



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DA PARAÍBA
CENTRO DE CIÊNCIAS HUMANAS, LETRAS E ARTES
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LINGUÍSTICA

JANAÍNE DOS SANTOS ROLIM

**THE POWER OF PLAY: A SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF
CHILDREN'S NARRATIVES ABOUT WOMEN THROUGH BARBIE DOLLS**

João Pessoa – PB

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Tese apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Linguística (PROLING) da Universidade Federal da Paraíba, na área de concentração de Teoria e Análise Linguística e linha de pesquisa Linguagem, Sentido e Cognição, como requisito para obtenção de grau de Doutora em Linguística.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Jan Edson Rodrigues Leite

Coorientadora: Prof.^a Dr.^a Vânia Soares Barbosa

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2025

Catálogo na publicação
Seção de Catalogação e Classificação

R748p Rolim, Janaine dos Santos.

The power of play: a social and cognitive analysis of children's narratives about women through barbie dolls / Janaine dos Santos Rolim. - João Pessoa, 2025. 319 f. : il.

Orientação: Jan Edson Rodrigues Leite.

Coorientação: Vânia Soares Barbosa.

Tese (Doutorado) - UFPB/CCHLA.

1. Cognitive linguistics. 2. Systemic functional linguistics. 3. Discourse analysis. 4. Women's empowerment. 5. Barbie - social aspects. I. Leite, Jan Edson Rodrigues. II. Barbosa, Vânia Soares. III. Título.

UFPB/BC

CDU 81'4(043)

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Data da aprovação: 16 de dezembro de 2025

MEMBROS COMPONENTES DA BANCA EXAMINADORA

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João Pessoa – PB
2025

“Eu esperava que o tinteiro contivesse a tinta mais negra para dar vida às minhas páginas em branco; todavia, enquanto a minha pena vagava pelo pergaminho, percebi que a tonalidade que saía era como de sangue carmesim.” (Rolim, 2025)

“I had hoped the inkwell held the blackest ink to breathe life into my blank pages; yet as my quill wandered across the parchment, I beheld the hue that poured forth was as crimson blood.” (ibid., our translation)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Brazilian Portuguese

Antemão, gostaria de destacar que não me sinto plenamente capaz de encontrar palavras que traduzam, de forma verdadeiramente fidedigna, tudo aquilo que sinto ao escrever esta sessão de agradecimentos. Ainda assim, empenhei-me, nas linhas que seguem, em derramar um pouco do que carrego em minha alma quanto à gratidão que sinto por todas as pessoas que caminharam ao meu lado ao longo desta longa e intensa jornada acadêmica.

Destaco meus primeiros fios de agradecimentos Àquele que é digno de toda honra, poder e glória para todo o sempre: Jesus, o Cristo. Agradeço-Lhe por me conceder o dom da vida, por ter nascido saudável e com uma família que sempre me instigou a estudar, apesar de todas as dificuldades encontradas ao longo do caminho, sobretudo as financeiras. Porém, o Senhor foi fiel, desde sempre, me dando forças para continuar a caminhada, quando eu pensei diversas vezes em desistir. Só Ele e eu sabemos os sabores e dessabores dessa caminhada, especialmente dos últimos momentos que marcaram sua conclusão. Todavia, ao olhar para a cruz, eu lembrava de quem eu era, e de quem eu não era; respirando, assim, a vitalidade que me bastava para prosseguir. Obrigada, Senhor.

Aproveito esta linha da vida para estender meus agradecimentos agora aos meus pais; Rosenilda dos Santos Rolim e Ednaldo Rolim, que ao longo desses anos carregaram comigo a responsabilidade e ética humana de fazer pesquisa e de agir com dignidade como ser humano. Hoje eu sou pesquisadora por causa deles. Foram eles que me deram sustento alimentar e, também, um ninho, para que eu pudesse criar asas e voar. Deus é testemunha do quanto eu sou grata pela vida deles, e por poder tê-los comigo. Eu não teria chegado até aqui, de forma alguma, sem eles em minha vida. Tudo que eu conquistei não seria nada se não os tivesse para compartilhar os frutos da minha/nossa colheita.

A próxima pessoa a quem dedico espaço aqui para externalizar minha gratidão é a minha irmã gêmea Janine Rolim: aquela em quem eu sempre me inspirei. Janine sempre foi uma irmã forte, como uma águia que ressurgia das cinzas, e voava sobre quaisquer obstáculos. Uma pesquisadora deslumbrante, que sempre lia meus textos e me impulsionava a seguir em frente, sem olhar para trás. Se hoje estou aqui, é porque aprendi a surfar as ondas da vida com ela. E hoje, acredito que sou empoderada o suficiente para ajudá-la, de modo a retribuir tudo o que aprendi com ela; pois ser família consiste nisto: segurar a mão um do outro e não soltar diante das tempestades da vida.

Saindo do ninho familiar, mas sem deixar o sentimento de família de lado, destaco este próximo parágrafo para Danielle Almeida, minha orientadora de mestrado, professora de inglês e, com muita alegria em dizer, amiga. Eu nunca pensei em minha vida que teria uma professora como Dani, e que posteriormente teria a honra de tê-la como minha orientadora. Além de ser linda, ela era muito inteligente. Ela sempre ouvia isso de mim e dizia: “ah, para, Jana” com um brilho no olhar. Dani, em sua vida, abriu as portas para um mundo cheio de oportunidades para uma menina que nunca sequer conhecera um mundo que não fosse a sua pequena cidade. Ela trouxe o mundo aberto em suas riquezas divinas para o meu “mundinho”, e me proporcionou pesquisar a partir dali, de modo a romper o véu das impossibilidades e, assim, voar alto. E eu voei. Porém, Dani também voou, para um outro mundo muito além do arco-íris ainda durante a escrita do meu doutorado; o que tornou o processo de escrita bem mais difícil do que eu poderia imaginar. Espero que ela esteja voando feliz no jardim da eterna infância. Ainda é muito difícil acreditar que ela partiu de forma tão repentina.

