyond ethnic identities. Moreover, the migratory flow, a phenomenon present in the country since its colonization, continues as a factor of high social, political and economic relevance. Still, both for migrants and people from other minority groups[1], the daily reality often brings experiences of discrimination, xenophobia, and lack of access to institutions and basic rights (Riegel; Pássario, 2018), what indicates the need of something beyond the diversity presence to construct safe and egalitarian places, intercultural places.

In this sense, educational institutions and those promoting the integration of minority groups (such as reception centers and schools, for example) can represent a sensitive expression for these people about the general community's position on their very existence. This is because often in those spaces one has their first experiences of contact with groups different from one's own. Thus, these institutions present an opportunity to promote exchanges that enhance the development of all involved, or to reproduce already existing social inequalities.

Vigotski (2004) proposes that experiences are a source of development. Experiences in the midst of diversity, in the face of appropriately organized circumstances in educational terms, are a source of intercultural development. The understanding of the cultural-historical theory of the human being can, in itself, be considered a theory in defense of the right to plurality, since it focuses on the potential of the development in and through social relations. Thus, this study aims to analyze Vigotski's possible contributions to an intercultural education. To do so, it discusses interculturality first, bringing contributions from cultural psychology and the critical multiculturalism model. Then, it presents concepts from the cultural-historical theory that contribute to think about the organization of an intercultural education. Finally, it analyzes concrete experiences of educational contexts in order to exemplify how the discussed concepts can be put into practice.

This study uses the method concept proposed by Vigotski, in which he is part of the wire conducting which weaves the reasoning; once the method is the way of looking to the prenomena, it is also the theory itself. Thereby, this article starts with the consideration of the smallest unit of analysis according to the cultural-historical theory: the person-middle unit, what means, the livingness[2]. The livingness, or perejivânie, is what is lived while the person goes through life (Vigotski, 2018). This way, the intercultural theories presented here dialogue with that one proposed by Vigotski, in order to search for the understanding of the livingness from the culturaly diverse groups under the cultural-historical theory's light.

Why Interculturality?

Either because migration processes bring diversity to light in a more explicit way, or because it is a topic of high relevance, migration is often a topic attached to discussions about interculturality. Currently, about 3.5% of the world's population inhabits a country other than their place of origin, and of those, about 14% are children and youth up to 20 years old (IOM, 2020). Migration, as a structural aspect of the human species' development (Lucassen, Lucassen; Manning, 2010), brings along various possibilities and challenges. Among them is confronting diversity and its possible paths of being managed. In practice, this management can mean for 272 million migrants (IOM, 2020) access, or lack of it, to basic rights such as housing, health care, education, and food (Koser, 2010). Thus, by implying social arrangements and negotiations, the act of migrating can be understood as a political act (Kunz, 2019).

When talking about interculturality, however, we are not limiting this concept to migration. Especially in Brazil, a country forged out of the violent miscegenation between indigenous peoples, African peoples, gypsy peoples and European peoples, it is important to expand this concept. The naturalization of diversity structured on Brazilian identity took place in a hierarchical manner, delimiting types of diversity that were more or less acceptable and with more or less access to rights and privileges (Riegel; Pássario, 2018). Thus, it comes closer to a colonial perspective[3] and distances itself from the intercultural perspective[4].

For this reason, interculturality is here understood by a larger scope, outlined by diversity in various aspects (as race, ethnicity, gender, age, exual orientation…), that coexist within promoting spaces of acceptance relations and mutual development. The broadness and plurality of this theme are reflected in the variety of theories and concepts found in the area, sometimes also called multiculturalism. It is noteworthy, however, that the choice of terms and respective definitions are based, among other things, on political positions (Holm; Zilliacus, 2009). In this study, the chosen perspective seeks to privilege the understanding of interculturality related to the multiplicity of cultural experiences in emancipatory contexts.

The cultural context, far from being limited to a background for the development of people, constitutes them and is constituted by them. As Vigotski states in several passages of his work, we are a social relation with ourselves, we are the other in ourselves (Vigotski, 2000; 2001; 2004; 2007; 2018). In cognitive terms, for example, studies show that the way signs are categorized tends to be taxonomic for Western cultures and thematic for Eastern cultures. In other words, people from Western cultures, when grouping signs, they often do it so based on perceived attributional similarity. Meanwhile, for people from Eastern cultures, this grouping is usually based on causal, temporal or spatial relationships (Masuda; Nisbett, 2001; Norenzayan et al., 2002; Nisbett, 2003; Ji, Zhang; Nisbett, 2004; Masuda et al., 2008).

