

## Monological education and pandemic: the return of those who never went

### ABSTRACT

Educational research into classroom discourse over the course of the last four decades has documented the prevalence of teacher talk and control; questions are predominantly closed or factual, students' responses often do not exceed three words, and teachers' feedback is mainly about correctness. However, there is increasing evidence that through dialogue students can learn more about the topic under study, retain the learning gains for longer times, and develop reasoning skills. These findings have been transformed into strategies to promote educational dialogues, making them richer and meaningful. Since this approach is not widely embraced in Brazilian public schools, we planned a classroom-based intervention focused on the development of teachers' dialogic practices facilitated by a school-based teacher professional development program. In March of 2020, when the first workshop was ready to be conducted, the pandemic arrived in Brazil and demanded the closure of all schools. In this paper, we reflect on what happened to classroom dialogue during the pandemic. First, a brief review of the highly unequal conditions to access internet and computers, basic means of the new educational platform, is presented. Second, based on interviews with two teachers and data from the municipality, we discuss, through the lenses of dialogical education, the school practice during pandemic times and how teachers have been facing the situation and portraying solutions to interact with students. Finally, through our analysis of schooling in the pandemic, we propose an expansion of the notion of monologue and dialogue to include more than verbal interactions. We argue that the concrete conditions of pandemics promptly impose a monologic model of education, despite all teacher's efforts to promote more interactions and dialogue.

**KEYWORDS:** Dialogue. Dialogical Education. Pandemics.

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## INTRODUCTION

*One day we arrived at the school and it was said that would be the last day.  
From that day on, the school would be closed.  
Ana, school teacher.*

In the last 30 years, much research has been devoted to understanding the dynamics of classroom interactions. Language, within this context, has assumed a prominent place as an object of research, not only because students' voices should be heard at schools but also because dialogic approaches could bring valuable results to students' learning and transform classrooms into more interactive sites (BAKER, 2020). This means that dialogical approaches could improve the quality of education (RESNICK *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, interventionist studies have found that teachers who participate in workshops or reflective dialogues are more liable to change their communication approach towards a more dialogic nature (HOWE; MERCER, 2017). Despite strong empirical evidence on the improvement of the educational process when using more interactive and dialogical approaches, the vast majority of classrooms is teacher-centered or, more specifically, teacher-delivering-information-centered, which might fit under the "banking" concept of education (FREIRE, 2017). In this perspective, knowledge is conceived as a collection of isolated facts, and teaching is merely the transmission of these pieces of information to students' minds (LYLE, 2008). In Freirean terms, teachers make deposits that are stored in the students' heads. Banking concept of education is not exclusively related to a sort of teaching technique or methodology, in a narrow sense. Nevertheless it is inevitably rooted in a very oppressive form of education, which is committed to the status quo, maintaining unequal social structures while avoiding bringing to the educational arena and the dialogue in classrooms social/cultural/economics issues.

Since this model of education is still widely embraced in Brazilian public schools, and also in Latin America (ALBORNOZ *et al.*, 2020), we planned a classroom-based intervention focused on the development of teachers' dialogic practices facilitated by a school-based teacher professional development program, in public schools in the south of Brazil, through an agreement between university and municipality. We were ready to start a teacher professional development program for dialogue when the pandemic was declared and all the schools were closed by mid-March 2020. Since then, the focus was not to conduct an intervention to promote dialogue but to understand the changes imposed by the contextual circumstances that might constrain the teacher-students interactions. So, following the decisions taken by the municipality and the perceptions of two teachers, we argue that teacher-students interaction that could already be considered monologic was more than accepted by the participants and amplified by the rules and medium of online interaction.

In this paper, we reflect on what happened to classroom dialogue during the pandemic. First, we present a brief review of the highly unequal numbers of households with computer and internet access, which were transformed into the new educational settings. Second, based on data from the municipality level and interviews with two teachers, we discuss the school practice during the pandemic of COVID-19 through the lenses of dialogical education: the conditions teachers have been facing and how they are portraying solutions to interact with students. Finally, we expand the notion of monologue and dialogue to include more than

verbal interactions in our analysis of schooling in the pandemic. In short, we argue that despite teachers' effort and agency to overcome the situation, the constraints imposed by concrete conditions prompted the revival of a monologic model of education, more unequal, non-inclusive, and devoid of students' voices. In this vein, we propose two research questions to be explored in this study:

- 1) What kind of teaching strategies were developed by the agents during the context of emergency remote education?
- 2) To what extent did these strategies reinforce a monologic model of education or promote a dialogical one?

