



## Education and citizenship: the role of teaching English in the early years of basic education

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### Summary

This study addresses the teaching of English in the early years of Basic Education from a critical, ethical and inclusive perspective, linked to citizenship formation. It is based on the understanding that, more than teaching vocabulary and grammar, it is the role of the school to develop pedagogical practices that promote participation, respect for diversity and intercultural dialogue. The problem investigated consists of understanding the effective role of English teaching in the formation of critical and participatory citizenship. The objectives include analyzing the approach of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) for the English Language and identifying pedagogical practices that integrate language teaching with democratic and inclusive values. The methodology adopted was qualitative, based on a bibliographic review of authors such as Rojo (2013) and Byram et al. (2001), in addition to the analysis of a didactic proposal applied to the early years. It is concluded that teaching English, when guided by principles of critical literacy and interculturality, can contribute significantly to the formation of conscious subjects, capable of acting with empathy, respect and responsibility in a globalized and diverse world.

**Keywords:** English teaching; Citizenship; Interculturality; Inclusive education.

### Abstract

This study addresses the teaching of English in the early years of Basic Education from a critical, ethical and inclusive perspective, linked to citizenship formation. It is based on the understanding that, more than teaching vocabulary and grammar, it is the role of the school to develop pedagogical practices that promote participation, respect for diversity and intercultural dialogue. The problem investigated consists of understanding the effective role of teaching English in the formation of a critical and participatory citizenship. The objectives include analyzing the approach of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) for the English Language and identifying pedagogical practices that integrate language teaching with democratic and inclusive values. The methodology adopted was qualitative, based on a bibliographic review of authors such as Rojo (2013) and Byram et al. (2001), in addition to the analysis of a didactic proposal applied to the

early years. It is concluded that teaching English, when guided by principles of critical literacy and interculturality, can contribute significantly to the formation of conscious individuals, capable of acting with empathy, respect and responsibility in a globalized and diverse world.

**Keywords:** Teaching English; Citizenship; Interculturality; Including education.

## INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of the English language in the initial years of basic education has been the subject of debates in the educational field, especially in the Brazilian context, in which teaching of foreign languages is directly related to citizenship formation and integration of subjects in an increasingly globalized world. In view of this, it is possible to affirm that mastery of the English language, more than a communicative skill, is configured as a tool for accessing knowledge, culture and active participation in contemporary society. Linguistic education from the early school years, therefore, it goes beyond the technical aspect and is inserted as a constituent element of the critical citizenship, expanding the possibilities of expression, understanding and action in world.

However, the way in which English language teaching has been questioned implemented in the initial years of elementary school, especially with regard to its articulation with the formative principles of citizenship. In many school contexts, the English teaching is still guided by fragmented methodologies, disconnected from sociocultural reality of students and with little attention to the ethical and civic dimension of educational process. Thus, the question is: What is the effective role of English teaching in early years in the formation of critical and participatory citizenship? This question points to for the need to reflect on the teaching of English as a curricular content and a pedagogical practice committed to the integral formation of the subject.

The general objective of this work is to analyze how language teaching English in the early years can contribute to the construction of citizenship in the context school. As specific objectives, we seek to: understand the theoretical foundations that relate the teaching of foreign languages to citizenship training; and identify practices pedagogical practices that integrate English teaching with democratic, ethical and inclusive values in early childhood education and the first years of elementary school.

The justification for this study is the importance of rethinking language teaching English in light of the guidelines that guide civic education, as recommended by the Base



National Common Curricular (BNCC), which recognizes language learning as essential component for the exercise of citizenship in multicultural societies and multilingual. The anticipation of English teaching in school curricula, as recent public policies, demands a critical and formative approach, which goes beyond the reproduction of vocabulary and grammatical structures, valuing the use of language in significant and socially relevant contexts. In this sense, as argued Rojo (2013, p. 90), language teaching must be attentive

[...] the demands of life, citizenship and work, in a globalized society with a high circulation of communication and information, without losing plural and democratic ethics, through the strengthening of identities and tolerance of differences. To this end, a situated view of language in use, language and text and plural and multimodal didactic practices are required, which the different theories of text and genres favor and make possible.