Todavia, Dani deixou um fruto em minha vida, um fruto muito suculento, generoso, amável e precioso: Vânia Barbosa, minha coorientadora da presente tese de doutorado. Nosso encontro aconteceu ainda em 2018, porém, devido à minha falta de maturidade, destaco estas linhas para agradecer o momento em que meus olhos se abriram e eu vi Vânia de verdade: de tênis vermelho, segurando sua mala de viagem e me encontrando no aeroporto de São Paulo rumo a New York City. What????!!!! Aquele momento foi mágico e está para sempre congelado em minha memória. Vânia e eu não sabíamos, mas aquele momento marcaria nossa vida para sempre. Hoje, posso dizer que Vânia, além de me orientar academicamente para a minha tese, foi também a materialização da leveza do ser humano no momento em que eu mais precisava para prosseguir com a minha tese. Eu precisava de amor para seguir arando meu jardim da escrita, e ela foi uma fadinha que sempre ligava para mim quando eu estava sofrendo. Obrigada por sempre me ouvir e me dar palavras de consolo, Vânia, e por sempre me lembrar de quem eu sou e, sobretudo, de quem eu não sou.

Nesse tocante, eu não poderia deixar de demonstrar minha grande gratidão àquele que eu denomino de *Bom Samaritano*, que me adotou e providenciou um lugar para que eu pudesse chamar de família quando eu pensei que seria o meu fim: Jan Edson Rodrigues Leite, meu querido orientador da presente tese de doutorado. Durante um ano e meio de orientação, eu pude conhecer o professor Jan e aprender com ele a deixar o passado para trás, de modo que um novo capítulo pudesse ser iniciado em minha vida, e que eu pudesse ter, finalmente, a oportunidade de arar e regar meu jardim com muito amor para que minhas sementes florescessem em flores ainda mais lindas e delicadas. Para ele, deixo uma frase que encontrei

na entrada do *Paraíso das Flores*, em Areia: “As flores de amanhã nascem das sementes de hoje”.

Sobre sementes e flores: como poderia eu imaginar que minhas sementes plantadas debaixo do sol quente e tropical de João Pessoa seriam adubadas por uma norte americana cheia de alegria e vida? Greta Penell expresso aqui minha extrema gratidão por você insistir em mim e, especialmente, para que eu enviasse minha dissertação de mestrado para a premiação do ITRA em 2023; a qual foi enviada faltando poucos minutos para acabar o prazo de submissão, beirando a meia noite do dia 31 de dezembro de 2022. E não só isso, obrigada por me receber com tanto carinho e acalento em Rochester e, sobretudo, por ter me convidado para “tag the names” das pessoas que iriam participar da conferência naquele ano; onde pudemos passar um bom tempo batendo papo e nos conhecendo melhor. É com um imenso prazer que posso dizer que você foi escolhida por Deus para integrar a banca de examinadores dos meus trabalhos; você marcou minha vida e me possibilitou viver meu “American Dream”. Ah, claro, o qual foi vivenciado no ‘The Strong National Museum of Play’, cercado por flores e rosas perfumadas; e encerrado em um outro espaço que parecia um castelo, com muitas flores perfumadas: um verdadeiro paraíso na terra. Jardim este que dou a minha palavra, de mulher empoderada, que será regado por mim enquanto eu viver. Obrigada por tudo Greta.

Outra professora e profissional que carrego no meu coração, e por quem tenho imenso prazer em expressar minha gratidão, é Betânia Passos Medrado. Um nome e sobrenome fortes, não é mesmo? Um nome que, para mim, abriga uma fortaleza imensa, e que pude conhecer ao longo da minha trajetória acadêmica de uma forma bastante singular. Foi por meio dos relatos da minha irmã (sua ex-orientanda de mestrado) que percebi o quanto sua presença espalhava magia e flores por onde passava. Por isso, não poderia perder a oportunidade de assistir nem que fosse uma disciplina com esta mulher e profissional ética e valorosa. Tenho o prazer em compartilhar que, mesmo não precisando cursar mais nenhuma disciplina ainda no mestrado, decidi que não deixaria escapar a oportunidade única de aprender com ela, e fui muito feliz naquela escolha. Hoje, é uma honra tê-la não ‘apenas’ como uma memória guardada na minha alma, mas como membro avaliadora da minha defesa de doutorado. Para encerrar, como ela mesma diz: “com estrelinhas”.

Além desses presentes (seres humanos) tão ricos que tenho tido o privilégio de ter e/ou ter tido em minha vida durante meus anos de vida familiar e acadêmica, gostaria de agradecer também a presença dos queridos participantes do LACON, com destaque inicial ao professor Tiago de Aguiar que, com suas palavras ricas em mensagem e harmonia, me mostrou, ainda neste ano, na minha banca de qualificação, como os homens são necessários no processo de

empoderamento feminino. Suas palavras aqueceram meu coração, e me fizeram ter o ânimo de escrever com muito carinho e atenção as conclusões da minha tese. Por isso, como forma de gratidão, gostaria que o senhor soubesse que o capítulo de conclusão da minha tese de doutorado ganhou um significado ainda maior do que eu esperava; pois, além de ser direcionado às respostas para as minhas inquietações de pesquisa, ele também foi direcionado a responder aos seus anseios que surgiram através da minha escrita. Anseios esses que busquei responder com muita ética e carinho.

Por fim, na minha caminhada acadêmica pelos grupos de pesquisa, deixo um “obrigada” em especial a esse ser humano de serenidade rara e ternura constante: Zé Maria, como Dani, com tanto carinho, costumava chamá-lo. Tive a honra de ser colega de grupo de pesquisa de Zé ainda no contexto do GPSM, onde Dani era nossa coordenadora e orientadora; e agora também tenho a honra de tê-lo como membro da minha banca examinadora, o que me faz ter a oportunidade de pensar na escrita e na apresentação com amor, e não com medo. Zé Maria é a materialização da análise do brincar de forma inclusiva; e tê-lo em minha banca fez com que eu pensasse no capítulo final do doutorado como uma grande e “serious play”.

Fora dos contextos acadêmicos de pesquisa, não poderia deixar de agradecer à minha ex-colega de trabalho e atual professora do curso de LEA na UFPB, Maria Rennally Soares. Foi ela quem, com uma humanidade digna de destaque, me ensinou a compreender as nuances da pesquisa e, igualmente, as muitas camadas do trabalho universitário, quando eu ainda dava meus primeiros passos profissionais na UEPB, no início do doutorado. Foi a partir de Rennally que aprendi a me portar com diplomacia no ambiente acadêmico, entendendo que gentileza e firmeza também são formas de ética. Obrigada por me guiar a ser a profissional que sou hoje, Reh.