This difference could be explained by the distinct types of thinking structured in different cultures. In contrast to the holistic perspective that prevails in Eastern thinking, in which the analysis of objects or situations is done by the totality, that is, by focusing on the relations it establishes, Western analytical thinking tends to deconstruct the whole to focus on the details considered as most important (Masuda; Nisbett, 2001; Nisbett, 2003; Masuda et al., 2008). In everyday situations this difference can lead to distinct world perceptions, as cultural psychology demonstrates. According to studies in the area (Miller, 1984), people from individualistic cultures, more prevalent in Western and industrialized countries, tend to attribute to personal characteristics the explanation of situations, while the tendency of people from collectivistic cultures would be to explain them by contextual characteristics.

In terms of performance, in the study by Kitayama, Duffy, Kawaruma, and Larsen (2003), the authors showed that people from individualistic cultures more accurately follow absolute tasks than relative tasks, and the opposite for people from collectivistic cultures. In this case, when it came to reproducing a picture in a smaller space, the first group did it more accurately when instructed to draw it the same size as the original picture (absolute task) as opposed to those who were instructed to draw it proportionally to the reduced space (relative task). Additionally, Hedden, Ketay, Aron, Markus and Gabrieli (2008) reported differences in brain activation between Asians and people from the United States of America when performing this type of task, showing a higher level of attention for Asians when performing absolute tasks and a higher level of attention for US nationals in relative tasks.

It is important to point out that by mentioning subjects from collectivist or individualist cultures and talking about tendencies in their development processes, we are not limiting them, tracing compulsory paths of subjectivation. Beyond the national or group culture, there is a series of internal and external influences that constitute people. Therefore, these studies only indicate privileged, that is, more frequent, paths of subjectivation and cognitive development in certain cultures. Thus, a member of a collectivist culture may present characteristics associated with individualist cultures and vice-versa, especially in a globalized world.

Besides of the perception of the external world and execution of tasks, culture influences the very identity construction of those who are part of it. The self is what underlies one's psychological reality, which can be defined as a continuously developing sense of consciousness and agency. However, it is not an isolated and rigid entity. Besides having biological and sociocultural roots, the individual is always situated and somehow reflects its context (Markus; Kitayama, 2010). Markus and Kitayama (1991), based on self-definition of participants, proposed the concepts of interdependent self, linked mostly to collectivist cultures, and independent self, linked to individualist cultures. The former would be the notion of a self that is connected to the social context, while the latter perceives itself as separate from it. This does not mean

that there is in fact a separation between person and context, but that the perception of their identities is based on aspects attributed more to internal than to social characteristics. Zhu, Zhang, Fan and Han (2007) were able to demonstrate, using magnetic resonance imaging, the activation of prefrontal cortex by stimuli referring to the self in Chinese and Western participants. When given stimuli referring to their mothers, however, only Chinese participants had this same brain area activated, demonstrating the influence of the social environment on biological functioning.

These studies exemplify the complexity of relationships between culture, groups and people. In this way, they also indicate a need to develop, especially in educational contexts, an extensive and high-quality work to enable a peaceful and fruitful coexistence for all people in intercultural contexts, always in defense of dignity and human rights. Unlike the colonial perspective, however, such work is not limited to intervening on minority communities to promote their assimilation into a society of closed rules. Intercultural projects should embrace diversity as a potency to be explored, as a means and an end to integration processes, in order not to be complicit with the erasure of non-hegemonic identities under the justification of inclusion (Fanon, 2001).

This requires adapting systems and educating dominant groups while accompanying minority groups to find solutions to their immediate needs. Promoting intercultural dialogues demands openness from all parties involved, as the Concordance Model of Acculturation (CMA) explains. When there is intercultural encounter, members of both cultures are faced, with a greater or lesser degree of agency, with the will to maintain their culture and to have contact with the outgroup[5]. As a result of interactions based on these desires, a series of changes occures at the group and individual level for all parties involved (Berry, 2005). These changes characterize acculturation, a dual psychological process. At the group level, this process can take years or even generations, since it is given to the mutual accommodation between the cultural and social norms of the two groups, that is, the changes that occur in both due to prolonged contact between them (Berry et al., 1989).