## **THE THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

Educational research into classroom discourse over the course of the last four decades has documented the prevalence of teacher talk and control; questions are predominantly closed or factual, students' responses often do not exceed three words, and teachers' feedback is mainly about correctness. Despite the many efforts to change this classroom dynamics, this characterization is still world-wide recognized (ALEXANDER, 2001; GUZMÁN; LARRAIN, 2021) and interactionally described as a triadic discourse referred to as initiation, response, and feedback or evaluation (IRF or IRE) (MEHAN, 2014; SINCLAIR; COULTHARD, 1975). The control of the talk is realized when this IRF template includes a closed initiation question, followed by a brief student's response and then evaluative feedback coming from the teacher.

This kind of interaction points to a directive and controlling teaching in which the purpose of a teacher's initiation and evaluation is to direct students' responses towards a required answer (ALEXANDER, 2005; SMITH *et al.*, 2004). In fact, 70% of students' answers are no longer than three words and just a handful of them participate frequently in the classroom talk (HARGREAVES *et al.*, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2004). The result is the prevalence of the teacher's talk and control and the reinforcement of the students' passive role, which has been defined as a monologic talk or monologic education (SKIDMORE, 2006).

However, there has been increasing evidence that through dialogue students can learn more about the topic under study, retain the learning gains for longer times, and develop reasoning skills. These findings have been transformed into strategies to promote educational dialogues, making them richer and meaningful. So, in dialogic teaching, there is a sense of encouraging exploration and development of meanings in which teachers and students make relevant and extended contributions to a given idea to move it forward (MERCER; LITTLETON, 2007; SCOTT, 1998). Therefore, classroom interaction is considered "to be more dialogic the more it represents the students' points of view and the discussion includes [both] their [ideas] and [the] teacher's ideas" (MERCER *et al.*, 2009, p. 354).

In order to grasp what happened to dialogue in the classrooms and changes that took place in the educational setting due to the pandemic, we rely on Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), which provides us not only with a broad vision about human development but also with some methodological tools to analyze subjects in their organizations collectively acting toward some object, i.e. purposefully transforming the reality (STETSENKO; ARIEVITCH, 2010).

Needless to say that CHAT is a wide-ranging theory and it is not our objective here to explore it in all details here – in order to understand its historical development and many strands of this perspective see, for example, Levant (2018) and Yamagata-Lynch (2010). For the purposes of our work, the summarization of five principles proposed by Engeström (2001), to be taken when analyzing any activity, is relevant. In his formulation, the first principle expresses that a “collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as the prime unit of analysis” (p. 136). In this perspective, understanding the development of teaching strategies to face new conditions is only possible when the activity system of the municipal educational system is taken into consideration, with its subjects within the community (of students, teachers, students family, school leaderships, municipal managers), permeated by rules, norms, and presenting a division of labor, mediated by tools (old and emergent ones) aiming at engaging students in the educational activity. Teaching strategies acquire their multifaceted nature only when embedded in this complex net of social relations.

The second principle summarized by Engeström highlights the multivoiced essence of the activity system, which “is always a community of multiple points of view, traditions and interests” (ENGESTRÖM, 2001, p. 136). Even though our research presents the interview with two teachers, their voices inevitably carry others’ voices (students’, parents’ and educational managers’). Not only the activity system embraces the multitude of voices, but also the subjects make themselves up through this myriad of voices and point-of-views. The same multivoiced nature is true for the official documents that synthesize the contradictory process of forging general guidelines (permeated by many voices, interests, and even antagonistic perspectives) for the whole education system, albeit all the uncertainties.