This argument reinforces that teaching English in the early years needs to be thought in a critical and civic way, considering the use of language in real social practices and various. The aforementioned author supports the idea that language learning must contribute to the development of conscious, tolerant and prepared subjects to interact in a multicultural world — which is in line with civic education defended in this work.

The methodology adopted consists of a bibliographic review of a qualitative, based on authors who address the relationship between language, education and citizenship. Academic productions, official documents and theoretical works will be analyzed that contribute to the understanding of the role of teaching English in the early years, considering its potential as a discursive and formative practice. Among the theoretical references, the contribution of Paulo Freire (1996) stands out, by emphasizing the language as an instrument of awareness and social transformation, and Rojo (2013), which discusses literacy practices and the role of multiple languages in development of critical citizenship in the school context.

This work proposes a reflection on the importance of teaching English in citizenship training from the first school years, considering that learning linguistics must be at the service of the emancipation of subjects, of the valorization of diversity and the construction of a more just and democratic world.



## FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF BASIC EDUCATION BRAZILIAN

The presence of foreign language teaching, especially English, in Education Basic in Brazil has been transformed in recent decades, especially since the new guidelines of the BNCC. In the initial years of Elementary Education, the inclusion of the Language English must respect the principle of playfulness, contextualization and social function of language. The BNCC (Brazil, 2018) advises that language learning should promote language skills and abilities for intercultural communication, the critical thinking and the formation of active subjects in society.

The BNCC (Brazil, 2018) recommends that teaching English in the early years Elementary Education is guided by an approach that values the social function of language, intercultural communication and the development of integrated skills to citizenship formation. Although the teaching of the English language is mandatory for from the 6th year of Elementary School (final years), this document authorizes and encourages its introduction in the initial years, as long as the didactic conditions are respected. pedagogical and the reality of the education network.

The BNCC recognizes the importance of expanded linguistic education, which considers additional languages — especially English — as means of expanding forms of social participation of students, allowing them to interact in different cultural, local and global contexts. This perspective proposes that language teaching English prioritizes the construction of meanings in real communication situations, with an emphasis in meaningful language practices.

According to the document, learning the English language should promote development of communicative and intercultural competence, contributing to the formation of critical, ethical subjects who are aware of their role in the world. This competence involves the use of language to understand and position oneself on issues social, cultural and environmental, in an ethical, supportive and responsible manner. Thus, the BNCC (Brazil, 2018) links the teaching of English to the development of general skills basic education, such as critical thinking, empathy, cooperation and responsibility.

Another relevant aspect is the valorization of multiliteracies in the process of teaching and learning the English language. This means working with different genres and media (such as videos, music, comics, digital games, etc.), reflecting diversity



of languages that students access in their daily lives. This approach allows students to classes become more meaningful, inclusive and engaging, contributing to the equity and quality of education. According to the BNCC (Brazil, 2018, p. 241),

Learning English enables students to create new ways of engaging and participating in an increasingly globalized and pluralistic social world, in which the boundaries between countries and personal, local, regional, national and transnational interests are increasingly blurred and contradictory. Thus, studying English can provide everyone with access to the linguistic knowledge necessary for engagement and participation, contributing to students' critical agency and the exercise of active citizenship, in addition to expanding the possibilities for interaction and mobility, opening up new paths for building knowledge and continuing studies.

The text above presents a contemporary and critical conception of the role of teaching of English language, especially in Basic Education, in which learning English is presented not as an end in itself, but as a means to social engagement, citizenship training and the active insertion of the student in a globalized, diverse and dynamic. This is because we live in a context of local and global interconnections, in which students are no longer restricted to their regional contexts. By stating that borders between countries and interests are increasingly blurred and contradictory, the document points out that the English language has a central role as a communicative bridge and cultural, emphasizing that the teaching of this language must be oriented towards actions of meaningful language, which favor social participation, critical thinking and respect for cultural diversity.

