CONVERGED PLAYFUL LEARNING: CONCEPTUALIZING DIGITALLY-MEDIATED PEDAGOGY IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Abstract

What happens when digital stories are used in the daily activities of pre-school education? We proposed to answer this research question by carrying out an exploratory case study of the use of a story app during the regular activities of a group of preschoolers (aged three to five) for a period of three months. The app shows and tells the story of a Brazilian child traveling around her country and being surprised by its culture, geography and biodiversity. All the activities were planned by the teacher. Data was collected through non-participant observation and analyzed according to the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Two members of the research team visited the group regularly twice a week, taking notes, audio recording interactions and comments and photographing children's actions and productions. During this process, the collected data was subjected to constant inductive analysis by the whole research team. Such analysis allowed the emergent identification of a set of prominent and recurrent themes, such as learning; involvement; creativity; multimodality in the learning activities and in children's representations and productions; hybridity of material resources, among others. Once the data was fully collected, the team approached the final set of themes with the intention of developing a deductive, theory-based analysis, which allowed the identification of two macro-themes, namely *converged play* (Edwards, 2016; Edwards *et al*., 2020; Wood *et al*., 2019) and *playful learning* (Baker *et al*., 2023; Hassinger-Das *et al*., 2017; McInnes, 2019; Ollonen & Kangas, 2024). *Convergence* was identified in the multimodality (New London Group, 1996) and hybridity of material resources involved, which integrated different digital and analogical media and their affordances; *learning* was evidenced by children's recurrent use of new knowledge; and *play* was grounded on the unequivocal high level of involvement and creativity manifested throughout the intervention. The final discussions allowed the team to come up with the concept of *converged playful learning* in an attempt to capture what happened as the result of the use of the digital story in the daily activities of this pre-school site. The ultimate aim of this

presentation is to share the development of this concept, offering it for discussion in current field of pre-school pedagogy.

Keywords: Multimodality; converged play; playful learning; converged playful learning; digital literacy.

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