That activity systems are part of a complex network and always in relation to other systems is something emphasized by the first principle. Over and above that, they are not only interrelated here and now. According to Engeström’s third principle, “activity systems take shape and get transformed over lengthy periods of time. Their problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history” (p. 136). Undoubtedly, the pandemic introduced many unexpected factors into schools’ dynamics. However, this misfortune did not arrive in a land without history or not permeated by many historical contradictory processes. Even the pandemic is not constituted by ahistorical or isolated phenomena – one could say that there is no disease in itself, but only real people with the disease (FLECK, 1979). Precisely because of this very contradictory developmental process (of the public health systems, the urban planning, the class structures, the access to scientific resources, and so on), the pandemic has assumed some of its more destructive facets. The whole consequence of the pandemics is only fully comprehended against this complex historical process. Even in the microscale of the pandemic system, at the school level and its singular remote teaching strategies, the teachers we interviewed, when making sense of the phenomena, were constantly historicizing the prior and the actual conditions they have in the school settings.

No less important, the fourth principle unfolds “the central role of contradictions as sources of change and development” (ENGESTRÖM, 2001, p. 137). Taking into account that activities are open systems and that contradictions

are “historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems” (p. 137), when a new element is introduced into the activity, some contradictions might be aggravated to the point that the disturbance is able to produce transformations and generate new activities (objects, rules, instruments, division of labor etc.). Before the pandemic, school activities (and more specifically the interaction between teachers and students) were already permeated by many historically formed contradictions, such as the value attributed to school knowledge, the meaning of the education, the role of teachers’ authority in managing the classroom – just to mention some examples. With the pandemic, and from the introduction of a centralized tool (an online teaching platform), provided by the municipality to organize the materials and facilitate the communication among all actors, the long-term and well-established dynamics of interactions were shaken by the new forms of interactions and their new conditions (lack of equipment and internet access, new rules, another pace of time). Up to this point, we might catch a glimpse of how some activities would develop in the next months, and how some strategies might become the new established ones. However, we still are not able to grasp the extent of the aggravation of the contradictions in the educational system and the path of the ongoing changes.

This leads us to the fifth and last principle in Engeström’s formulation: the possibility of expansive transformations in the activity systems, which is “accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of activity” (ENGESTRÖM, 2001, p. 137). Unfortunately, our analysis shows that, despite the agency of the teachers in trying to promote inclusion and participation of the students, the pandemic aggravated the well-established non-dialogical approaches. However, this does not mean that expansive transformation in this situation cannot happen. On the contrary, from the fifth principle, it is fundamental to emphasize that such transformation takes place precisely by people, in activity, purposefully and agentively changing their own conditions. Paraphrasing (MARX, 1972): we teach under circumstances transmitted from the past, but we should never take this statement as purely deterministic, remembering that we also make these very circumstances.

In this work, the unit of analysis is the activity in which teaching strategies are developed by the school system (teachers, school leadership, and educational managers from the municipality) with the goal of attending to the conditions imposed by the emergency remote education. The focus is not the analysis of these teaching strategies *per se*, but to understand how and why they were materialized in such a way and what are their implications in the students’ learning process. A teaching strategy can be seen as an operational unit that conveys and realizes certain forms of education. That is, a teaching strategy embodies beliefs, aims, norms that make explicit views and contradictions of their authors and institutions, at the same time that it indicates resources, materials, and assessments that concretize the teaching-learning activity.

## **DATA SOURCES AND MATERIALS**

This research draws on the data from interviews with two school teachers (who were about to take part in the teacher professional development program

for dialogue and who felt comfortable to be interviewed) and also from documents of the municipality (in which there was the agreement with the university to promote the program), that outlines the action plan for schools during the pandemic and emergency remote teaching. The research followed the ethical guidelines issued by the Brazilian regulatory committee.

### **Interviews**

We interviewed two upper-primary school teachers in order to grasp their understanding and interpretation of what happened to the educational activity during the remote teaching. Ana (fictitious name) is a female mid-career teacher and teaches Portuguese. Fred (fictitious name) is male mid-career teacher and teaches Religion. We conducted narrative interviews, and teachers were asked to summarize their experiences during the emergency remote teaching. The researcher posed one big question (Could you tell me what happened after the pandemic was declared and how the events followed after that?) and interrupted the narrative just a few times to ask for clarification. The interviews lasted for about 30 minutes. They were video recorded and transcribed in verbatim form.