This indicates that even those who seek to shut themselves away in their own culture and avoid cultural influences from others end up being part of the acculturation process at the collective level and, consequently, being affected at the individual level by the diversity present in the context. The preference presented by majority groups on acculturation strategies usually depend on the extent of cultural differences between groups (Berry, 1987). Large cultural differences can cause disagreement over the maintenance of minority groups' original culture, which, in turn, can present a threat to their identity. At the same time, the identity of majority group members may also be threatened if the minority insists on maintaining its different cultural values in this situation. CMA argues that disagreement in acculturation attitudes often leads to intergroup conflict and impacts the psychological well-being of members of both groups (Roccas; Horenczyk; Schwartz, 2000).

One of the central points of the model is that acculturation attitudes are defined not by acculturation preferences *per se*, but by each group's perceived threat (Piontkowski; Rohmann; Florack, 2002). Factors such as prejudice and antagonism can be generated by perceived differences in outgroup beliefs and values and may come to influence their strategy choice (Rokeach; Smith; Evans, 1960; Schwartz; Struch; Bilsky, 1990). In other words, subjective perception of members of each group, although it may not match reality, is one of the factors generating possible negative and threatening evaluation in intercultural relations (Piontkowski; Rohmann; Florack, 2000).

However, it is not necessary to have an openly discriminatory and segregating discourse for the positions of one group to be perceived as threatening by the other. Even projects that claim to be intercultural or multicultural may be structured based on a perspective that maintains power relations instead of promoting the coexistence of multiple cultures in reciprocal, egalitarian relations, without hierarchy or oppression. On this theme, McLaren (2000a; 2000b) classifies four levels of multicultural paradigms: (i) conservative, (ii) liberal humanist, (iii) liberal left, and (iv) critical or resistance. The division assumes that if multiculturalism is the coexistence of different cultures, it can then be classified by the level of equality between them, categorizing from the most oppressive category to the least.

Conservative multiculturalism understands that societies share a common sense of development and evolution, from a lower to a higher stage, toward a single culture that will reach the end of the evolutionary stages. In turn, liberal humanist multiculturalism presents a formalist paradigm based on the premise that everyone is equal before the law; however, this level ignores the production of inequalities based on hierarchical social relations. For the left liberal multiculturalism, culture is essentialized and there is a defense of diversity; but this defense does not propose working on the production of inequalities, since it perceives them as inherent to diversity. Finally, critical and resistance multiculturalism argues that there are asymmetrically constructed power relations in societies, which generate social, economic, and political inequalities that must be destroyed. Therefore, the critical paradigm is the one that proposes effective work for the deconstruction of inequality, while enabling and valuing diversity (McLaren, 2000a; 2000b).

While liberal perspectives of multiculturalism recognize the right to cultural freedom, they do not engage in ensuring conditions for different beings to exercise it without loss (McLaren, 2000a; 2000b). Recognizing the possibility of differences and the formal legitimacy of their existence is not enough to let anyone express themselves in any context without facing risk. To promote equality of opportunities and conditions in an unequal system, it is necessary to question the very basis of this system, and the coloniality that constitutes it.

Coloniality, although a consequence of it, is not a synonym of colonialism. The latter denotes a political and economic relationship in which sovereignty of one group is subordinated to the power of another

nation; coloniality, on the other hand, is a pattern of power that arises from colonialism, but is not limited to national power, referring to a form of work, knowledge, identity constitution, among others (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Coloniality surpasses colonialism. In this sense, coloniality of being and knowledge generate, Fanon (1973) well explains, the need for the colonized person to develop his identity as a copy of the colonizer, but he, however, can never be accepted as an equal.

Fanon (2001) explains that the colonized people see life not as their criativity blossoming, but as a permanent fight against the omnipresent death[6]. This death is defined as the constant threat of hunger, unemployment, high mortality rates, inferiority and the absence of hope for the future. The colonized person, as well as the one who lives in a country considered underdeveloped or like any dispossessed person, lives not a full life, but an incomplete death (Fanon, 2001, p. 115).

For all people to have the right to develop fully and completely, with the right to be different, but also to not be unequal, it is necessary to overcome coloniality and promote interculturality. That is, it is necessary to elaborate relations, especially in the educational field, of reciprocity and collaboration, of emancipation and overcoming of oppression. Interculturality, then, appears not merely as normativity, as a should-be, but as a proposal for coexistence, for the organization of spaces, of relationships, of identities, of knowledge. It is a value, a principle of action that guides the being in relation to the world.