Another important point is the emphasis on the critical agency of students, that is, their ability to understand, interpret and intervene in discourses and practices social contexts that surround them. Learning English, in this context, becomes a tool for empowerment, by allowing students to access different sources of knowledge, communicate with multiple communities and position themselves ethically before social and cultural issues.

By expanding the possibilities of interaction and mobility, teaching the English language — especially from the early years — can contribute to new paths of learning, preparing students for intercultural, academic and future professionals. This perspective dialogues with the concepts of multiliteracies (Rojo, 2013) and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997), which reinforce the need to train individuals who not only master a language, but who know how to act with sensitivity, ethics and responsibility in different cultural contexts.



Thus, the BNCC (Brazil, 2018) proposes that teaching the English language in the years initials, when offered, should be playful, contextualized, inclusive and guided by social language practices, linking linguistic development to experiences cultural, social and cognitive abilities of students. This is a concept aligned with the comprehensive formation of the subject, which sees language as an instrument of expression, knowledge, interaction and citizenship.

This approach requires an understanding of language as a social practice, as defended by Kleiman (2005), who highlights the need to break with the traditional view of language as code, assuming it as discourse situated in practices significant literacy skills. From this perspective, English teaching should be linked to student reality, allowing reflection on values, rights, duties and diversity.

When considering language as a social practice, teaching English in the early years begins to assume a broad formative role, contributing to the integral development of the student. According to Rojo (2013), multiple literacies, that is, the different forms to read, write and interact with texts in varied social contexts, must be part of everyday school life. The inclusion of the English language in the first years of school needs be anchored in methodologies that value play, music, oral narratives and visuals, games and children's life experiences.

As Paes de Barros and Moura (2020) argue, language teaching in the 1990s initials need to be meaningful and affective, allowing students to build a positive relationship with the new language. This implies recognizing the sociocultural context of students, their local references and the knowledge they bring from home and community. Such pedagogical practices strengthen students' self-esteem and expand their possibilities for social inclusion and future mobility.

Byram (1997) proposes an expansion of the concept of communicative competence traditional in the teaching of foreign languages, especially English, arguing that, in addition to developing linguistic competence — that is, the ability to correctly use the grammar and vocabulary of a language — is essential to develop intercultural communicative competence in learners. This competence is composed of five fundamental dimensions, known as *savoirs* (knowledge):

- *Savoir* – Knowledge: refers to the knowledge of social practices and cultural aspects of both one's own culture and foreign culture.



- *Understanding knowledge* – Ability to interpret and relate: ability to interpret cultural documents or behaviors and relate them to those of their own culture.
- *Savoir apprendre / faire* – Ability to discover and interact: disposition and ability to acquire new cultural and communicative knowledge, especially in real interaction situations.
- *Savoir être* – Critical and reflective disposition: involves an attitude of openness, curiosity and willingness to relativize one's own cultural values.
- *Savoir s'engager* – Critical engagement: refers to the ability to evaluate critically cultural perspectives, practices and products, based on explicit criteria.

In the context of English language teaching, Byram (1997) highlights that learning a language is also learning to interact with speakers of other cultures, which implies develop respect, empathy and critical awareness. The foreign language is therefore a tool for citizenship education, as it allows students to understand different points of view and participate ethically and reflectively in multicultural contexts. This approach has great relevance in Basic Education, especially when seeking to form subjects who are sensitive to diversity and capable of democratic coexistence.

Early teaching of an additional language such as English provides a foundation fertile for the development of intercultural communicative competence, as highlights Byram (1997). This competence is fundamental in globalized societies, where mastery of a foreign language is also a means of understanding different worldviews, exercise empathy and participate ethically in interactions global social networks. By learning about and respecting other cultures through language, students develop a reflective awareness about their own culture, recognizing the processes of otherness and identity.