The content analysis focused on the projected experiences and past actions referred to narrate the events (MUYLAERT *et al.*, 2014). Within this perspective, we do not expect to extract some sort of final evidence of what truly happened to one particular context. Neither do we intend to identify to what extent teachers were loyal to the original action plan for the pandemic remote teaching (documents of the municipality). On the contrary, in these narrative interviews we highlighted utterances in which the teachers elaborated their interpretations about the development (changes, improvements and worsens) of their teaching strategies that aimed at reaching the students. So, when they narrated these events we analyzed the other dimensions they were connected to, such as interaction, educational goals, community and rules, among others.

## **RESULTS**

### **Overall narrative**

In March of 2020 the schools were unexpectedly closed, the classes suspended and the students sent back to their homes. Vis-a-vis such an adverse situation and expecting to continue to a certain extent the educational activities, the municipality adopted a centralized online platform to mediate student's learning. However, due to students' poor Internet connection and inadequate equipment, teachers promptly started using other mediums to communicate with the students, exchange materials/lessons, and clear up doubts. This was done primarily through WhatsApp Messenger, and in some cases through printed materials. The guidelines for sending and receiving the lessons were: teachers should prepare a one-page handout comprising 15 days of student work. After this period, as soon as the printed material arrived at the school, they were quarantined for one week and then graded by the teachers. However, in order to be used as documental proof of assessment, these printed materials, and consequently the teacher's feedback, were not sent again to the students. There were no regular online meetings or group activities.

### Outlining the analysis

Our attempt to grasp what happened with teachers' strategies after the declaration of the pandemic produced the five categories presented in Chart 1. These categories allow us to reconstruct, in a very synthetic way, in this particular case, the contradictory development of teaching strategies to reach students.

Chart 1 – Categories that emerged from the analysis, connected to the development of teaching strategies

Categories that unfold the development of teaching strategies	Contradictory nature revealed/aggravated/imposed by the emergency remote education
Lesson goal	For cognitive learning, for acquiring useful knowledge, for the workforce, for not losing one year, for documental proof.
Interpersonal relationship	Empathy, personal history, one's material condition, one-side communication, directiveness.
Materiality of the interaction	Whatsapp Messenger, printed handouts, asynchronicity.
Legal guarantees	Retaining students materials, one-page 15-day activity, automatic approval, punching the clock
School boundaries	Parents control, material resources, nature of the activities, who is doing the lessons

Source: Authors (2022).

### Lesson goal

This category expresses how “lessons” can be multifaceted and fulfil a myriad of objectives. For the students, keeping doing the lessons might mean to achieve the minimum grade and get certification (for better salary and work requirement). For the teachers, on the other hand, lessons, focused on disciplinary learning, even in their limited form, are the opportunity to not lose any content that could impact the progress to the following grade:

Having online classes during the pandemic was... It would be a 'flawed' year for all future stages, so we needed to validate this year and not have a year missing [...] This year, learning may have existed, but we will only know when they return to the school [...] it's complicated for us to know if there was really learning. (ANA).

Lessons might also be converted into documental proof, complying with the law and ensuring the evidence of students' participation or teacher fulfilling their obligations:

There was a very strong demand, very strong, for the students to deliver the activities. In fact, if that was the goal, it was accomplished because the pedagogues would run after it, they did the active searches [...] teachers were pressed to accept anything and everything... so, if the activity came 'in white',



you consider that the student put their name, grade the activity with 5 points and approve them. (FRED).

We have to prove in some way that there was this school year, right, even if in a different way. (ANA).

### **Interpersonal relationship**

In our analysis, the pandemic and remote teaching brought to the surface the problem of the alterity. First and foremost, it was even more necessary for the school to see/perceive/conceive the students in their particularities (personal history, material conditions) to have them as the other subjects in the educational activity. The original action plan for the pandemic was sensitive to the students' material conditions when outlining a continuous evaluation of their situation. Teachers were also conscious of students' reality when changed from the centralized platform to Whatsapp Messenger or when they expressed (through the interview) a rationale about the differences in students' engagement in solving the tasks (differences in urban and rural areas, types of parents' works, income level) and, to some extent, tried to mend some of the effects of these limitations in the development of the teaching strategies.

Notwithstanding, the category "Interpersonal relationship" allows us to grasp how the other is taken in the communication process and the nature of this process during remote teaching. In short, our analysis shows the prevalence of an one-sided communication.