Aproveito também para destacar, agradecer e enaltecer o nome de duas pessoas que transformaram profundamente a forma como passei a enxergar o trabalho e a academia ao longo desses últimos quatro anos, verdadeiros presentes de Deus em minha vida, e que me ajudaram, de todas as maneiras possíveis, a conciliar trabalho e estudo na pós-graduação: Eneida Gurgel e Kariny Dias. Essas duas professoras de espanhol, que tenho a imensa honra de chamar de amigas, não apenas acreditaram em mim e no meu profissionalismo, mas confiaram às minhas mãos uma responsabilidade que considero um “diamante precioso” a ser administrado, honrado e frutificado no contexto em que atuamos. Vocês não têm ideia da minha gratidão. Deus sabe o quanto suas vidas iluminaram a minha, e o quanto cada gesto de vocês me sustentou quando eu mais precisava. Que o Senhor derrame sobre vocês as mais abundantes bênçãos celestiais ainda aqui, nesta terra.

Se aproximando o fim dessa sessão de agradecimentos, gostaria de mencionar o nome de duas colegas do grupo de pesquisa LACON que foram verdadeiros presentes de Deus assim que adentrei ao grupo: Tatiana Ramalho e Maria Eduarda Oliveira. Cada uma, com seu jeito singular, tocou minha vida de forma profundamente especial durante minha trajetória no LACON. Posso afirmar, sem exagero, que Deus operou maravilhas através de vocês para comigo, maravilhas que só Ele é capaz de mensurar. Tatis, com seu trabalho sempre vibrante, criativo e a ‘todo vapor’, reacendeu em mim o desejo de continuar desenvolvendo minhas ideias do ITRA, ideias que, por tantos momentos, pensei em enterrar junto com meus ressentimentos. Duda, querida Duda, com sua ternura e acolhimento, abriu-me os braços desde o início, compartilhando comigo sentimentos vivos e pulsantes que atravessam a vida acadêmica, sempre iluminando o caminho com os dons do Espírito Santo por meio da Palavra do Senhor Jesus. Vocês me fortaleceram de muitas formas. Isso, vocês ambas, para que nenhuma fique com ciúmes. *Haha*.

Por fim, trago aqui meus agradecimentos a alguns nomes em especial que marcaram minha vida acadêmica não apenas ao longo do doutorado, mas ao longo dos meus 15 anos de jornada acadêmica, desde a época do pré-vestibular cursado na UFPB até o fim do doutorado: Gerúisa, Andrea Burity Dialectaquiz, José Ribamar, Maura Regina Dourado, Angélica Maia, Mariana Perez, Betânia Passos Medrado, Regina Celi, Carla Lynn Reichmann e Mariane Telles.

“Há dias em que nossas vozes se erguem em protesto, e dias em que o silêncio fala mais alto.”
Rolim (2025)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

English

To begin with, I would like to acknowledge that I do not feel fully capable of finding words that can truly and faithfully translate everything I feel as I write this acknowledgements section. Even so, I have devoted myself, in the lines that follow, to pouring out a little of what I carry in my soul regarding the gratitude I feel for all the people who walked beside me throughout this long and intense academic journey.

I begin by offering my first threads of gratitude to the One who is worthy of all honor, power, and glory forever: Jesus Christ. I thank Him for granting me the gift of life, for allowing me to be born healthy and into a family that always encouraged me to study, despite the many difficulties encountered along the way, especially financial ones. Yet the Lord was faithful from the very beginning, giving me strength to continue the journey whenever I thought of giving up, which happened many times. Only He and I know the tastes and distastes of this path, especially in the final moments that marked its completion. However, every time I looked at the cross, I remembered who I was, and who I was not, and in doing so, I breathed the vitality I needed to move forward. Thank You, Lord.

I take this opportunity to extend my thanks to my parents, Rosenilda dos Santos Rolim and Ednaldo Rolim, who, throughout these years, carried with me the responsibility and human ethics of doing research and acting with dignity as human beings. Today I am a researcher because of them. They gave me not only nourishment but also a nest from which I could grow wings and fly. God is witness to how grateful I am for their lives and for having them with me. I would not have reached this point, by any means, without them. Everything I have achieved would mean nothing if I could not share the fruits of my/our harvest with them.

The next person to whom I dedicate this space to express my gratitude is my twin sister, Janine dos Santos Rolim: the one who has always been my inspiration. Janine has always been strong, like an eagle rising from the ashes and soaring above any obstacle. A brilliant researcher, she always read my texts and pushed me forward, never backward. If I am here today, it is because I learned to surf the waves of life with her. And today, I believe I am empowered enough to support her in return, to give back everything she taught me. That is what it means to be family: to hold each other's hand and never let go in the storms of life.

Stepping outside the family nest, though without leaving the feeling of family behind, I dedicate the next paragraph to Danielle Almeida, my master's advisor, English teacher, and, with great joy I say, my friend. I never imagined I would have a teacher like Dani, and even

less that I would later have the honor of having her as my advisor. Besides being beautiful, she was incredibly intelligent. She would always hear me say this and reply, “Oh, stop, Jana,” with a sparkle in her eyes. In her lifetime, Dani opened the doors to a world full of opportunities for a girl who had never known anything beyond her small town. She brought the vast, extraordinary world into my “little world” and allowed me to conduct research from there, breaking the veil of impossibilities and enabling me to fly high. And I did fly. But Dani also flew, to a world far beyond the rainbow, still during the writing of my doctoral thesis, which made the writing process far more difficult than I could have imagined. I hope she is flying happily in the garden of eternal childhood. It is still very difficult to accept that she left us so suddenly.

Nevertheless, Dani left a precious fruit in my life, sweet, generous, loving, and invaluable: Vânia Barbosa, my co-advisor for this doctoral thesis. Our first meeting happened back in 2018, but because of my lack of maturity at the time, I highlight these lines to thank the moment my eyes finally opened and I truly saw Vânia: wearing her red sneakers, holding her suitcase, meeting me at the São Paulo airport as we headed to New York City. What????!!!! That moment was magical and remains forever frozen in my memory. Neither of us knew then, but that moment would mark our lives forever. Today, I can say that Vânia, besides guiding me academically, also embodied human gentleness at a time when I most needed it to continue my thesis. I needed love to keep tending the garden of my writing, and she was the little fairy who always called me when I was struggling. Thank you, Vânia, for always listening to me, comforting me, and reminding me of who I am, and, above all, who I am not.