Thus, we can understand that there is an intercultural way of relating to knowledge (in which what is produced in one culture is not privileged, as in academic Eurocentrism, but rather in which the contribution of several cultures is recognized) and to behavior (not determined by a unique way of being civilized, stigmatizing the other as a barbarian), for example. Interculturality is not dogma or reason, it is a worldview and, therefore, it is materialized in praxis.

Education, Inculcation and Interculturality

Education is one of the fields in which the colonial perspective of our society becomes more evident. It is a privileged space for reproduction of a material and cultural structure that aims at maintaining the status quo, a central place in the political socialization of those who constitute a group, as stated by Marx and Engels (2001) by defending that the power material and intellectual are interconnected. It happens because dominant thoughts in a specific time are the dominant classe's ones, once they own the means of intellectual production.

Throughout history, power relations between classes are increasingly being hidden, and the current schooling masks, in a subtle way, brutal techniques of imposing force. Although they came to power through violence, the dominant classes progressively build justifications in culture to maintain their status without having to repeatedly resort to physical means of oppression (Bourdieu; Passeron, 1970).

In this sense, every pedagogical action can be understood as symbolic violence, since it imposes a cultural arbitrariness (the culture of the group that arbitrarily acceded to power), using an arbitrary power (historically constituted by force). Likewise, the very context in which the communication of this pedagogical action takes place is arbitrarily imposed by the hegemonic group (Bourdieu; Passeron, 1970). In other words, both school disciplines and school structure are cultural arbitraries, impositions of a functioning defined by dominant groups.

> The true *sociogogue*[7], that is, the educator – and not the gramophone – is always political. The education of social reflexes is the education of a social line of conduct of the organism, that is, it is political education. Pedagogy (Sociogogy) has never been apolitical, because the work on the *psyche* (the social reflexes) has always, willingly or unwillingly, inculcated this or that social line, that is, political line, in correspondence with the interests of the ruling social class that guided it (Vigotski, 2001, p. 302, authors' emphasis).

As part of this process of maintaining hegemonic power, education and institutions inculcate a worldview that, besides being elitist, is racist and has a strong Eurocentric cultural bias. To build a truly emancipating, integral education, which enables and fosters the development of all human potentialities, it is necessary to decolonize education and make it intercultural.

Education is the encounter between human development and philosophy. On one hand, it is necessary to know and respect the processes of human development, to understand the periodization of development, the organization of cultural psychic functions[8]. On the other, it is necessary that this education serves a purpose, which is necessarily philosophical, moral, and cultural. It is not biology that determines the destiny of human culture, but culture itself, so "[…] psychology cannot directly provide any kind of pedagogical conclusions" (Vigotski, 2001, p. 41). Undoubtedly, it is essential that education is informed by in-depth knowledge of pedology[9]; however, it also requires great attention to the values in which one educates. "The psychological nature of the educational process is the same whether we wish to educate a fascist or a revolutionary proletarian" (Vigotski, 2001, p. 80).

Human beings have infinite possibilities for developing their cultural functions. Education needs to be able to allow this integral development, and to contribute to the creation of possibilities for human emancipation. For this purpose, it needs to be intercultural. That is, it requires taking into account and valuing the differences between all people, and enabling all of them to flourish. Education must be able to embrace diversity at entrance and exit, in other words, to welcome all people (without excluding, for example, people with disabilities, or with behaviors considered socially inadequate) and to value heterogeneity and equity (without imposing homogenization, either of learning forms and times, or of behaviors, values, or identities).

> It is true that we educate for life, that life is the ultimate judge, and that our goal is not to inoculate special scholastic virtues, but to communicate habits and capacities to live. [It is true that] incorporation into life is our ultimate goal, but in life there are very different habits and this incorporation can have very different characteristics. We cannot assume an indifferent or identical attitude toward all its elements, nor can we say yes to everything just because it exists in life (Vigotski, 2001, p. 77).

A country as diverse since its origins as Brazil urgently needs to place at the center of its educational debate the possibility of appropriation of cultural goods for human development. And, grounded on such violent policies also since its genesis, it needs to understand the inherent value of diversity, and develop interculturality not only in education, but in all the construction of a coexistence that allows emancipation of its people.

Contributions of Vigotski to an Intercultural Education

Interculturality, in these terms, was not a theme in Vigotski's work, given the historical limitations. However, the author beckons to this theme when he defends the elaboration, in education, of these new forms of conduct in his concept of sociogenesis of cultural development. From his bases, we understand the importance of an intercultural education, of exchanges, of the interaction amongst differences. Sociogenesis explains the social in us, the non-strictly and limitingly biological components of personality and of forms of social behavior, which are dialectically cultural in relation to the environment. Thus, it also indicates, through its philosophical-spinozist and epistemological-marxist roots, how to create possibilities for the development of interculturality.