The oral-verbal-discursive interaction that we usually found in the classroom turned into brief written reports; what was an ongoing interaction became an initiation in which the response arrived with two weeks of delay and obtained almost no feedback. In other words, in many cases the IRF sequence was reduced to a single initiation from the teachers; in others, when there was a student's response, there was not any feedback from the teacher. In the rare moments that there were synchronous interactions, it was more about empathy, and the asynchronous interactions were characterized as a transfer of information: "Students who participated in the online meeting that I arranged asked me to do it more times because they realized that it was not about content, it was about affection" (FRED).

When the interaction is considered a tool for learning, it is considered in the case of clearing up doubts, when the student reaches the teacher with some misunderstanding; it is never posed as an action in which teachers can develop students' reasoning.

### **Materiality of the interaction**

The nature of communication is closely linked to the materiality of the interaction during the pandemic. Despite the municipal effort of giving the teachers an educational platform, the poor connective conditions on the part of students prompted the migration to WhatsApp Messenger and printed handouts: "And after that [the installation of Google Classroom by the municipality], the change from WhatsApp to the platform, there was a relative decline in those who used the internet" (FRED) and "And... in the course of time, many students had to migrate from the platform through the use of cell phones to the printed handouts" (ANA).



From that, teachers started sending the lessons (digital or printed) and getting students' responses only 15 days later. In this perspective, even the Whatsapp Messenger works as a medium of sending activities, not very different from the exchange of printed handouts. In a few cases, students used the messenger to clear up doubts:

Even in the printed handouts, they managed to get someone's WhatsApp and ask questions; and if they were unable to do any activity, they left a message in the handout: 'Teacher, I did it the way I understood it, I don't know if it is right'. (ANA, 2020).

It was worth noting that with the advance of time, instead of students having more opportunities in the digital interaction, they were pressed to go towards the paper/printed interaction.

These mediums of interactions were not built to mediate learning and tend to induce a one-way channel. The printed material was used to convey messages; students used it to write small messages to their teacher explaining the reason that they had not filled the activity or even talking about their lives, "[...] if there was any discursive question, instead of writing 3 lines, they wrote 6, 7, 8 lines. They talked... for example, there was a girl who had an accident and then she ended up in the hospital, so she told what happened" (ANA).

However, at the same time that students were calling for dialogue, the activities should be short and straightforward, and the exchanges were further limited by poor internet connections. Some students did not respond to the teacher's contact:

So this apathy, this non-involvement of the student in an effective way was huge, [...] I believe that maybe this non-involvement with the "class", in this new modality, reflects or enhances the apathy that we already saw in the classroom itself. (FRED).

Many contradictions emerge from the accommodation of aims, needs and conditions.

### **Legal guarantees**

The declaration of the pandemic did not automatically change the regulatory frameworks. Even with the unfolding of remote teaching, some legal obligations attached to the regular educational setting were still in effect, which generated a lot of hesitancy among teachers and educational managers in themes such as completing the same number of school days and teaching time in a quite distinct context: what is the meaning of testifying that a student spent 800 hours studying during the emergency remote teaching?

The ambivalence in the legal framework is also closely linked to one aspect of the contradictory nature of the lessons, when they became documental proof – for precaution, as schools and teachers were explicitly asked to do so: "But I don't know if the majority adopt it either for fear ... of ... afterwards, you never know if the Ministry of Education will not approve it later, or someone..." (ANA).

Then, you must have all the records, the activities delivered and returned, the messages exchanged. [...] There is a concern about parents who can go to the Public Prosecutor's Office and the school may have to take care of managing a situation in front of the prosecution. (FRED, 2020).

In this perspective, both legal aspects and the assessment, instead of being mechanisms to guarantee better educational processes, assume a very limited nature: fulfilling obligations that are not anymore in tune with the ongoing activity.

### **School boundaries**

Another contradictory phenomenon that our analysis could highlight is how the boundaries, or the frontiers, of the school became blurred. One evident aspect is that the school (or part of it, to be precise) effectively moved into students' houses, which inevitably changed families' routines. However, following the physical proximity, some families became closer to the teaching-learning process. In many cases, they were responsible for connecting the student through their mobiles, exchanging the printed handout at school, or getting the free meal offered by the municipality. Some of the parents also followed the students during the activities to verify if they were working seriously and asked the teachers for easier lessons, taking into account the difficulties faced in the remote teaching. Overall, it seems that the new situation produced a closer relationship between family and students regarding the educational process.