In this regard, I must express my deep gratitude to the one I call the *Good Samaritan*, who welcomed me and provided a place I could call family when I thought I had reached my end: Jan Edson Rodrigues Leite, my dear advisor for this doctoral thesis. Over a year and a half of guidance, I was able to get to know Professor Jan and learn from him how to leave the past behind, so that a new chapter could begin in my life, and so that I could finally have the opportunity to nurture and water my garden with love, allowing my seeds to blossom into even more beautiful and delicate flowers. To him, I leave a phrase I found at the entrance of the *Jardim das Flores*, in Areia: “The flowers of tomorrow are born from the seeds of today”.

Speaking of seeds and flowers, how could I have imagined that the seeds I planted under João Pessoa’s warm tropical sun would one day be nurtured by an American woman overflowing with joy and life? Greta Penell, I express my deepest gratitude to you for believing in me and, especially, for encouraging me to submit my master’s thesis to the ITRA award in 2023, a submission sent just minutes before the deadline, nearly at midnight on December 31,

2022. And not only that, thank you for welcoming me with warmth and tenderness in Rochester and for inviting me to help “tag the names” of the conference participants that year. We spent precious time together, talking and getting to know each other better. It is with great pleasure that I can say that you were chosen by God to join the examining committees of my work; you marked my life and allowed me to live my “American Dream”. A dream that unfolded in the Strong National Museum of Play, surrounded by flowers and fragrant roses, and ended in another place that looked like a castle, filled with perfumed blossoms, a true paradise on earth. A garden that, I promise, with the word of an empowered woman, I will water for as long as I live. Thank you for everything, Greta.

Another professor and professional whom I carry in my heart, and for whom I feel immense gratitude, is Betânia Passos Medrado. A strong name, wouldn't you agree? A name that, to me, holds within it a vast fortress, one that I came to know throughout my academic journey in a rather unique way. It was through the stories told by my sister (her former master's advisee) that I realized how her presence seemed to scatter magic and flowers wherever she went. For this reason, I could not let the opportunity pass to attend at least one course taught by this ethical and remarkable woman. I am pleased to share that, even though I no longer needed to take any additional courses during my master's program, I decided that I would not allow such a unique opportunity to learn from her to slip through my fingers, and I was very happy with that choice. Today, it is an honor to have her not *only* as a cherished memory held within my soul, but also as a member of my doctoral thesis defense committee. To conclude, in her own words: “with little stars”.

Beyond these precious gifts (these human beings) that I have had the privilege of knowing throughout my personal and academic life, I would also like to thank the dear members of LACON, with special mention to Professor Tiago de Aguiar, whose thoughtful and harmonious words, during my qualification exam earlier this year, showed me how necessary men are in the process of women's empowerment. His words warmed my heart and gave me the motivation to write the conclusion of my thesis with even more care and attention. As a gesture of gratitude, I would like you to know that the conclusion chapter of my doctoral thesis gained a meaning far greater than I had anticipated; for in addition to addressing my own research questions, it also responds to the concerns you raised while reading my work, concerns I sought to address with great ethics and affection.

Finally, in my academic journey through different research groups, I leave a special “thank you” to a human being of rare serenity and constant gentleness: Zé Maria, as Dani lovingly called him. I had the honor of being Zé's colleague in the GPSM research group, where

Dani was our coordinator and advisor; and now I also have the honor of having him as a member of my examination committee, which gives me the opportunity to think of writing and presenting with love rather than fear. Zé Maria embodies the inclusive analysis of play; and having him on my committee made me envision my final doctoral chapter as one great, beautiful “serious play”.

Outside the sphere of academic research, I cannot fail to thank my former coworker and now professor in the LEA program at UFPB, Maria Rennally Soares. With remarkable humanity, she taught me to understand the nuances of research and the many layers of university work when I was still taking my first professional steps at UEPB at the beginning of my doctorate. It was Rennally who taught me how to carry myself diplomatically in academic spaces, showing me that kindness and firmness are also forms of ethics. Thank you for guiding me into the professional I am today, Reh.

I also take this moment to acknowledge, thank, and honor the names of two people who profoundly transformed how I came to see work and academia over the past four years, true gifts from God in my life, who helped me in every possible way to balance work and postgraduate studies: Eneida Gurgel and Kariny Dias. These two Spanish teachers, whom I am honored to call my friends, not only believed in me and in my professionalism but entrusted me with a responsibility that I consider a “precious diamond” to be managed, honored, and cultivated in our shared work context. You have no idea how grateful I am. God knows how your lives illuminated mine and how each gesture of yours sustained me when I most needed support. May the Lord pour the most abundant heavenly blessings upon you here on this earth.

As this acknowledgements section draws to a close, I would like to mention two colleagues from the LACON research group who were true gifts from God the moment I joined the group: Tatiana Ramalho and Maria Eduarda Oliveira. Each of you, in your unique way, touched my life profoundly during my journey at LACON. I can affirm without exaggeration that God worked wonders through you, wonders only He can measure. Tatis, with your vibrant, creative, full-speed-ahead work, you reignited my desire to continue developing my ITRA ideas (ideas that, at many moments, I considered burying along with my hurts). Duda, dear Duda, with your tenderness and warmth, embraced me from the very beginning, sharing with me the living, pulsating feelings that permeate academic life and lighting the way at every step with the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the Word of the Lord Jesus. You both strengthened me in countless ways (yes, both of you, so that neither gets jealous). *Haha*.

Lastly, I offer my gratitude to several names that have marked my academic life not only during the doctorate but throughout my 15-year academic journey, from my pre-university

courses at UFPB to the completion of this PhD: Gerúisa, Andrea Burity Dialectaquiz, José Ribamar, Maura Regina Dourado, Angélica Maia, Mariana Perez, Betânia Passos Medrado, Regina Celi, Carla Lynn Reichmann and Mariane Telless.

