

# Games as a Mediational Tool for the English Foreign Language Teaching - Learning: Instrument and Result Games for Children

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## Introduction

*According to Bruner (2000), some of the main tools of the Language Acquisition Support system are language-like games.*

*Bruner (2000)) analyzed the interaction between games and languages on several levels. Language-like games such as peckaboo, for instance, not only “provide the first occasion for the child’s systematic use of language with an adult” (2000:45) but, more important, there are structural and functional parallels between games and language as the symbolic system.*

*Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic (2008:100)*

Games constitute a fundamental activity (Engeström, 1999) for the psychic development of children, for the comprehension of rule in the social world and, thus, for

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the integration in this world (Szundy, 2007). Besides, games have always been present in human culture as existing elements “before culture itself, accompanying and marking it since the most distant origins up to the civilization phase in which we are today” (Huizinga 2007:6). Moreover, Szundy (2007) highlights that games are essential elements in human culture and history and that the playful element remains in adulthood, perpetuating itself in diverse activities to which we dedicate ourselves: in fiction in general, in sports games, in lotteries, just to name a few (Szundy 2007; Huizinga 2007; Caillois 1958; and Cook 2000).

Keeping in mind the known role of games in the teaching-learning process for children, this paper aims at presenting the results of a research project which investigates to what extent instrument-and-result (Newman & Holzman 1993) games can foster more comprehensive English teaching-learning locus for children. In order to reach this objective, the theoretical-methodological approach is based on Vygotsky’s (2000, 1998) concepts of play, mediation, creativity, instrument and ZPD as the zone of collaboration and creation and also on Leontiev’s (1977) concepts of activity and consciousness.

This paper reflects partial results of Dellova’s master degree research (in press) which focuses on initial English teaching-learning. This study was carried out by Dellova (in press) in a private institute of language teaching, in an English classroom composed of six children aged from 9 to 11 years old who have basic knowledge of the English language. The turn-taking mode (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1998) to indicate appropriation was analyzed.

## **Let’s play in the Zone of Proximal Development**

*Play and playlike acts are in an essential way  
connected to the transition from  
direct communicative arts to the mediated ones.  
Vygotsky (1978:97) wrote “in play thought is separated from  
object and action arises from ideas rather than from things”.  
The ability to “detach” from the immediate environment  
and to give another “meaning” to objects and to actions is,  
according to Vygotsky,  
a “transitional stage” toward  
creating meanings  
that are completely free of the  
immediate surrounding environment and events.  
Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic (2008:100)*

Vygotsky (1978) explains that ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) is the distance between the level of real development, which is usually determined by the independent solution of problems, and the level of potential development, determined by the solution of problems under the orientation of an adult or in collaboration with peers. Newman & Holzman (1993) say it represents the unit of learning-and-development based on the difference between instrument-to-result, which is an instrument identified and acknowledged as of a possible use for a determined objective and instrument-and-result, which is an instrument specifically designed to create what we would like to produce (Newman & Holzman, 2003). Instrument-and-result has to do with revolutionary activities which have as an objective the development in the transformation of the participation of the human being in social cultural activities, giving a possibility to, as we transform the culture, make part of it. “When we become agents of the development of our community, we transform the development of the culture of our community and, in this way, we have the responsibility and become interdependent of it” (Liberali, 2008:07).

Adding to the definition of ZPD, Bernstein (1993) tells us ZPD is a stage of ideological battles for new ways of work. Engeström (1999) adds it is a terrain to be inhabited and explored by the means of a multidirectional movement inside the possibilities. This zone creates intersectioned traces which allow each person to move in a more effective way, independently of the direction to be taken. In this zone of intersections and of boundaries with others, full of history and power, each one tries to adapt him/herself and, simultaneously, struggle to overcome the boundaries. This leads to critical conflicts which head to new paths which expand the collective comprehension of the zone of development and create meanings which are temporarily steady. When the agents reach a certain level of domain of this zone, the process of new zones restarts. The ZPD is, then, a distance between the actions present in the daily life of the individuals and the new forms of activity, socially and historically constituted, which can be collectively generated as a solution to situations of conflicts that take place in the everyday life.