Culture, for Vigotski, is more than a mere background for the global development of the human being; it integrates it in an inseparable way by becoming part of one's own personality and adding new psychological systems to it (Vygotski, 1995). Since the cultural psychic functions are initially social, the cultural aspect organizes all relations based on which the individual and collective development will take place. Thus, it is not possible to talk about development without necessarily talking about culture.

From this reflection, one must also consider the idea of culture as a living, dynamic system, aligned with the reality and the needs of those who are part of it. It is possible, therefore, to draw a parallel between cultural-historical theory and the theories proposed by cultural psychology when understanding, first, that diverse environments in culture (in the extensive sense of the word) generate a process of acculturation for majority groups as well as it does for minority groups (Berry, 1987; Piontkowski; Rohmann; Florack, 2002). Everything that is cultural is also necessarily social. This is because every sign, every tool separated from the organism, serves the social environment (Vygotski, 1995).

Hence the second parallel, from the concept of sociogenesis of higher forms of behavior, since studies in cognition from cultural psychology demonstrate the differences, in terms of brain activation, from experiences in different cultures (Masuda; Nisbett, 2001; Zhu et al., 2007; Hedden et al., 2008). According to Vigotski, change in social relations brings more change to "ideas, patterns of behavior, demands and tastes" (Vigotski, 2004, p. 10), which indicates that a real intercultural education does not mean teaching in a classroom some topic about another culture. On the contrary, it requires education as a whole to be intercultural, a transversal interculturality, aiming at changing social relations and at promoting the development of intercultural beings.

Regarding the sociogenesis of complex psychic functions, Vygotski (1995) argues that participation in culture not only allows a person to learn something, but also to assimilate learning and become enriched. Furthermore, participation in culture reworks the natural composition of the psyche and reorients the entire course of a person's development. Thus, it is in the social that the origin of complex psychic functions takes place.

For Vigotski, development is potentiated by experiences. Thus, it demands space for multiple experiences, be they individual-social, affective-intelective, or historical. In the same measure, it demands freedom to signify these experiences in different ways in the social context.

> We have already seen that the only educator capable of forming new reactions in the organism is experience itself. For the organism, only the link that occurred in its personal experience is real. Therefore, personal experience becomes the main basis of pedagogical work. Strictly speaking, from a scientific point of view, one cannot educate others [directly] (Vigotski, 2001, p. 75).

The cultural development of people takes place in the social environment, rooted in diverse cultural experiences that are internalized as an integral part of the personality or, in Vigotski's words, "[…] through others, we constitute ourselves" (Vigotski, 2000, p. 25). This is why, in order to educate interculturality, it is necessary to educate interculturally. It is the intercultural social relations, the experience of interculturality in the social environment, which can be truly incorporated by learners from their own cultural experience. Diversity, in this perspective, is a rich field for development, once there is full freedom to experience it safely.

> We can formulate the general genetic law of cultural development as follows: every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the scene twice, on two stages; first on the social and then on the psychological level; at first among people as an interpsychic category and then within the child as an intrapsychic category (Vygotski, 1995, p. 150).

Vigotski's transforming discovery in pedology is therefore the social genesis of cultural development. In other words, everything that is proper to the human being, that is developed beyond the strictly biological, develops in a cultural environment, in relation to the other. In parallel, sociogenesis elucidates the importance of education in cultural development. This is because once the signs, meanings, and senses are incorporated by the person in relation to their environment and in relations between people, there is the opportunity, as educators, to organize learning environments that promote the development of people in a perspective of human emancipation. Thus, Vigotski reminds us of the possibility, in terms of praxis, of social transformation of humanity and the role of education in it by saying that "[...] the goal of education is not the adaptation to the existing environment, which can be effected by life itself, but the creation of a human being who looks beyond his environment" (Vigotski, 2001, p. 77).

The human being's cultural development is necessarily dialectical, that is, it occurs in their relationship with the environment, in a process of overcoming contradictions experienced by the person. This is also how the attribution of new meanings to experiences related to interculturality happens. It is necessary to experience them, to perceive the contradiction between external meaning, attributed by the environment, and what one understands of the situation at the moment. From this dialectic, it is then possible to elaborate a new meaning for the experience, which creates conditions for the development of personality.