“There are days when our voices rise in protest, and days when silence speaks louder.”
Rolim (2025)

ABSTRACT

Considered a cultural artifact (Almeida, 2006), the Barbie doll has undergone significant transformations in its representation, incorporating greater diversity in physical attributes, ethnicities, professions, and contexts of inclusion, thereby reflecting contemporary social changes (Rolim, 2020; Sarinho Júnior, 2023; Prochner, 2024). In this context, as a development of my master's research (Rolim, 2020), this doctoral thesis addresses the scientific need to investigate such changes and their implications, going beyond the analysis of the doll's physical attributes and the packaging that accompanies it. Thus, grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1978, 1985), in the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), and in complementary studies within Cognitive Linguistics, such as those focusing on *Frames* (Bateson, 1972) and *embodiment* (Johnson, 2017), this study aims to investigate children's interactions during play with Barbie dolls and their subsequent reflections on this experience. The goal is to examine whether and how such interactions indicate, through the children's discourse, elements of women's empowerment, particularly in the four dimensions of power proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007): *power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*. The research also examines the *conceptual metaphors* and *metonymies* used by the children and their impact on the formation of perceptions about social roles and the diversity of female bodies. The purpose is to understand how children's cognitive faculties articulate their feelings and reactions toward the woman represented by Barbie, who embodies, in her figure, representations of real adult women, and how children are shaped by their accumulated life experiences, even at an early age. Based on a qualitative and interpretive approach, the investigation was conducted with elementary school children in a *quilombola* school in the city of João Pessoa, in the state of Paraíba, recognized for valuing Afro-Brazilian culture and promoting the inclusion of historically marginalized groups. The specific objectives included: i) identifying the processes, based on the *System of Transitivity* (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), in children's narrative discourses about power and empowerment derived from their experiences during play with Barbie dolls and in their subsequent reflections; ii) interpreting the most prominent processes in children's narrative discourses, both during play and after it, about power and empowerment, using the evaluative mechanisms of the *Appraisal System* (Martin; White, 2005), by examining clauses according to the actions, events, or states in which the participants are involved; iii) identifying, from a cognitive perspective (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), through *cross-domain mapping*, the conceptual metaphors present in children's discourses during play and in their subsequent reflections, with particular attention to discussions of power and empowerment, while also examining the role of conceptual metonymies; iv) examining, from a cognitive perspective, how the metaphorical patterns in children's narrative discourses, both during play and in later reflections, construct their perceptions about Barbie and about women; and v) discussing how the four levels of power outlined by Charlier and Caubergs (2007) are linguistically configured in children's narrative discourse, from both social and cognitive perspectives, with the aim of understanding how playing with Barbie dolls, considered empowered (Rolim, 2020), can promote struggles for representation, respect, and inclusion regarding the diversity of women and their roles in society. The research corpora consist of: i) discourses emerging from the spontaneous interactions of eight (08) female *quilombola* children while playing with Barbie dolls, who were divided into two groups, namely Group 1: children playing with *Barbie Career Dolls* (representing varied professions), and Group 2: children playing with *Barbie Fashionistas* (dolls representing physical or intellectual disabilities reflected in their bodies and clothing); and ii) discursive reflections on this experience, obtained through a focus group conducted using a carefully designed script with questions aimed at thematizing empowerment during and after the play experience. The analysis of the children's discourses indicated that they demonstrated a deeper understanding of the meanings they attributed to their lived experiences, both socially and cognitively, when reflecting on the role of women in the context of empowerment and in broader social discussions, though this understanding was built gradually and collectively throughout the play sessions. These discourses thus provided analytical support for addressing issues such as autonomy, diversity, inclusion, agency, representation, and respect for different types of female bodies, including aspects related to disabilities, as well as other categories that emerged from the data analysis. Finally, by integrating social and cognitive perspectives, the analysis provided important and academically necessary empirical evidence on how cultural objects, such as Barbie, can promote women's empowerment and encourage values of equity and respect for diversity from early childhood. Regarding the linguistic-analytic theories adopted, I observed that the convergence between Systemic Functional Linguistics and Cognitive Linguistics enabled me to understand, through the analyses presented, how evaluative language and embodied experiences intersected in the children's discourse to produce new symbolic meanings.

Keywords: Women's empowerment. Barbie. Systemic Functional Linguistics. Appraisal System. Cognitive Linguistics.

RESUMO

Considerada um artefato cultural (Almeida, 2006), a boneca Barbie passou por transformações significativas em sua representação, incorporando uma maior diversidade de atributos físicos, etnias, profissões e contextos de inclusão, refletindo, assim, as mudanças sociais contemporâneas (Rolim, 2020; Sarinho Júnior, 2023; Prochner, 2024). Nesse contexto, como desdobramento da minha pesquisa de mestrado (Rolim, 2020), esta tese de doutorado aborda a necessidade científica de investigar tais transformações e suas implicações, indo além da análise dos atributos físicos da boneca e das embalagens que a acompanham. Assim, fundamentado na *Linguística Sistêmico-Funcional* (Halliday, 1978, 1985), no *Sistema de Avaliatividade* (Martin; White, 2005), na *Teoria da Metáfora Conceitual* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) e em estudos complementares no âmbito da Linguística Cognitiva, como aqueles centrados nos *Frames* (Bateson, 1972) e no *embodiment* (Johnson, 2017), este estudo tem como objetivo investigar as interações de crianças durante o brincar com bonecas Barbie e suas reflexões posteriores sobre essa experiência. O objetivo é examinar se, e de que modo, tais interações indicam, por meio do discurso infantil, elementos de empoderamento feminino, particularmente nas quatro dimensões de poder propostas por Charlier e Caubergs (2007): *poder sobre, poder para, poder com e poder interior*. A pesquisa também examina as *metáforas* e *metonímias* conceituais utilizadas pelas crianças e seu impacto na formação de percepções sobre papéis sociais e a diversidade de corpos femininos. Busca-se compreender como as faculdades cognitivas infantis articulam seus sentimentos e reações diante da mulher representada pela Barbie, que carrega em sua figura representações de mulheres adultas reais, e como as crianças são moldadas pelas experiências acumuladas ao longo de suas vidas, mesmo em idades precoces. Com base em uma abordagem qualitativa e interpretativa, a investigação foi realizada com crianças do ensino fundamental em uma escola quilombola da cidade de João Pessoa, no estado da Paraíba, reconhecida por valorizar a cultura afro-brasileira e promover a inclusão de grupos historicamente marginalizados. Os objetivos específicos incluíram: i) identificar os processos, com base no Sistema de Transitividade (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), presentes nos discursos narrativos das crianças sobre poder e empoderamento, derivados de suas experiências ao brincar com as bonecas Barbie e em suas reflexões subsequentes; ii) interpretar os processos mais proeminentes nos discursos narrativos infantis, tanto durante o brincar quanto após ele, sobre poder e empoderamento, utilizando os mecanismos avaliativos do Sistema de Avaliatividade (Martin; White, 2005), examinando as orações de acordo com as ações, eventos ou estados em que os participantes estão envolvidos; iii) identificar, sob uma perspectiva cognitiva (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), por meio do *cross-domain mapping*, as metáforas conceituais presentes nos discursos das crianças durante o brincar e em suas reflexões subsequentes, com atenção especial às discussões sobre poder e empoderamento, examinando também o papel das metonímias conceituais; iv) examinar, sob a mesma perspectiva cognitiva, como os padrões metafóricos nos discursos narrativos infantis, tanto durante o brincar quanto nas reflexões posteriores, constroem suas percepções sobre a Barbie e sobre as mulheres; e v) discutir como os quatro níveis de poder delineados por Charlier e Caubergs (2007) são configurados linguisticamente nos discursos narrativos das crianças, a partir de perspectivas sociais e cognitivas, com o objetivo de compreender como o ato de brincar com bonecas Barbie, consideradas empoderadas (Rolim, 2020), pode promover a luta por representação, respeito e inclusão em relação à diversidade de mulheres e aos seus papéis na sociedade. O corpus da pesquisa é composto por: i) discursos emergentes das interações espontâneas de oito (08) meninas quilombolas durante o brincar com bonecas Barbie, divididas em dois grupos, a saber: Grupo 1: crianças brincando com *Barbie Career Dolls* (representando diferentes profissões) e Grupo 2: crianças brincando com *Barbie Fashionistas* (bonecas que representam deficiências físicas ou intelectuais refletidas em seus corpos e vestimentas); e ii) reflexões discursivas sobre essa experiência, obtidas por meio de um grupo focal conduzido com um roteiro cuidadosamente elaborado, contendo perguntas voltadas à tematização empoderamento durante e após a experiência lúdica. A análise dos discursos das crianças indicou que elas demonstraram uma compreensão mais profunda dos significados que atribuem às suas experiências vividas, tanto social quanto cognitivamente, ao refletirem sobre o papel da mulher no contexto do empoderamento e nas discussões sociais mais amplas, ainda que tal compreensão tenha sido construída de forma gradual e coletiva ao longo das brincadeiras. Esses discursos forneceram, assim, suporte analítico para a abordagem de questões como autonomia, diversidade, inclusão, agência, representação e respeito aos diferentes tipos de corpos femininos, incluindo aspectos relacionados às deficiências, bem como outras categorias emergentes da análise dos dados. Por fim, ao integrar as perspectivas social e cognitiva, a análise ofereceu evidências empíricas importantes e academicamente necessárias sobre como objetos culturais, como a Barbie, podem promover o empoderamento feminino e incentivar valores de equidade e respeito à diversidade desde a infância. No que se refere às teorias linguístico-analíticas adotadas, observei que a convergência entre a Linguística Sistêmico-Funcional e a Linguística Cognitiva possibilitou compreender, por meio das análises apresentadas, como a linguagem avaliativa e as experiências corporificadas se entrecruzaram no discurso infantil para produzir novos significados simbólicos.

