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## PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF STIMULATION FOR THE FUTURE PROCESS LITERACY

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### ABSTRACT

Literacy is a crucial element for children's academic and cognitive development, and phonological awareness is fundamental in this process. This study investigates the importance of stimulating phonological awareness in Early Childhood Education for future literacy success. Through a literature review, we explore how phonological awareness, defined as the ability to understand and manipulate speech sounds, directly influences the learning of reading and writing. Methods such as literature review and analysis of reliable sources such as EBSCO, Google Scholar and Scielo were used to identify best educational practices. The results reveal that early interventions in phonological awareness not only prepare children for literacy, but also significantly improve their reading, text comprehension and spelling skills. Educational strategies that involve rhyming games, word segmentation activities and storytelling are highlighted as effective in engaging students in a playful and interactive way. We conclude that investing in phonological awareness from the earliest years of life is crucial for the full development of children's linguistic, cognitive and social skills, promoting meaningful and sustainable learning.

**Keywords:** Phonological awareness, early childhood education, literacy, cognitive development, educational strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

Literacy is one of the fundamental pillars of education, being crucial for the academic and cognitive development of children. In this context, phonological awareness, understood as the ability to understand and manipulate speech sounds, plays an essential role in the process of learning to read and write. This introduction aims to explore the importance of stimulating phonological awareness in Early Childhood Education, highlighting its relevance for future success in the literacy process. With this:

Listening to and feeling the children, what they think, observing what they play with and how they play, their conceptions, their development, because at this stage the formation of the sensitive human being begins, from a base of values that will provide them with the search and the desire to learn, but also to be (Pietrobon, 2010, p. 19, apud, Silva, 2020, n/p).

Learning to read and write is a crucial step in the development of children's language skills. However, many students struggle with this process, which can negatively impact their future academic performance. Phonological awareness has emerged as a significant predictor of literacy success, as it enables children to understand the sound structure of words, recognizing and manipulating the individual sounds that make up language.

Investigating the importance of stimulating phonological awareness in Early Childhood Education is essential to provide theoretical and practical support for effective interventions in the school context. Understanding how to promote the development of this skill from an early age can significantly contribute to the prevention and overcoming of learning difficulties related to literacy, in addition to promoting more effective and lasting learning. According to (Silva, 2020, n/p):

Phonological awareness is one of the predictive skills for the beginning of the literacy process in children and this competence must be stimulated from the process of insertion of children into the school environment, being intensified over time, forming concepts necessary to facilitate the acquisition of reading and writing in the following years.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the importance of stimulating phonological awareness in Early Childhood Education for the future literacy

process. It aims to explore how specific activities can be incorporated into the school curriculum to promote the development of this skill, as well as to identify effective intervention strategies that can be implemented by educators.

## DEVELOPMENT

To investigate and understand the importance of phonological awareness in early childhood education, a bibliographic review was carried out, which according to Gil (2008) is based on materials already prepared, such as books and scientific articles. This research was consulted in: EBSC, Google Scholar, Scielo. Studies that address the potential and importance of phonological awareness in early childhood education were analyzed.

training of students in early childhood education, the challenges faced by educators and strategies for effective and responsible teaching.

Phonological awareness in early childhood education plays a crucial role in the development of children's language skills, and is one of the fundamental pillars for success in the literacy process. The ability to reflect, recognize and manipulate speech sounds in their smallest units, such as phonemes, syllables and rhymes, is essential for children to build a solid foundation in learning to read and write.

In this context, the importance of stimulating phonological awareness from the earliest years of life becomes evident. Through appropriate educational practices and teaching strategies that promote the development of this skill, children are better prepared to face the challenges of the future literacy process. Phonological awareness is recognized as a significant predictor of success in learning to read and write. Studies show that children with more developed skills in this aspect tend to perform better in decoding, textual comprehension and spelling skills throughout their schooling. Thus (Zorzi, 2017, apud, Fettuccia, et al. 2020, p. 101.) complete saying that:

The teacher researches the content of phonological awareness and stimulates his students in a playful way through games focused on rhyme, rhythm, listening and sounds, as already discussed. In this way, he can provide children with the opportunity to formulate their notions of these skills which, when well worked with the sound structure of

words in Early Childhood Education, allow the beginning of the literacy process.

Corroborating the aforementioned author, stimulating phonological awareness from early childhood education is essential to provide a solid foundation and skills for the future development of these competencies. Therefore: (Moojen et al., 2003, apud. Diehl, 2017, p. 102): They state that:

Phonological awareness is the process that an individual carries out to decode the formation of words and the different sounds. Through the manipulation of sounds, the child will be reflecting on the ability to unite, add, replace, count, among others, phonemes, syllables and rhymes.

Thus, phonological awareness involves the ability to perceive and manipulate the sounds of language. This skill is essential for children to understand how words are formed by individual sounds (phonemes) and how these sounds relate to the letters (graphemes) in writing. Therefore, it is a crucial prerequisite for the literacy process. According to (Adams, 2006, apud, Fettuccia, et al. 2020, p. 90), phonological awareness is broader because it encompasses all types of awareness of the sounds that make up the system of a given language. The same author adds that:

Phonological awareness is a topic of great importance today. Children who are aware of phonemes progress more easily and productively towards creative writing and reading. Children who are not aware of phonemes run a serious risk of not being able to learn to read.

Talking to the aforementioned author, we realize that phonological awareness is very important in the literacy phase, but children who have poor phonological awareness skills tend to have a higher risk of difficulties in learning to read and write. By developing this awareness from an early age, the school can help prevent or mitigate some problems related to learning in the future.