Clot (2006) highlights ZPD does not consist of helping the agent to make what has been anticipated to him/her. ZPD consists of creating a picture in which the agent will be able to do what could be impossible in his/her own activity. ZPD is a place, in a certain way, in which the psychological or social favors the agent in order to make him/her find unrealized possibilities<sup>3</sup>. Magalhães (2007 a & b) brings new insights to the ZPD definition and explains that is a zone of creative action, one transforming “practical-critical” activity, in which collaboration and criticism are fundamental to the possibilities of the creation of “new paths” (development). The focus is on the creation of new meanings in which the social mediations are a “pre-requisite” (instrument) and “product” (development). For her, ZPD is understood as a space for radical transformation of the system of activity, which can take place when one of the participants establishes one conflict and the development is reached through the resolution of this conflict, in such a way that transcends its contradictions. To Szundy (in press), ZPD is a zone of conflict in which knowledge is constructed in a spiral way,

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<sup>3</sup> Each of us is full, in each instant, of possibilities not realized. That is, the activity is a minimal part of what it is possible (Clot, 2006).

which implies the creation of practices and situations in the classroom which allow the engagement of the students in collaborative activities, which take into consideration the interactive processes existent in various social contexts.

Damianovic (2008) tried to unite the definitions above and sew parts of it to summarize ZPD. The result is that the ZPD is related to a collective development which does not take place in circles, but in a spiral full of paths that pass by a same point and that advance to a transformation. Liberali (2008:07), based on Engeström (1996), explains that, “as we understand the development as a collective process, and not simply as an individual one, we can see that the collective transformation means change in the course of the life of each person, along with the life of other people, in a process of construction of new collectiveness. In this direction, besides being vertical, it is also a horizontal movement of crossing boundaries in different worlds and not only ascending in the scales of competence and of maturity”. Because it involves diverse movements to cross frontiers, ZPD is undoubtedly, a stage of ideological battles to develop the ways of working (Bernstein, 1993), which should be ways related to conflicts inherent to revolutionary activities (Newman & Holzman, 1993), aiming at the creation of new forms of social activities to the everyday actions (Engestrom, 1999). ZPD is not help, but one space of life, a zone of creative action (Magalhães, 2008), in which the agent meets possibilities not realized (Clot, 2006) for the creation of new meanings in which social mediations are pre-requisite and product (Magalhães, 2008).

Out of what has been explained above, for this research specifically, we would like to say that the key aspects of ZPD for the game analyzed here are that, according to Vygotsky (1998), play leads to development once it allows the emancipation of the immediate field of perception, that, paradoxally, leads the child to a deeper penetration and understanding of reality, through more complex and richer processes. In that sense, Newman e Holzman (1993:121) state that “play is an instance of learning-leading-to-development”, once learning leads to development in the ZPD. Play encourages the player to act as being competent in the activity under consideration, as they put it. To Newman & Holzman (1993), the activity of creation of meanings is the extraordinary developmental occurrence that happens during play, once ZPD is created in that play. Through and in play, children learn how to perform revolutionary activities (Newman & Holzman, *ibid*).

### **Activity Theory: development of awareness in situations of social activity**

*Drawing a child into the activity of speech and  
into the sphere of language may be done though play.*

*Adults create playlike situations and activities  
that are particularly suited to engage  
a child and bring her or him into a dialogue.*

*Marjanovic (1990)*

Ninin (2008) explains that the Activity Theory has been elaborated with the purpose of understanding social transformations in a perspective in which it is possible,

dialectically, to establish a connection between the social and individual structure, giving more consideration to the actions practiced by the individual. Its focus is on the complex nature, situated and distributed from one human doing and offers us one possibility to look at the work which is carried out by individuals in a conscious manner. Its focus is, therefore, on the development of awareness in situations of social activity.

Activity Theory considers one net of contextualized elements which are interrelated in a coherent and interdependent manner and involves the subject, the object, the community, their artifacts, rules and division of labor. Ninin (2008) explains that the subject refers to the person or group of people, from different walks of life, who is engaged in an activity and whose point of view is taken to analysis. The subjects, in a system of activity, are responsible for establishing moments of conflicts, as well as for dealing with those conflicts, aiming at making out of them impulses for learning and developing. In our case, the subjects are the teacher and her students. According to Ninin (2008), based on Engeström (1999) the object is the target of activity, in relation to which agents act and feel one necessity. In this research it can be the learning of the English language and it is strongly marked by relations of power which in our case could be between the teacher and her students and out of which emerge in the multiplicity of voices (of the teacher and the students, and the characters of the focused fairy tales), supported by historical-cultural traditions, the interests of the community and the knowledge that each subject involved has of what he wants to construct. Ninin (2008) also explains that there is the community which it can be understood as a group of people, with different perceptions and understandings. This group of students and teacher shares the object of the activity. The Cultural Artifacts are all the means that the subjects have at their disposal to influence the object of the activity and to transform it in a result. They are in this research the fairy tales and the games. They have the role of mediators among the elements of one activity. They are created and transformed during one activity. In this research, the contextual elements of the Theory of Activity are fundamental because with the Theory of Activity we can see and understand not only how the classroom dynamics work, but also, and most importantly, how students learn English, which is the object of the activity under consideration.