Palavras-chave: Empoderamento feminino. Barbie. Linguística Sistêmico-Funcional. Sistema de Avaliatividade. Linguística Cognitiva.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder (TEA – Transtorno do Espectro Autista)

CAPES – Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior

CMT – Conceptual Metaphor Theory

CNPq – Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico

CNS – Conselho Nacional de Saúde

COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease 2019

GPSM – Grupo de Pesquisa em Semiótica Visual e Multimodalidade

GVD – Grammar of Visual Design

LACON – Laboratório de Compreensão Neurocognitiva da Linguagem

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NOW – National Organization for Women

OMS / WHO – Organização Mundial da Saúde / World Health Organization

PROLING – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Linguística

SELIP – Seminário de Estudos Linguísticos da Paraíba

SFL – Systemic Functional Linguistics

TEA – Transtorno do Espectro Autista

UFPB – Universidade Federal da Paraíba

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

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1. INTRODUCTION

*“One wonders if women still exist, [...] what place they occupy in this world,
what their place should be.”*

(Simone de Beauvoir, 1956, p. 13)

1.1. The Genesis of Philosophical Concerns

A graceful, gentle, and strong¹ being² (2015, our translation). The role of women in society, widely explored by scholars in Brazil and around the world (Freyre, 2003; Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; Almeida, 2006; Beauvoir, 1956; Espinosa-Miñoso, 2014), among others, has been the key theme of my academic interest since 2017. That was the year I began my research journey, particularly in the field of gender and power studies, by joining the Research Group on Visual Semiotics and Multimodality (GPSM/CNPq/UFPB) as a researcher. Under the coordination of Professor Dr. Danielle Barbosa Lins de Almeida³, GPSM stood out as a pioneering research group in Brazil “dedicated to multimodality studies, with a special focus on analyzing semiotic artifacts of childhood, such as toys and games” (Frederico, 2019, our translation). Over the past decade, its research has gained recognition for its academic rigor and social relevance, earning both national and international acknowledgment (Rolim, 2020; Almeida *et al.*, 2021; Sarinho Júnior, 2023).

As a woman⁴ researcher shaped within this group and aware that gender studies travel over various fields of knowledge, including the *humanities, philosophy, literature, psychology, sociology, political science, and cultural studies*, I dedicated my master’s thesis to examining the intersections of gender and power across different social contexts, including *familial, workplace, political, cultural, media, and social movements*. My specific focus was on the childhood context, analyzing the Barbie doll to identify traits of empowerment in her design (physical attributes) and packaging as a means of investigating the representation of women by these dolls. The research was conducted within the theoretical framework of Multimodality, incorporating the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress; Leeuwen, 2006) and Systemic-Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1985; 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004; 2014), which were the analytical tools adopted by the research group to which I belonged. As for the concept of ‘power’, that underpins not only the thesis but also the present research, I drew on Allen’s (1999) definition, which frames power as “the ability to empower and transform oneself, others, and the world” (p. 18, our translation). This perspective aligns with Batliwala’s (1994) assertion that *empowerment* enables women to “recognize their innate right to equality, dignity, and

¹ Poem ‘Woman’ by Ivone Boechat, 2015.

² Human being.

³ With deep sorrow, I must note that Professor Dr. Danielle Almeida passed away during the last year in which this research was being developed. Her passing further emphasized the importance of keeping the flame of play-related studies alive within the scope of Proling’s research.

⁴ I chose to use the term *woman* instead of *female* because I believe it is important to emphasize my social experience as someone who identifies herself as a woman.

justice” (p. 132, our translation). It is from these two perspectives of *power* and *empowerment* that I have approached my research on gender and power throughout my studies.