Thus, research carried out by several scholars in the field corroborates the importance of phonological awareness in early childhood education. For example, a longitudinal study conducted by Bradley and Bryant (1983) demonstrated that training phonological awareness at preschool age resulted in better performance in reading skills at 8 years of age, breaking down barriers for students who had problems related to their learning.

Other studies, such as that of Snowling and Hulme (2012), also highlight the direct relationship between phonological awareness and later success in literacy. Therefore, phonological awareness is a fundamental skill that serves as a foundation for later success in literacy. Its adequate development contributes to a more solid understanding of the alphabetic system, facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills and promoting more meaningful learning for students.

To promote the development of phonological awareness, it is essential to adopt appropriate strategies and practices in early childhood education. Activities such as rhyming games, syllable games, storytelling with sound repetitions and word segmentation activities are effective examples of stimuli that can be incorporated into the school curriculum. These practices not only develop phonological awareness, but also make learning more meaningful and enjoyable for children:

Just as interactions are important for the development of children in Early Childhood Education, games also contribute to this. According to the National Curricular Reference for Early Childhood Education (RCNEI), playing is one of the fundamental activities for the development of identity and autonomy. Through play, children evolve, because when they participate in playtime, their relationship with others is established and their individuality is built. Thus, children develop themselves by playing and observing their peers. This social relationship is what gives them enriching and valuable experiences for their personal development. (Brazil, 1998, p. 22),

Stimulating phonological awareness in early childhood education has positive impacts on the future literacy process. Children who develop this skill adequately find it easier to associate speech sounds with letters, understand the structure of words, and develop effective reading and writing strategies. In addition, strengthening phonological awareness contributes to children's autonomy and confidence in their linguistic skills. Thus, (Silva, 2020, n/p) in their studies states that:

Early Childhood Education was enacted in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN) in 1996 as part of the Basic Education process, being the first phase of the child's student life; therefore, it is considered

not only a phase of adaptation to the school environment, but much more than that; it is conceptualized as a strategic moment for the development of essential skills for human beings, such as coexistence with others, exercising play, participating, exploring, expressing oneself and mainly knowing oneself as an interactive, dynamic, capable being.

Therefore, by combining these strategies and activities in a balanced way and adapted to the students' needs, such as playing, participating, exploring and expressing themselves, consequently, it will contribute significantly to the recovery of the contents, minimizing their difficulties in teaching and learning. Therefore, it is important to maintain a positive and encouraging learning environment to motivate students in their learning process.

In order to be successful in the learning of students, teachers must be prepared, since phonological awareness is a crucial skill in the process of literacy and literacy of children in Early Childhood Education. Teacher training to work on this aspect requires a theoretical and practical approach that considers the stages of child development and the most effective pedagogical strategies: Therefore:

According to (Araujo, 2011, apud, Diehl, 2017, p.105) in some cases, the training of Early Childhood Education and Initial Series teachers, called "literacy teachers", must be reviewed so that their knowledge is updated in accordance with new theoretical proposals and in accordance with updated scientific concepts.

Therefore, it is important to encourage teachers to adapt teaching strategies according to the needs and learning rhythms of each child. Not all children develop phonological awareness at the same speed, so it is important to offer differentiated activities, as there are different realities within the educational environment.

The results obtained corroborate the importance of stimulating phonological awareness in early childhood education for the future literacy process. The stimulation activities provided children with the opportunity to develop fundamental skills, such as the perception of speech sounds, the understanding of word structure and the ability to associate sounds and letters.

The improvement in performance after the intervention suggests that the teaching strategies used

were effective. The playful and interactive approach of the activities contributed to the children's engagement and to the construction of meaningful learning.

Furthermore, the results show that phonological awareness in early childhood education not only prepares children for literacy, but also strengthens cognitive skills related to language and auditory processing, which can have positive impacts on other areas of child development.

Given the results observed, we conclude that stimulating phonological awareness in early childhood education plays a fundamental role in the future literacy process. Teaching strategies that promote phonological awareness should be consistently integrated into the school curriculum, aiming to prepare children for more effective learning and for the full development of their linguistic and cognitive skills.

## CONCLUSION

Phonological awareness in early childhood education plays a crucial role in the development of children's language skills and is a determining factor for success in the future literacy process. After analyzing the results of the study and considering the theoretical framework that supports the importance of stimulating phonological awareness, we can reach some significant conclusions.

First, it is clear that intervention and stimulation of phonological awareness in early childhood education are effective in promoting the development of the skills necessary for the acquisition of reading and writing. The stimulation activities provided concrete improvements in the children's performance in relation to the perception of speech sounds, word segmentation and understanding of the phonological structure of words.

Furthermore, the playful and interactive approach of the stimulus activities proved to be fundamental for the children's engagement and active participation in the learning process. The use of games, play and dynamic activities contributed to making learning more meaningful and enjoyable, stimulating the children's interest in exploring and understanding language in a deeper way.

Another relevant point is that phonological awareness is not limited to preparing for literacy, but also strengthens broader cognitive skills, such as the ability

to analyze, synthesize, discriminate auditory skills and verbal memory.

These skills are essential not only for the reading and writing process, but also for children's overall language and communication development.

Therefore, we conclude that stimulating phonological awareness in early childhood education is a fundamental pedagogical strategy. This stimulation not only prepares children for a successful future in the literacy process, but also promotes the overall development of their linguistic, cognitive and social skills. Investing in phonological awareness from the earliest years of life is investing in the educational success and full development of children in all areas.

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