As Ninin (2008) points out, during the development of one activity, the relationships among the subject, object and community are measured by cultural artifacts, rules and division of work. These mediating elements are responsible for the movements, at some time of development and at other times of conflicts in the activity. However, they are always directed to a result. In our case, the result is learning how to use English in meaningful and contextualized situations, in this case, reading stories and playing games about them. To deal with the conflicts of the human living, man needs to understand himself as a subject in different revolutionary activities. The activities “do not exist without a subject who is engaged in it. The activity is the main mode of interaction between man and the exterior world. Therefore, the initial element and the one with a fundamental importance is not the activity per se, but precisely, this interaction between man and his inseparable relationship with the reality around him” (Brushlinsky, 1990:123).

## **Games: connections to an increased change in motivations, tendencies and incentives**

*In Vygotsky's (1978) words,  
it is the "meaning" that  
dominates over objects and actions in play,  
while in the "reality" frame,  
objects and actions dictate their meaning.  
Therefore "play" is a separate activity frame,  
a separate zone of existence in which space, time,  
relationships between participants and  
the roles they play, rules of behavior, and  
goals of activity are different and  
separate from the ongoing  
"here-and-now" existence.*

*Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic (2008:102)*

Vygotsky (1999:121-122) states that "play fulfills the needs of the child", and those needs include everything that is a reason to action. In other words, "every advance is connected to an increased change in motivations, tendencies and incentives". Vygotsky states that play appears to fulfill tendencies to needs that can not be fulfilled and that the definition of play would be of an "illusionary or imaginary world in which unfulfilled needs can be fulfilled".

In games, the child creates an imaginary situation, which is the defining feature of play. Another feature is the rules, which have their origin in the imaginary situation. "The simplest game with rules turns immediately into an imaginary situation in the sense that, once play is regulated by certain rules, various possibilities or action are eliminated" (ibid: 125). According to Vygotsky (ibid:126), it is in play that the child frees herself/himself from the external visual sphere and learns how to act in a cognitive one, that is, the child starts acting independently of what she/he sees. That is very significant, because the child starts operating with meanings rather than only with stimuli of the external world.

In that sense, Vygotsky's conclusion that play creates a ZPD for the child is of utmost importance, because we can then understand the child develops essentially through play. Leontiev (2006) agrees with Vygotsky, also pointing out that play allows the psychic development of the child.

By distinguishing human play from animal play, Leontiev (2006:120) points out the fact that human play is not instinctive, but "an objective activity that, by constituting the basis of perception that the child has of the world of human objects, determines the content of their play". The presence of those objects with which adults operate in the world of the child makes that play, games become the main kind of the child's activity,

because in them, the child searches for the domain of those objects”. According to Leontiev (*ibid*: 120-122), the awareness of the objective world happens in the child through action, that is, in the effort of acting like an adult in that objective world, the child becomes aware of the existence of that world. In that sense, Gorki (*apud* Leontiev 2006:130) states that play is “the path through which children understand the world in which they live in and that they are called to change”.

However, a contradiction between the need to act with the objects and the development of the operations that perform those actions appears unsolved in that process, and it can only be solved in play, “once it is free from the obligatory ways of acting, or operations”. In play, the operations are substituted through imagination that, paradoxally, puts the child even closer to the real world (Arce 2004).

When talking about the characteristics of play in general, Leontiev (*ibid*: 123) states that the “general formula of the motivation of games is ‘competing, not winning’” and that the game loses its ludicity when “victory, more than simple participation, becomes the internal motivation”. It is important to highlight that competitiveness is not the issue, but orientation to victory, that leads the motivation of the game to the search of prizes, homage, without considering the means to reach those ones, leading individuals to excessive aggressiveness, greed and isolation from other individuals. That is in strong opposition to Vygotsky’s theory of learning, in which in collaboration with others (Magalhães 2007) multiple ZPDs (John-Steiner 2000:187) are created so that individual can develop mainly through learning. In Vygotsky’s and Leontiev’s vision of learning, collaboration in games, and not orientation to victory, is what is essential to create an environment in which all participants can profit, and not only “the best”, which leads to marginalization and social injustice.