However, the implementation of this teaching also requires public policies. consistent, adequate teacher training and contextualized teaching materials. According to Tílio (2019), many teachers face difficulties in their initial training and continued to work with English in the early years, which directly impacts the quality of education. Therefore, it is essential that education networks invest in teacher training and professional development, as well as in the preparation of curricula that articulate the English language with the schools' pedagogical projects, ensuring coherence, continuity and relevance to school practices.



Teaching English in the early years should contribute to the construction of citizenship. As stated by Menezes de Souza (2011) and Silva (2010), languages foreign countries are also spaces of power, ideology and symbolic dispute, being essential that the pedagogical work with them is critical and committed to social justice. When articulate language, culture and ethics, teaching English can become an instrument of emancipation of subjects, promoting children's protagonism and engagement of students with topics relevant to their lives and the society in which they live.

### **The relationship between language, identity and citizenship**

Language teaching at school is also an opportunity to work with students to build their identity and coexist with diversity. Contact with another language and another culture allows the student to reflect on their own culture, exercise respect for differences and develop an ethical and civic stance. As Moita states Lopes (2006), language is a space for constructing identities, and working with discursive genres can favor the recognition of the plurality of voices in society.

In this context, teaching English can be understood as a tool for the development of linguistic citizenship, by enabling the critical understanding of texts and speeches, participation in diverse social practices and the strengthening of individual and collective identities. This perspective broadens the role of the language teacher English, which also becomes a mediator of meanings, values and social practices.

Rojo (2013) highlights that language practices at school must reflect the diversity of subjects and their sociocultural contexts, being a space for valuing multiple identities present in the classroom. Language teaching, in this sense, does not it can be neutral or decontextualized, but it needs to engage with the students' realities, their stories, their ways of being and expressing themselves. Thus, working with projects and texts involving issues such as racism, migration, inequality or human rights is not not only possible, but necessary.

A practical example of this approach occurs when, when teaching English, the professor proposes the study of song lyrics from different English-speaking cultures — such as Jamaican, African and Indigenous Canadian — to discuss identity and social issues. Analysis of the song “Black Man in a White World” by Michael Kiwanuka, for example, can spark debates about racial identity, exclusion and resistance, promoting a



critical and engaged learning. In this process, students learn vocabulary and grammatical structures as well as expanding their cultural and social awareness, relating the language to the world in which they live. In this process, according to Rojo (2013, p. 12), the school he must

[...] enhance multicultural dialogue, bringing within its walls not only the valued, dominant, canonical culture, but also local and popular cultures and mass culture, to make them voices of dialogue, objects of study and criticism.

Another concrete example can be seen in projects involving the production of podcasts or short videos in English, in which students tell their stories of life, their family customs or local traditions. These productions allow the articulation between linguistic learning and the strengthening of local identities, in addition to foster the development of autonomy, authorship and empathy. As noted Norton (2000), language learners invest in language to communicate and construct and legitimize identities in different social contexts.

In this process, it is essential to recognize the role of the school as a space for citizenship formation. As Candau (2008) states, critical intercultural education proposes that goes beyond the superficial recognition of diversity, promoting practices pedagogical approaches that address inequalities and value historically diverse voices silenced. Teaching English, in this context, can be a powerful tool for problematize social issues and broaden students' horizons, contributing to their formation as active and critical subjects.

The notion of linguistic citizenship, as proposed by Lopes (2018), reinforces that the access to different languages and critical literacy is a right for everyone. This citizenship involves ensuring that all students have the opportunity to participate fully of the communicative practices that circulate in society, understanding the discourses that question them and can also produce meanings, act and transform. Language, in this sense, it is a school content and a tool for empowerment and transformation social.

Teaching English as an additional language needs to be guided by principles ethical and pedagogical that consider the subjects in their complexity. The construction of linguistic and cultural identities is a continuous process crossed by relations of power, and the school has the role of providing a safe and inclusive space for all students can express themselves, learn and recognize themselves as full citizens. As



argue Menezes de Souza (2011) and Pennycook (2001), it is not just about teaching a foreign language, but to educate for dialogue, justice and coexistence democratic.