The notion of addressing power not from a perspective of oppression, but of *ascension*, inspired the foundation for my early studies, while I explored feminist perspectives on power, based on the works of scholars such as Sardenberg (2009, 2011, 2015; Sardenberg *et al.*, 2020), and collective studies by Freeman (1975), Morgan (1970), and others. Over the course of their reflections, the authors conceptualize *empowerment* as both an individual and collective process, a perspective widely discussed by feminist institutions and development NGOs⁵ across four dimensions of power: *power over*, *power within*, *power to*, and *power with* (Charlier; Caubergs, 2007). These dimensions played a pivotal role in the analysis and discussion of the findings from my study on empowerment as depicted through Barbie dolls, which I presented in the conclusion of my thesis⁶. In my master’s thesis, I concluded that the Barbie dolls analyzed displayed, to varying degrees, aspects of empowerment aligned with these dimensions of power.

Thus, building on my academic trajectory, this introductory chapter continues the research initiated in my master’s thesis, emphasizing the coherence and development of my scholarly work. Building on my previous research, which drew on the frameworks of Grammar of Visual Design and Systemic Functional Linguistics, I developed a comprehensive understanding of the topic and was able to accomplish the goals set for that study. Yet, the investigation also unveiled significant gaps that inspired the next stage of my research. These gaps relate, first, to the ultimate analysis of a toy, as carried out in the Fisher-Price laboratory, a subsidiary company of Mattel, which involved the act of playing with the toy under investigation. Furthermore, I realized that it was crucial to incorporate a cognitive dimension into this new study, focusing on the analysis of conceptual metaphors mapped in the discourse of children who play with Barbie dolls. In doing so, this research seeks not only to understand how children *evaluate* the Barbie dolls they play with, but also how they *process*, *conceptualize*, and *encode* metaphors through language during play, ultimately exploring whether these “empowered” representations genuinely foster a sense of empowerment.

⁵ NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations

⁶ My master’s thesis was awarded in 2023 with the *Junior Prize for Outstanding Toy Research* for its originality, relevance, creativity, methodology, clarity and importance, during the 9th world conference of the *International Toy Research Association* (hereinafter, ITRA, p. 14), which theme was *Toys Matter: The Power of Playthings*.

Building upon the theoretical and methodological gaps identified in my previous research, I now extend this doctoral investigation by incorporating two additional linguistic tools to strengthen its analytical foundation.

The first tool builds on Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), which already informed my earlier study. However, at this stage, I wanted to go beyond the ideational level of analysis to capture how *evaluation* and *stance* are expressed in discourse. For this reason, I integrated the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), which enables a more nuanced understanding of how *attitudes*, *emotions*, and *judgments* emerge in children's discourse while playing with Barbie dolls.

Still, knowing that language does more than convey evaluation, since it also reveals how individuals *think*, *imagine*, and *conceptualize* their experiences, I decided to adopt a cognitive perspective as well, aiming to explore how children make sense of the world through play and how they understand one thing in terms of another (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980, p. 80). In this sense, I drew on Conceptual Metaphor Theory within Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff; Johnson, *ibid.*; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999; Duffy; Feist, 2023), since I believe that this framework complements the systemic-functional approach by connecting linguistic choices to underlying conceptual patterns.

Finally, to frame these analyses within a broader understanding of human communication, I drew on Bateson's (1972) systemic view of communication and the ecology of mind, which situate meaning-making as a process that occurs not in isolation but within relational and cultural systems.

In this sense, I believe that the three linguistic frameworks (Systemic Functional Linguistics, the Appraisal System, and Conceptual Metaphor Theory) together with Bateson's ecological perspective, converge to form a *dialogic* and *interdisciplinary* lens through which this thesis examines *language*, *play*, and *cognition*. The following sections will further explain how these perspectives intertwine to support the analytical procedures of this study.

1.2. Framing the Research Landscape

The contemporary world, shaped by centuries of women's struggle for rights in both physical and intellectual domains, reflects significant and tangible achievements in women's societal roles, though the need for continued progress remains (Cipriani; Werner, 2023). These achievements are now disseminated, recognized, and celebrated, no longer silenced or oppressed, at least not to the extent described in works referencing previous centuries (Perrot,

2005). At present, while developing this doctoral thesis, humanity has witnessed the opportunities women have gained to work in various professional and scientific fields, hold influential positions such as world leaders, scientists, etc. and compete in the Olympics, demonstrating the strength of their bodies, this being a stage for social representations as it is considered a political object (Santos; Kurpel, 2021).

In this context, since the Barbie doll constitutes the main object of inquiry in this study, based on the study conducted in my master's thesis (Rolim, 2020), I find it necessary to emphasize that as a toy, she represents a 'semiotic object' (Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; 2004), that is, one that carries within herself ideologies and social values of a certain time of production. In recent years, Mattel has been producing Barbie dolls aimed at representing the diversity of female bodies in various contexts, professions, and ethnicities, as well as including representations related to disabilities (Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; Almeida, 2006; Rolim, 2020; Sarinho Júnior, 2023; Prochner, 2024). This fact is in line with the research developed by Brougère (2010; 2014; 2018), who emphasizes the importance of toys in redefining realities.

Thus, regarding the body of the Barbie doll, it is observed that, in addition to scholars, such as those mentioned above, emphasizing the need to represent female diversity in the toy, the evolution of women's social roles in society was also highlighted in the 2023 Barbie movie. The film underscored female diversity, emphasized the theme of female empowerment, already addressed in my master's thesis (Rolim, 2020), and reaffirmed women's right to define their identities, choose who they want to be, and freely exercise their right to speak, a right that has been denied throughout history (Duby, 1993; Caballero, 1999; Perrot, 2005; Barata, 2016).

It is noteworthy that, over the years, society has come to recognize that she, the Barbie doll, a children's toy representing adult women, is more than just a toy; she functions as a cultural artifact reflecting both changes and continuities in discourses on gender, power, and female representation (Rolim, 2020; Prochner, 2024). Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002) emphasize that the doll, as a semiotic artifact of childhood and a cultural object, represents "social actors through its design, movement, color schemes, among other things, [which are] always conditioned by the social contexts and ideologies of the time of their production" (p. 91). Similarly, Cruz (2011) highlights that toys reflect and reproduce social patterns associated with "specific groups, certain places, and different identities or social profiles" (p. 44). This reinforces the fact that Barbie, as an iconic American, and global, doll, has been the focus of attention and discussions since her existence.