## **Methodology**

*It is not a coincidence that pretend play and learning  
to use language in children continue to develop simultaneously.*

*We propose that operations and processes that  
take place in and around play activities  
also constitute an intrinsic part of semantic development,  
that is the development of the ability  
to use language to construct meanings.*

*In fact, we examine play like processes and acts by  
which these processes are realized in the context of  
building and using symbolic tools and  
in the development of skills and  
functions involved in symbolic mediation.*

*Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic (2008:96)*

This research was developed by Dellova (in press) in a private language institute in the Great ABC<sup>4</sup> area in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The English class had six children aged from nine to eleven years old, who had had 100-minute lessons weekly for a year and a half. That amount of classes provided them with an elementary level of English<sup>5</sup>. The data collection happened in June, 2007 and consisted of an initial discussion with the students in which the teacher's proposal was introduced and two fairy tales: i) Toy Soldier and ii) Puss-in-Boots, were chosen by them in order to be dealt with in the following lessons. Also, three 100-minute lessons were recorded afterwards, and in those lessons some of the chosen fairy tales were dealt with through games. The aim of the use of the games was to retell some actions of one of the stories presented to them as well as describing some of the characters. Most importantly, it aimed at using the target language in a meaningful context to students, in which mutual ZPDs could be created so that students could use the language more naturally.

The main analysis was that of the turn-taking to indicate that appropriation. Specific analysis categories were created by Dellova (in press) based on Orsolini (2004), Wertsch & Smolka (1993), Brookfield & Preskill (2005), Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1996) in order to show how students appropriate of the language. Based on Wertsch & Smolka's idea of advance on other people's speech, Dellova (in press) has adapted the analysis categories proposed in Orsolini's text, which aimed at discussing argumentation. As the collected data is not focusing on argumentation, I used Orsolini's categories as a basis for developing categories which showed advance on other people's speech, but eliminating the argumentation aspect. Brookfield & Preskill and Kerbrat-Orecchioni were used to complement the categories created by Dellova (in press). For this research, we will concentrate on Dellova's two kinds of categories which are: 1. Advance on other people's speech and; 2. Contributions as requests and questions that allow the other to expand on his/her speech.

1. Advance on other people's speech – When students complement what other students or the teacher said. This category is subdivided into:
  - Elaboration – The information introduced by a previous speaker is continued and elaborated by adding information, such as:
    - An incomplete statement is completed;
    - The narration of an event or summary of facts is continued;
    - The answer to a clarifying or explanation request from the teacher or a colleague is elaborated by adding information;
    - The translation of a statement is provided (from Portuguese to English and from English to Portuguese)
  - Simple Answer – The information requested by the previous speaker is provided by not elaborated.
  - Mirroring – The information introduced by a previous speaker is repeated and/or reformulated.

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<sup>4</sup> Composed of three mainly industrial cities: Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo and São Caetano with a total population of approximately 1,8 billion people IBGE (2007).

<sup>5</sup> This level of English is in accordance to CEF – Common European Framework.

- Appropriation – The information introduced by the teacher or a colleague in a previous lesson or situation is repeated and/or reformulated in another communicative situation.
2. Requests – When the teacher or other students ask students to expand on what was said. This category is subdivided into:
- Explanation request – Request of information related to the previous speaker contribution in which elaboration of the semantic content of the previous statement is requested
  - Clarifying request – Request of information related to the previous speaker contribution in which specification of one of the referents of the previous statement is requested, so that the speaker has the opportunity to expand his/her ideas;
  - Question in reference to linguistic objects – Questions on how to say or pronounce a word in English;
  - Participation request – Request that students speak and/or perform a task.

In order to visualize the subdivisions of the categories, Dellova (in press) organized the chart below.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Advance on other people's speech	Elaboration	The information introduced by a previous speaker is continued and elaborated by adding information, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An incomplete statement is completed;</li> <li>▪ The narration of an event or summary of facts is continued;</li> <li>▪ The answer to a clarifying or explanation request from the teacher or a colleague is elaborated by adding information;</li> <li>▪ The translation of a statement is provided (from Portuguese to English and from English to Portuguese)</li> </ul>
	Simple Answer	The information requested by the previous speaker is provided by not elaborated.
	Mirroring	The information introduced by a previous speaker is repeated and/or reformulated.
	Appropriation	The information introduced by the teacher or a colleague in a previous lesson or situation is repeated and/or reformulated in another communicative situation.
Requests	Participation request	Request that students speak and/or perform a task.
	Explanation request	Request of information related to the previous speaker contribution in which elaboration of the semantic content of the previous statement is requested.
	Clarifying request	Request of information related to the previous speaker contribution in which specification of one of the referents of the previous statement is requested, so that the speaker has the opportunity to expand his/her ideas.
	Question in reference to linguistic objects	Questions on how to say or pronounce a word in English.