Byram (1997) does not directly address the relationship between language, identity and citizenship in the terms used in many contemporary debates about multiculturalism and critical training, but, underpins this relationship by proposing that language teaching foreigners should promote the development of intercultural competence as part of the formation of the intercultural citizen. For this author, when learning a foreign language, the individual has access to new ways of seeing the world, and this also implies a critical reflection on their own cultural identity. Therefore, language teaching must promote an attitude of openness towards others, respect for diversity and willingness to dialogue — essential elements for civic education in democratic societies and plurals.

By emphasizing *savoir être* (the willingness to relativize one's own values) and *savoir s'engager* (critical engagement), Byram (1997) shows that the construction of citizenship is intrinsically related to contact with linguistic otherness and cultural. However, other authors address the relationship between language, identity and citizenship, such as Moita Lopes (2006), who discusses how language is a place for the construction of social identities. He argues that language teaching should not can be neutral, as it involves values, world views and ways of acting socially.

Learning a new language should be seen as a process that helps the student to reconstruct his identity and understand how discourses shape relationships of power and citizenship. "Language is, therefore, a space for the dispute of meanings and production of social identities. Teaching it, therefore, is also teaching ways of inhabiting the world.", states Moita Lopes (2006, p. 21).

Rojo (2013) argues that language teaching, especially in a perspective of new literacies, must consider the different ways of living, of communicate and build identities in contemporary times. For her, learning another language is also a means of social and political empowerment, as it enables critical and active participation of students in broad social practices. "Literacy multiples provide subjects with the possibility of seeing themselves, recognizing themselves and project themselves into multiple social and identity roles, favoring a more critical and inclusive." (Rojo, 2013, p. 89).

These authors reinforce the idea that teaching and learning languages is, at the same time, time, form identities and exercise citizenship. Language is an instrument and symbolic space where belongings, values and social relations are negotiated — central elements for the development of conscious, critical and supportive subjects.

### **Pedagogical practices in teaching English with a focus on citizenship**

Considering the proposal for citizenship training, pedagogical practices in teaching English must go beyond the simple repetition of grammatical structures and vocabulary. It is essential that classroom activities are connected to real-life usage situations of language and that encourage students' engagement in topics relevant to their reality. According to Rojo (2013), school language practices must articulate multiple languages and modes of textual production, incorporating elements of culture digital, media and various forms of contemporary expression.

Rojo (2013, p. 98) defends new literacies in the contemporary world, and defines literacy as

[...] the search to cover the uses and social practices of language that involve writing in one way or another, whether they are valued or not valued, local or global, covering diverse social contexts (family, church, work, media, school, etc.), from a sociological, anthropological and sociocultural perspective.

When considering literacy as a social practice inserted in multiple contexts (school, media, family, work, among others), the aforementioned author proposes a plural and critical approach, which is in line with the objective of their work understand English teaching as an instrument for citizenship formation. In the years initials, this understanding is fundamental for the teaching of the foreign language to overcome teaching vocabulary and grammar, but be oriented towards forming capable subjects to communicate, interpret and act in the world — including in intercultural contexts.

This view of literacy also favors the appreciation of linguistic practices of students, respecting their sociocultural diversity, which reinforces the idea of inclusion, identity and democratic participation — central elements to the notion of citizenship. In this sense, the perspective of new literacies contributes to supporting methodologies of English teaching that are more dialogic, meaningful and committed to reality of students and their critical insertion in society. Working with projects didactics, didactic sequences and diverse textual genres favor the development

of communicative and social skills. The intercultural approach, as proposed Byram, Nichols and Stevens (2001), is an important strategy to promote a critical and ethical language education that recognizes cultural and linguistic diversity as value and right.

By integrating activities that involve different textual genres and practices everyday discourses, such as letters, emails, invitations, stories and dialogues, students from the early years develop not only language skills, but also cognitive and socio-emotional. Such practices allow students to articulate their local experiences with global knowledge, making English teaching more meaningful and contextualized. This contributes to the formation of citizens capable of reflecting on the world that surrounds them, respecting differences and exercising their citizenship in a conscious and participatory.