However, in some cases, the role of the different subjects in this new school setting became fuzzy:

But there were some cases ... that we cannot know for sure... that I believe that parents or older siblings completed the lessons for the students. [...] You knew that the child or teenager had difficulty in the classroom and when something extremely perfect comes in, a perfect handwriting, for example, it is a little suspicious ..., but they did it ... someone may have helped, someone may have done it for them, but there's no way we can prove it, right... (Ana).

Not only the role of the students and/or parents are blurred. Teachers used to be closer to the students to the point they could identify students' difficulties and their idiosyncrasies. With the advent of remote teaching, even the simple task of making sure that students are doing the lesson of the classroom is repositioned. Students, teachers and parents are now in an activity system with rules and division of labour in transition, so that the modes of acting are not well established.

### **DISCUSSION**

Even when acknowledging the system's development in response to the new conditions, it is hard to say that there was a transformation. The ethos of the teaching-learning activity remained almost intact. The emphasis of traditional approaches centered on content-delivery is clear during remote teaching. Despite all the efforts to be in tune with the students' needs, the strategies revolve around making the best content-delivery possible: "We lost part of the gain that we would have with the previous process in the classroom, but we needed to do our best so that students have a process of learning under the possible circumstances..., in the most excellent way possible" (FRED).

The situation set new conditions for the teaching-learning process, but the solutions were quite common, based on the classroom education. Here, it is not the case to accuse the teachers, both of them were engaged in doing the best they can with all the resources they had in hand, but the contextual situation is rather complex.

First, they were facing a new demand, with uncertain outcomes, and not having almost any control of the process. This contrasts with the regular teaching activity, as teachers always know what to do: “We were developing our activities in the routine way that we do every year, and I believe that in a week the situation has changed completely and then we did not know what would be the best way to proceed” (FRED).

Second, a new tension that appeared in the teaching practice was about the kind of pressure or instruction that should be offered to the students. Should the teachers be severe and ensure a strong line of learning, or should they embrace the students and make the maximum effort to keep them connected with the school? It is not an easy question, with relevant implications whatever the position: “I said to him: 'little guy, you can do it in your way, even if you don't understand” (ANA).

Third, the social situation of the families became important to the teacher-student interaction. The access to equipment and internet connection is highly unequal in Brazil; among households in the D and E classes, the majority do not have access to the computer and the Internet (58%), and more than a third (34%) had access to the Internet only (NIC.BR, 2019). This brings enormous hardship for these students to follow the activities in the remote model. For instance, more than 6 million students had not had access to school activities during October 2020, accounting for 13.2% of students. When looking at the students in vulnerable conditions, this amount rises up to 23%. As a result, 4 million students that were far from the school activities in 2020 dropped out in 2021 (SALDAÑA, 2021).

One last point that needs to be discussed is educational inequality; the unequal access of academic resources to socially excluded communities. It is known that there is a gap between private and public schools in terms of school funding, qualified teachers, technologies, learning tools, cultural experiences among others (THOMPSON, 2020). However, the strategies developed in the emergency remote teaching have aggravated this situation, not only between private and public school but also within the public sector, where students from the same class might have had different learning experiences based on their social conditions. In general, private schools' answer to the pandemic was ready and fast; on the next day of the school closure teachers were at their homes proposing lessons and organizing online meetings while relying on students' families having internet access and technology devices (“RETRATOS DA EDUCAÇÃO...”, 2021).

In public schools, based on our data, it was found that students had highly disproportionate experiences. For instance, while some students had access just to a printed handout without any interaction with their teacher or with digital resources, others who had better social conditions might have had the opportunity to navigate on the internet, watch videos, dealing with animations or simulators, and engage with teachers and colleagues. This poses a difficult issue to teachers, the extension in which they should enrich the learning strategies for those who have access to technology while keeping the majority just with sheets of paper and pencils. It is worth noting that around 70% of the students from the two teachers interviewed were using printed handouts.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

*Hello Ana, good night!*

*The internet at home was cut and my credits also ran-out, I can just use WhatsApp for messages and not anymore for videos. Tomorrow, there will be a call that I can participate in just if I stay on the street to get internet access from my neighbour, is it a problem?*