Table 1: Categories to analyse the turn taking in games (based on Dellova, in press)

## Let's play the analysis of the "Guessing Game": looking for local and universal scope in human development

*Construction of meaning  
and construction of semantic mediators  
is seen as a dynamic activity that  
simultaneously takes place  
on different time scales and has both  
a more local and a more universal scope in human development.*

*Symbol systems and the symbolic meanings they produce  
are viewed as continuously developing, dynamic,  
and relational activities, which enrich and build  
cultural lore while building and developing knowledge,  
understanding, and the sensibilities of each person.*

*Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic (2008:112)*

To proceed the analysis, we will first present the excerpt which will be analysed along with the number of the turn focused on and the category given to it. Then, the discussion will be developed, referring back to the excerpts.

### Excerpt from "Guessing Game"

T = Teacher  
V = Vanessa, student  
G = Gabriel, student  
B = Beto, student  
H = Helena, student  
M = Miriam, student  
R = Renata, student

Turn	Excerpt	Category
T202:	... you talk about this (picture)... okay. (The student was asked to describe a red toy elephant that appeared in Toy Soldier)	Participation request
V150:	The red, blue, white... the black, green...	Simple Answer.
T203:	Ok, but what is the main color?	Explanation Request
V151:	Red.	Simple Answer
T204:	It is...	Clarifying Request
V152:	It is...	Mirroring
T205:	It is...what is the main color? It is...	Mirroring, Explanation

		Request, Mirroring
V153:	Red?	Clarifying Request
T206:	Red, ok? It's a boy, it's a girl...	Simple Answer, Mirroring
V154:	It's a boy, yes, boy... How do you say...?	Elaboration, Question in reference to linguistic objects
T207:	Wheel.	Simple Answer
M40:	Jack-in-the-box.	Appropriation
T208:	Jack-in-the-box? No.	
R34: H33: (simultaneously)	The toy soldier. The toy soldier.	Appropriation Appropriation
T209:	The toy soldier? No, no.	Mirroring followed by a rejection
V155:	No, no.	Mirroring
B53:	The...	Participation Request
T210:	Say...	Participation Request
V156:	No...	Simple Answer
T211:	Say this ((Teacher whispers the words 'dog, cat' in the student's ears))	Participation Request
V157:	It's an animal...	Appropriation
B54:	é:::	
G26:	This is... a big rat.	Appropriation
V158:	No.	
B55:	Elephant.	Appropriation
V159: T212: (simultaneously)	Yes. Yes.	

Table 2: Turn, excerpt and category (based on Dellova, in press)

In this part of the article will discuss the analysis of an excerpt of the game named as “Guessing Game” that happened in the first recorded lesson. In the same lesson, at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher pre-taught some new vocabulary to students such as *jack-in-the-box*, *rats*, *boat*, etc., mainly the characters’ names, for instance, *ballet dancer*, *toy soldier*, so that students could understand the story to be told immediately afterwards. After that, teacher and students read the story *Toy Soldier* once did some true or false and picture ordering tasks in which the understanding of the story was checked and then started playing games. The first game played was “Guessing Game”, which consisted of a student getting a card with a picture of a character from the story and then describing some features (color, gender, etc.) of that character without saying which character it was. Students had then to guess who the character

was. During some moments of this game, and in the excerpt above, students used the new vocabulary learnt such as the characters' names, as well as structures (G26: 'This is... a big rat') that have been studied throughout the course as we will discuss next.

Student Vanessa picked up a card and then started describing, with the teacher's help, the character, which was a red elephant. This can be seen from turn T202 onwards (table below). The teacher's intervention, which provides a ZPD to students, is made through different forms (see table below), such as Explanation Requests (T203, T205), Mirroring ( T205, T206), and Participation Requests (T210, T211).

Explanation Requests	T203: Ok, but what is the main color? T205: (...) what is the main color? (...)
Mirroring	T205: It is... (...) It is... T206: Red, ok? (...)
Participation Requests	T210: Say... T211: Say this...