> The personality becomes for itself what it is in itself through what it previously manifests as itself to others. This is the process of personality constitution. Hence, it is clear why necessarily everything that is internal in the higher functions has been external: that is, to once having been for others, what is now for itself (Vigotski, 2000, p. 24).

It is important to point out that a person's lived experience is not constituted directly by the environment or the experience, but by the relationship that one establishes with this environment. It is the indivisible unity person-environment, "[...] a unity in which one represents, in an indivisible way, on the one hand, the environment, what one experiences – the lived experience is always related to something that is outside the person – and, on the other hand, how I experience it" (Vigotski, 2018, p. 78). Thus, it is not enough, as the person who educates, to organize environments of cultural exchanges to be experienced by students: the lived experience requires elaborating the meaning of interculturality in each specific student-environment relationship.

Vigotski (2007) explains, from the genetic point of view, the significance and attribution of meanings to the child, which occurs in the midst of lived experiences. This would be a way to the effective internalization of intercultural relations. Every knowledge has to go through the personal experience; and "[...] above all, to educate means to establish new reactions, to elaborate new forms of conduct" (Vigotski, 2001, p. 76).

Since learning occurs in a dialectical relationship, in the contradiction that a person experiences, it is not, strictly speaking, educators who educate students, but rather students who educate themselves in relationship with each other and with the environment. However, this does not take the teacher's role away, but rather determines it: it is up to the educator to intentionally organize learning environments. They are powerless to change something in the studants, to influence them, but they are omnipotent by criating a social environment, an "authentic lever of the educational process" (Vigotski, 2001, p. 76), the mean which will permit the person's development.

By determining such function, Vigotski also broadens its understanding, because if it is through the environment that one learns, it is not enough to recite contents. Since every experience is a learning experience, the organization of the space must be done in the sense of favoring a context for experiencing, not for absorbing information. Thus, there is no use in trying to teach democracy if this is done in an authoritarian way. Nor would it be effective to try to teach interculturality in culturally limiting environments. It is only possible to think of new meanings from new experiences in which the environment is modified. Pedagogical practice, in this sense, demands such coherence.

For this reason, an educator's work is of great complexity. The good educator is not the one who repeats content, nor even the one who inspires students, but the one who deeply understands the laws of pedology, of pedagogical psychology, of education. Moreover, by understanding them, he or she organizes social environments that allow the person to follow their path of cultural development towards human transformation.

> The newborn child is a condensation of previous experience, a pure biology, and that during several years of its development it really must travel the entire path followed by mankind, from ape to airplane.
> The whole difference lies in the fact that this path is traveled by the child on his or her own legs and not parallel to the paths of history. If we take into account the enormity of this path, it is understandable that the child will have to wage a cruel struggle against the world and, in this struggle, the teacher will have to say the decisive word (Vigotski, 2001, p. 302).

To do so, it is necessary to organize transformative experiences aimed at human development. The lever for this organization goes through the creation of challenging environments, as it occurs when the person is in an uncomfortable position: the greater the tension in the discomfort, the more natural and irresistible is the pedagogical impetus (Vigotski, 2001). This idea somehow solves one of the great current educational debates: teaching is not just about proposing activities that please the student (leaving them passive, comfortable, in their comfort zones), nor about being an authoritarian tyrant (teaching in oppressive forms of behavior), but about fostering the development of students on the basis of diversity and the richness of unique differences.

This process will happen by challenging them to the exact extent of what they do not yet know how to do, but can do with pedagogical help. “From the psychological point of view, the teacher is the organizer of the educational social environment, the regulator and controller of its interactions with the learner” (Vigotski, 2001, p. 76).

For an Intercultural Education: practice and perspective

Vigotski teaches us that we, human beings, are constituted in the relationship with others, that knowledge that does not go through personal experience is not knowledge, and that to educate means to elaborate new forms of behavior (Vigotski, 2001). By explaining the sociogenesis of cultural psychic forms, he invites us to organize educational environments in which the experience of interculturality is possible, so that it can be experienced in oneself – for the other – to oneself, as stated above.

An intercultural education, therefore, is not one that proposes contents about different cultures, but one that is built collectively and socially, through the sharing of cultural experiences. It is the one that organizes environments of reciprocal and respectful relationships, valuing differences and encouraging human emancipation. Based on the presented concepts of interculturality and cultural-historical theory, we will present below two educational experiences that exemplify practical possibilities for intercultural education. Here, it is considered that the people participating in the educational projects presented are part of the cultural diversity, demanding unique educational processes that value their idiosyncrasies.