*Fernanda, Year 5 student, 10 years old.*

The message above was received by teacher Ana on a Sunday night, her student was saying that her internet access was poor allowing just the exchange of files and not participating in the online meeting. Fernanda was considering staying on the street to access the neighbor internet signal. Ana discouraged her from doing that for safety reasons. This raw message might synthesize many of the aspects that this work has opened up: precarious conditions, materiality, interpersonal relationship, school boundaries, among others. We have witnessed in recent decades the emphasis on the need for changes in the classrooms dynamics. The arguments vary from cognitive aspects to perspectives that value social participation under a democratic ethos (SEGAL *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, fostering dialogic pedagogies comprises many dimensions (teaching-learning, instruments and assumptions) and components that reflect key elements considered to play a role in enacting the approach (CALCAGNI; LAGO, 2018). In this scenario, dialogic pedagogies have been gaining space, especially from cultural perspectives, emphasizing the role of language in learning (MERCER; HOWE, 2012).

However, despite the effort to enrich classroom dialogue, a monological model of education is not only still in place in many schools but the emergency remote teaching also amplified it during the pandemic: "the return of those who never went" expresses that. The educational strategies developed during the processes reified a conceptualization that knowledge was circulating as the verbal interactions continue to be transmitted, although just in written format. It might be said that there was a reduction of the mediating tools to written messages. Indeed, this reduction had an impact on limiting students' learning.

Regarding the viable transformations, we showed that the changes system developed were not of radical ruptures, allowing much permanence of the present model, such as rules, goals, and the nature of communication. Indeed, despite all hope, it would be naïve to expect that dialogue would thrive under limited and deprived conditions. However, what was unexpected was the extent to which dialogue was reduced in the current circumstance. We might frame one overall contradiction that surpasses all the categories, despite the increase of the monolocicity, the community got close to the school and there was an increase of the esteem: teachers, school leaderships, and municipal managers were more conscious about the students' well-being and their economic-social conditions.

Finally, we should come back to Freire's notion of banking education and say that the emergency remote teaching implemented in most Brazilian public schools was an online/digital version of the same banking education. Students were still being viewed as blank accounts to be filled with knowledge: in this case, the deposits were made via digital transaction. The questions of power raised by Freire were still in place, aggravating social and educational inequalities through a system that determines the content and strategies by default of students, from whom is expected the reproduction of an answer taken as correct.

# EDUCAÇÃO MONOLÓGICA E PANDEMIA: O RETORNO DOS QUE NÃO FORAM

## RESUMO

A pesquisa educacional sobre o diálogo da sala de aula ao longo das últimas quatro décadas documentou a prevalência da fala e do controle do professor. No entanto, há evidências crescentes de que, por meio do diálogo, os alunos podem aprender mais sobre o tema em estudo, reter os ganhos de aprendizagem por mais tempo e desenvolver habilidades de raciocínio. Esses achados se transformaram em estratégias de promoção de diálogos educativos, tornando-os mais ricos e significativos. Como essa abordagem não é amplamente adotada nas escolas públicas brasileiras, planejamos uma intervenção escolar com foco no desenvolvimento de práticas dialógicas dos professores, promovida por um programa de formação de professores. Em março de 2020, quando a primeira oficina estava pronta para ser realizada, a pandemia chegou ao Brasil e exigiu o fechamento de todas as escolas. Neste artigo, refletimos sobre o que aconteceu com o diálogo em sala de aula durante a pandemia. Em primeiro lugar, apresentamos uma breve revisão das condições altamente desiguais de acesso à internet e aos computadores, meios básicos da nova plataforma educacional. Em segundo lugar, a partir de entrevistas com dois professores, analisamos por meio da Teoria da Atividade, a prática escolar em tempos de pandemia, como os professores têm enfrentado a situação e elaborado soluções para interagir com os alunos. Finalmente, propomos uma ampliação da noção de monólogo e diálogo para incluir mais do que interações verbais. Argumentamos que apesar de todos os esforços do professor para promover mais interações e diálogo, as condições concretas das pandemias impuseram prontamente um modelo monológico de educação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Diálogo. Educação Dialógica. Pandemia.

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## NOTES

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