Table 3: Excerpts of Teacher's Intervention (based on Dellova's in press)

Vanessa, as well as the other students, could participate and use the new language items learnt (see table below), through Elaboration (V154) and Appropriation (M40, R34, H33, G26, B55, V157) of the target language. Some of the examples of Appropriation consisted of word-level statements (M40, R34, H33, B55) while others had examples of complete sentences (G26, V157), showing that students not only appropriate of the lexis, but also of the grammatical structure of the English language.

Elaboration	V154: It's a boy, yes, boy... (...)
Appropriation (word-level statements)	M40: Jack-in-the-box. R34: The toy soldier. H33: The toy soldier. B55: Elephant.
Appropriation (complete sentences)	G26: This is... a big rat. V157: It is an animal...

Table 4: Excerpts of Student's Participation

### **Conclusion: To play or not to play?**

*The imaginary frame of activity changes relationships between the participants. Furthermore, the imaginary activity frame may enter into interaction with the out-of-play activity frames (reality frames). Structures and relationships built within the imaginary frames are then used to shape the actual understanding*

*of the world (subject-object relationship)  
as well as the interpersonal  
relationships and identities of the participants.  
Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic (2008:93)*

We would like to conclude this paper saying: “Yes, we should play and a lot!” In the excerpt analyzed, we can perceive that, at the beginning, the pattern of interaction among teacher and students is dual, that is, from T202 to T209, the teacher speaks, a student responds. But, from V155 onwards, the pattern of interaction starts to change. The students start talking to each other, rather than only responding to the teacher. That shows that the interpersonal relationships were being changed through the process of playing games. For this reason, teacher’s intervention decreases as students get involved with the game and they really start talking to each other, having meaningful interactions.

Having in mind the Activity Theory, the object of the Activity which is the learning-teaching of the English language and the artifacts that are the games about the fairy tales previously read, we can see that the object is being reached through them, and that the division of labor and pattern of interaction among the subjects change as the games are played. Students are requested to interact in the foreign language by playing games about fairy tales, and what starts as a teacher-student interaction becomes gradually a more student-student interaction. That is, the rules among the students change and this solidifies the community of the classroom as being one where there are different students interacting with the teacher and not for the teacher. That is, it is a community of learning and using the language and not only of doing what the teacher wants the students to do. The games analyzed in this paper have triggered in the students the view that “learning is a creating adventure, something richer than simply repeating the lesson given. Learning is constructing, reconstructing and viewing things to change” (Freire,1996:77) For us, this is very important because as Magalhães (in press) highlights based on Jantzen (2005), it reflects a ZPD as being: i) a place in the social situation of development, in which learning and development become mediated; ii) a place of mediation between the rudimentary form and the ideal one based on dialogue, communication, cooperation and social relationships; and also as iii) crisis of development and a source for development as a result of this crisis; as well as iv) result of the process of internalization and finally as v) intrapsychic ZPDS which change its functions in the process of a future development.

Still, in terms of the students’ participation, we can observe in the excerpt analyzed, that all students were involved in the game (all of them participated in the game), that is, all of them got engaged in the imaginary situation present in the game and also followed the rules implied in that situation. In that way, students detached from the immediate reality and could interact in the target language, what was profitable to them in the sense that the object of the activity was being reached. That is, “the symbolic element of the human language which is connected to an object is used for the construction of a field of common meanings among the ones involved in the interaction. Understanding the meaning of the language of the Other and being able to express oneself with meaning to the other, presupposes that these meanings are shared. This is a condition for one, via language, to interpret the thought of the other and be able to communicate his own thought” (Freitas & Oliveira, in press)

Also, the pretend play analyzed showed that the operations and processes that take place in and around play activities also constitute an intrinsic part of semantic development, that is, development of the ability to use language to construct meanings. This construction of the imaginary playlike frame is an activity that places with the participants in a special bond of collaboration, thus creating an inner group of people that share something no one else does. There is an inner group in the games studied and this has helped create shared experiences that the members of an inner group can later evoke using simple gestures or phrases from the imaginary frame.

Something we have missed though has been that this delimited segment of activity to be understood by us as being temporary and not binding to student's real or actual relationships. However, although it is a framed activity, it has an indirect, mediational impact on the real nonframed relationships and experiences. And we understand that no one is autonomous first to decide after. "Autonomy is constituted in various experiences, innumerable decisions which are being taken along life" (Freire, 1996: 120). Autonomy in language learning follows the same pattern and games are helpful in allowing learners to live the various possibilities of playful experiences and decisions in life which is definitely an instrument-and-result activity. Not only the product values, but also the whole process of revolutionary living.

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