The first one is from the Serta (Alternative Technology Service) welcomes in its headquarters in Glória do Goitá (PE) and Ibimirim (BA) adult students from all over Brazil interested in its technical/professional courses in agroecology. Its proposal is to support local rural development, ensuring the strengthening of communities in the interior of Brazil based on family farming, and for this reason it works with students with a community leader profile.

Serta was born from the progressive church, whose basis were from Liberation Theology, it has a historic of popular education which allowed the creation of an own methodolodgy. This is the result of the experiences and experimentations by the agricultures, social movements and governors’ side.

Over the course of a year and a half, students experience theoretical and practical learning in several areas related to agroecology. At the same time, they have relational, social, and human experiences that also promote their development. Based on a proposal of Pedagogy of Alternating Cycle, students spend one week in immersion and training at the school, in its different environments, in intense coexistence. In the other three weeks, they remain in implementation and intervention in their own homes, applying what they have learned in their commu-

nities. During this period of physical distance from the school building, there is also, on a regular basis, a technical visit from a teacher who follows the development of each student. "Intervention in the community, in the surroundings, in the circumstances, is part of learning, as is the personal and social development of the participants in the training process" (Moura, 2003, p. 61).

From its extensive experience in promoting knowledge that welcomes and benefits from all the learnings of people in direct educational relationships and of those in their communities, Serta has created the PEADS, Educational Proposal in Support of Sustainable Development. Its methodology is based on four steps: 1) To see, observe, gather information, research, identify the first knowledge that people already have about an object; 2) T analyze, develop, unfold the research data, deepen, raise the level of knowledge brought by the research; 3) To transform the knowledge into action, intervene in the community based on new knowledge, return the knowledge produced to those who helped generate it; and 4) To self-evaluate and hetero-evaluate the processes, the content, the people involved in the process of building learning and actions (Moura, 2003).

Through what this methodology makes possible, Serta's educational experience promotes a connection and a direct relationship between popular knowledge, which students bring to the classroom and that they experience in their communities, and the academic knowledge, which is presented by the technicians and teachers both during the on-site visits to the school and during the visits to the students' homes. This horizontal relationship, of mutual collaboration and valorization of different types of knowledge, enables an experience that promotes interculturality. Not only socially, but also environmentally, this educational proposal draws on the expertise of each and every person, whether scientific or popular, and offers an enriching place for integral development.

> We have a very diverse group of students: from middle-class students from the metropolitan region of Recife, through professionals who bought a small rural property and want to turn it into an agroecological farm, to the children of farmers who live on the fields. And through their life stories and individual knowledge, we try to take advantage of and value this diversity, which is an enormous wealth. The different realities can help the students and help the course itself, including the disciplines. There is a student who is a technician at INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform). She knows all about agrarian reform, so, in the content of land regularization of the public policy course, she is the lecturer. She is the one that goes there and presents and discusses. On the other hand, we have students that have never seen a lettuce plant, that like permaculture, but are from the metropolitan region of Recife and have no involvement with the rural environment, so they want to get to know nature. Then, the farmer's son, who was born and raised on the

> farm, tells him how to get milk from the cow, how to plant, how to harvest, how to plow the land (Lovato; Franzim, 2017, p. 118-119).

The methodology applied at Serta enables a permanent recognition that those who participate in the educational process have a contribution to make. It is a school of technical education, academically recognized, where popular and practical knowledge are given equal value. In this educational space, different possibilities are created so that people who represent this community knowledge are also the people who teach, highlighting these possibilities of exchange between the different cultures that come to the school.

Diversity, in these cases, is more than a discourse and represents the elaboration of concrete situations that enable the experience of interculturality and, therefore, the internalization of reciprocity and respect. This organization of space is, in fact, what transforms the way of relating of those involved. As proposed by cultural-historical theory, it is from the social experience that personality is structured. Therefore, the type of relationships promoted by Serta *in* the educational experience can exemplify ways of educating not only *for* interculturality, but also, and necessarily, *in* interculturality.

Another educational experience that demonstrates possible intercultural education practices is the Âncora project in Cotia (SP). The formal education school is a social project that serves elementary school students free of charge. It works with several methodological devices that seek to break with the conventional way of teaching, allowing different learning experiences and possibilities. One of these tools is the student assembly. Almeida (2017) reports that attendance at the assembly is optional. All those involved in the school community can participate in this assembly, but only students have the right to vote, and all decisions taken there are put into practice by the students themselves, thus exercising their autonomy.