The intercultural approach promotes contact with multiple world views, which is essential in the formation of attitudes of respect and tolerance. By recognizing that the language carries cultural, social and historical values, the teacher acts as a mediator of knowledge and practices that enable students to understand and dialogue with otherness. In this sense, teaching English goes beyond teaching vocabulary and structures. grammatical, becoming a privileged space to discuss issues of identity, belonging, human rights and social justice.

Thus, adopting pedagogical strategies based on projects, genres textual and didactic sequences with an intercultural focus expand opportunities for learning the English language as well as strengthening the social function of the school. This perspective is aligned with contemporary curricular guidelines, such as the BNCC, which emphasizes the role of the school in the integral formation of the student and in the development of skills for exercising citizenship in a globalized, diverse and changing world constant transformation.

Below is a suggestion for a teaching activity in English for the following years: initial stages of elementary education, integrating linguistic education with citizenship training, based on the principles of the BNCC (Brazil, 2018).

Activity: *My Helping Hands* – the suggestion is for the application in the 2nd to the 3rd year of Elementary School, with duration of 2 classes of 50 minutes each. The general objective is to develop vocabulary basic English related to actions of help and coexistence, promoting attitudes citizens in the school environment.



### Activity Steps:

1. Conversation circle (Portuguese and English): Start with a conversation about what is help people: at home, at school and in the community. Ask: How can we help? someone? Why is helping important? Introduce and teach some simple expressions in English related to the topic, with gestures: *Help my friend. Pick up the trash* (collect the trash). *Say please and thank you* (say please and thank you). *Share my toys* (share my toys). *Be kind* (be kind). Use posters with pictures and mime to facilitate understanding.

2. Practical activity: "Helping Hands Mural". Each child draws the outline of your hand on a sheet of paper and, with the teacher's support, writes in English a action that represents a gesture of citizenship (a short phrase among those taught). Example: *I help my teacher. Or I say thank you.* Then, each student presents his or her sentence orally. (with visual support) and the mural is mounted with the title *Our Helping Hands* in the hallway or classroom.

3. Closing song: Teach and sing with the students the adapted song from *If you're happy and you know it*, replacing it with positive action phrases: *If you help a friend today, clap your hands! If you pick up trash today, stomp your feet!* This reinforces the vocabulary in a playful and memorable way.

BNCC (Brazil, 2018) skills involved:

- EF15LP10: Use oral language to interact in the classroom and in other spaces in the school.
- EF15EF02: Share, respect rules and value attitudes of solidarity and cooperation.
- EF15LI01 (English Language): Understand and use expressions and words family members in everyday contexts.
- EF15LI05: Participate in oral interactions in English with the support of gestures, mimes and images.

Expected results: to expand English vocabulary with social meaning and practical; encourage citizenship attitudes, such as solidarity, respect and cooperation; develop oral skills and creative expression through art, music and dramatization.

As established by the BNCC (Brazil, 2018), competencies guide the teaching the English language in a way that goes beyond grammatical mastery and translation,



seeking to train students capable of communicating, reflecting critically, valuing cultural and linguistic diversity, and use language as a tool for social integration and access to knowledge. The approach is interdisciplinary, multicultural and technological, promoting the development of literacy practices aligned with social contexts and contemporaries.

It is possible to illustrate with two examples of specific skills (Brazil, 2018, p. 246):

Competence 1: Identify one's own place and that of others in a multilingual and multicultural world, reflecting critically on how learning the English language contributes to the insertion of individuals in the globalized world, including in the world of work.

Competence 5: Use new technologies, with new languages and modes of interaction, to research, select, share, position oneself and produce meanings in literacy practices in the English language, in an ethical, critical and responsible manner.