In the assembly, the experience of reciprocal relations between students of different contexts, ages and stages of development provides an opportunity to learn how to build agreements in a democratic way. From complex issues of daily life at school to the organization of time, everything goes through the assembly and can be decided on its basis. One of the main intercultural learning experiences that this space makes possible is reaching deliberations in the face of differences and in the horizontality of relationships. These decisions are not based on majorities, but rather on a process of negotiation and discussion for the collective to make decisions together and consensually. If necessary, the same issue can remain under discussion for several weeks or even return to the agenda after it has already been agreed upon.

More than valuing the voice and the requests of the children, the student assembly is a space that promotes child protagonism. It is a school institutional environment that does not operate solely on adult logic, building new possibilities in the relationship between children

and adults within the meeting of these groups. In this way, the project, based on the adaptation of context to the needs of the group that composes it, presents a live organizational culture. That is, it assumes that organizational space is created by and for the people who are there at any given moment and that, instead of internalizing imposed rules, the students are the ones who develop guiding principles for their experience. Thus, it promotes a sense of co-responsibility for individual and collective educational processes.

It is important to point out that, although these experiences are indicated here as examples of intercultural practices, it is not intended to suggest that they are absolute models to be followed for intercultural education, as ready-made recipe guides. In fact, any attempt to do so would already be structurally inadequate to the proposal presented for intercultural education. Rather, the experiences bring possible practices to materialize the principles discussed, in order to favor the development of intercultural beings. In both cases presented, this is done through the organization of spaces of freedom, horizontality, recognition and appreciation of diversity.

Conclusion

This study aimed at analyzing Vigotski's possible contributions to intercultural education. To this purpose, it relied on other theories to understand what interculturality would be and the relevance of discussing the theme in current contexts. After drawing dialogues with cultural-historical theory, it presented concrete experiences of educational contexts that exemplify the concepts discussed.

Interculturality is an urgent issue both in Brazil and in the world, and education is an essential pillar for its effective organization. Education must not respond to hegemonic interests and to the reproduction of a symbolic and cultural framework that divides people into superior and inferior, holders of privileges and those excluded from institutions and social organizations. It should, however, advocate for the elaboration of a conviviality that values differences and puts an end to inequalities.

Vigotski's contribution brings powerful tools to change this oppressive educational paradigm. From the understanding of sociogenesis in the development of human beings, the author reaffirms the importance of reciprocal exchanges in cultural experiences and of interculturality in the constitution of human personality. Moreover, the theory offers bases to outline proposals for an organization of spaces that promote emancipatory educational experiences. This is because, according to the cultural-historical theory, it is not possible to conceive education without considering each one's social experiences. In other words, every educational process that proposes to be cultural-historical will necessarily be intercultural.

Education that is thought and applied on a top-down perspective, in a single direction, as a way to homogenize, can never be intercultu-

ral, regardless of the contents that the person who educates may propose. On the other hand, education that recognizes richness in diversity, that encourages every reality, tools, baggage and identities, will also be promoting interculturality. Thus, an intercultural education, in consonance with cultural-historical theory, should think about human development in a socially constituted way, promoting the full development of the potentialities of each one from their bio-psycho-social reality.

Received on July 17th, 2021
Approved on November 1st, 2021

Notes

1 The terms "minority groups" and "majority groups" in this article refer to the perceived social status of each group. In this sense, indigenous and quilombola communities, gypsy peoples, black collectives, and LGBTQI+ groups, for example, would be considered minority groups, although statistically and in terms of political and social relevance they are not necessarily so.

2 The livingness would be "[...] the prism which refrects the middle influence" about the person (Vigotski, 2018, p. 78).

3 Part of a system of power that originates from colonialism and perpetuates itself as coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

4 This implies not only the coexistence of different cultures, that is, multiculturalism, but coexistence in a situation of reciprocity. In interculturality, there is no production of inequalities based on culture, but a recognition of equality in difference.

5 Outgroup, in contrast to the ingroup (group of which one is a part), according to social psychology.

6 Mort atmospherique (Fanon, 2001, p. 115).

7 *Sociogogy* is a synonym for pedagogy, used to highlight the essentially cultural/social nature of the discipline.

8 Complex psychic functions, developed in relation to culture. This expression is commonly translated in Vigotski's work as higher psychic functions, but we opted for the expression cultural psychic functions to highlight its genesis and avoid the possibility of a misreading.

9 Science of child development.

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Editor in charge: Carla Vasques

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