Competency 1 deals with students' critical awareness of their role in a globalized and multicultural world, recognizing the importance of the English language for their social and professional insertion. And Competence 5 emphasizes the use of technologies digital tools as tools for producing and interpreting meanings in the English language, developing literacy practices with ethics, criticality and responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the reflections developed throughout this work, we saw that teaching of the English language in the early years of elementary school can be significant in construction of citizenship in the school context. Based on the BNCC guidelines, it is clear that It is known that learning English, from the earliest years, goes beyond the acquisition of linguistic skills: it is deeply linked to the formation of subjects critical, ethical, empathetic and socially active. By treating language as a social practice, inserted in real contexts of communication, teaching English favors the development of intercultural communicative competence, expanding the capacity of students to understand and interact with cultural diversity at local and global levels.

This approach, centered on playful, contextualized and meaningful, allows children to build a positive relationship with the language foreign, while developing democratic values, sensitivity ethics and awareness of their rights and duties. By promoting multiliteracies, the teaching of

English enhances inclusion, the appreciation of diversity and social mobility, fundamental elements for the consolidation of civic education.

Thus, the teaching of the English language in the early years, when articulated with a critical and inclusive pedagogical proposal, effectively contributes to the exercise of citizenship, by preparing students to act with responsibility, respect and engagement in a plural and globalized society. In this sense, the foreign language ceases to be just curricular content and becomes a tool for emancipation and social transformation.

Teaching foreign languages, especially English, surpasses the transmission of grammatical structures and vocabulary, since teaching is, above all, a practice pedagogical approach that contributes significantly to the civic education of students. When articulate language, identity and culture, language teaching enables students reflect critically on themselves, on others and on the social dynamics that involve them. Based on authors such as Moita Lopes (2006), Rojo (2013), Norton (2000), Candau (2008), Lopes (2018) and Byram (1997), it is understood that language is a space of construction of meanings and negotiation of identities, and is therefore an instrument of empowerment, social participation and transformation. Thus, by promoting respect to diversity, intercultural dialogue and critical awareness, language teaching foreigners in Brazilian public schools contributes decisively to the formation of autonomous, ethical subjects committed to social justice — fundamental pillars of citizenship in democratic societies.

Based on the analysis of pedagogical practices aimed at teaching English in initial years of Basic Education, it can be concluded that it is fully possible to integrate the teaching the English language to democratic, ethical and inclusive values. From the perspective of new literacies (Rojo, 2013), foreign language teaching assumes a relevant social function, by articulating language, culture and citizenship in practices meaningful and contextualized. Working with different textual genres, projects didactics and activities that involve the students' reality favor not only the development of linguistic skills, but also of abilities socio-emotional and attitudes of respect, solidarity, empathy and cooperation.

Such pedagogical practices contribute to the appreciation of cultural diversity and for the formation of subjects capable of acting critically and ethically in different contexts, aligning with the BNCC competencies (Brazil, 2018), which guide teaching



of the English language as a tool for exercising citizenship and active integration in a globalized, plural and constantly changing world.

Based on the reflections and practices presented in this work, it can be stated that teaching English in the early years of elementary school has an effective and strategic role in the formation of a critical and participatory citizenship. Far from being limited to memorization of vocabulary and grammatical structures, the teaching of the English language, when based in the principles of new literacies and guided by the BNCC guidelines, it becomes a means of promoting values such as respect for diversity, solidarity, empathy and dialogue intercultural.

By articulating language and social experiences, the pedagogical practices described — such as didactic projects, use of different textual genres, collaborative activities and intercultural approach — expand students' communicative repertoire and develop their ethical and social awareness. In this way, teaching English contributes to form subjects better prepared to understand, respect and interact with others, recognizing themselves as part of a collective. Thus, language learning English in the early years becomes a powerful tool for inclusion, participation democratic and construction of plural identities in an increasingly globalized world.

In view of this, the importance of rethinking English teaching from the early years as a space for the construction of meanings, intercultural dialogue and training ethics. By integrating democratic and inclusive values into pedagogical practices, the school fulfills its social role of forming critical, conscious subjects capable of acting with responsibility in the world. It is hoped that this reflection will inspire educators to take on a transformative stance, promoting language teaching that respects diversity, encourage participation and contribute to an education committed to citizenship, inclusion and democratic values.

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