From the time of her launch in 1959 by Mattel, Barbie has evolved into a global icon (Almeida, 2006), sparking debates that extend far beyond childhood and into sociocultural, political, and academic spheres, as mentioned in the previous section. Barbie was among the most analyzed and discussed toys, particularly within the doll category, at the ITRA 2023 conference⁷. Central to these discussions is the doll's significant role in constructing social meanings and shaping gender identities, with some researchers arguing that she embodies "sex and gender extremes, like hyper-femininity" (Prochner, 2024, p. 41), alongside with the issue that, being a toy for children aged 3 and over, the doll presents sexualized body patterns, typical of an adult woman.

If truth be told, the doll has indeed long been the target of criticism regarding her semiotic representations, particularly the fact that she embodies an adult woman with sexualized physical features. Her color palette, skin tone, and the objects she carries, along with her physical attributes, appearance, kinetic movements, and other design elements, such as the material from which she is made, have all been subjects of debate and analysis (Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; Almeida, 2006; Prochner, 2024). However, Prochner (2024) points out that this 'stereotypical' Barbie culture began to shift in the 2010s, although her studies still emphasize the issue of Barbie representing physical features of a sexualized adult woman.

Regarding this information, I strongly emphasize that the transformation observed in Barbie, as noted by Prochner (*ibid.*), had already been addressed in my master's research (Rolim, 2020), which began in 2018. In that work, I highlighted that, among the dolls sold during Barbie's 60 years of existence, there was a notable boom in Barbies designed to represent diverse professions, including "Computer Engineer, TV Anchor, Race Car Driver, Rockstar, Veterinary, Dentist, Skier, Architect, Art Teacher, Movie Actress, Chef, Presidential Candidate, Fashion Designer, Zoologist, and Paleontologist" (Rolim, 2020, p. 29), including others. Furthermore, I also mentioned that, in 2015, Mattel launched Barbie dolls featuring eight different ethnicities. These facts support Prochner's (2024) observation in her most recent book that Barbie herself has undergone a significant transformation since 2010 (p. 42), and it is aligned with the studies of Allen (1999) and Batliwala (1994) on the concept of empowerment, which emphasizes transformation for the common good.

⁷ According to the website of the ITRA (International Toy Research Association), founded in 1993, it is the oldest professional association dedicated exclusively to the transdisciplinary scientific study of toys, games, and other forms of play. In 2023, the association hosted the 9th World Conference in Rochester, NY.

As observed, several changes have taken place so far. Above all, considering the academic research conducted (Rolim, 2020) and Barbie's reimagining as an empowered figure in the 2023 Barbie movie, it is essential that studies on the theme of female empowerment and Barbie continue. As a woman researcher, I understand that the changes mentioned thus far, although reflecting progress in the fight for gender equity by encompassing various dimensions of human experience and womanhood, remain incomplete. There is still a need for further scientific understanding of these changes and their implications, especially in the context of interaction with the Barbie doll and the reflections of children themselves after the play experience.

Thus, it is of paramount academic importance to analyze Barbie and her social roles not merely through the lens of her physical attributes and packaging, but also by the discursive possibilities that shape children's narratives during and after playing with this semiotic artifact. The aim is to investigate whether Barbie truly embodies female empowerment, a quality widely promoted by Mattel, and to examine how children narrate their play experiences with Barbie and their subsequent reflections as they construct meanings related to empowerment and women. In this regard, Brougère (2010), in his seminal works, argues that when playing, children integrate the various semiotic modes available, that is, the multiple potential meanings of the toy. Moreover, play allows children to experience social practices based on their own actions while simultaneously revealing social practices of representation and meaning (van Leeuwen, 2008).

That said, the present doctoral thesis focuses on investigating female empowerment in and through the Barbie doll, as expressed in children's discourse during play and in the reflections that follow, from social and cognitive perspectives. It employs three theoretical frameworks, explained earlier, to understand how children structure, restructure, and even create reality (meaning) through linguistic choices during and after play, based on social and cognitive analyses. From this research perspective, the Barbie doll can become a valuable tool for girls to learn about their social roles as human beings, transitioning from the category of the 'second sex', so widely debated by Simone de Beauvoir (1956), to the awareness that women can and should be whoever they want to be, in any context, whether in the real world or in the realm of play.

In addition, this research also aims to raise awareness among researchers, toy producers, parents and girls, through play and the reflections that arise from it, about the fact that women should be respected regardless of their social roles, ethnicity, physical or intellectual conditions, or gender. Additionally, the study introduces scientific innovation in the field of linguistic

theories by combining Systemic Functional Linguistics with Cognitive Linguistics to provide a broader understanding of play with the Barbie doll and the reflections that follow, focusing on the social and cognitive aspects of empowerment.

That said, I present the purpose of the study, and the research object, in the following section for a better understanding of this investigation.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This doctoral thesis aims to analyze children's interactions with Barbie both during the play-based activity and in their post-play reflections, considering the context of women's empowerment. Recognized as one of the most iconic toys in history (Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; Almeida, 2006; Rolim, 2020; Prochner, 2024), Barbie plays an important role in shaping children's perceptions of *gender*, *social roles*, and possibilities for *self-expression*. In this sense, I find it essential to explore how this playful interaction contributes to the construction of meanings related to women's empowerment, particularly regarding the appreciation of *representation*, *diversity*, and *respect* for different female body types, including those associated with *disability*.

Based on these aspects, this study seeks to explore how children *interpret*, *re-signify*, and *construct meanings* associated with Barbie, a toy that, over the decades, has evolved to represent, according to Rolim (2020) and Prochner (2024), to represent different *professions*, *skin tones*, *body types*, and *gender identities*. I understand these transformations as closely linked to contemporary discourses on women's empowerment, which emphasize *equal opportunities*, *freedom of choice*, and the *appreciation of women in their multiple forms of expression* (Curiel, 2013; Espinosa-Miñoso, 2014; Lugones, 2008, 2010, 2020).

Through the analysis of children's play and their post-play reflections, I aim to examine how their narratives about Barbie, and women more broadly, indicate, or fail to indicate, elements of women's empowerment. Furthermore, I seek to understand whether and how children recognize the changes in Barbie's representation, both during play and in subsequent reflections, and to analyze the impact of these changes on their perceptions of themselves and on the role of women in society. In doing so, I hope this study contributes to a broader discussion on the role of toys in *shaping social representations*, offering insights for a deeper understanding, informed by a cognitive perspective grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), on how toys such as Barbie can participate in nurturing a more conscious and empowered generation.

That said, in this doctoral thesis, I situate my work at the intersection of *gender* and *power* studies within the universe of childhood, focusing particularly on women's empowerment through the Barbie doll. Building upon my master's research (Rolim, 2020), this study now incorporates *social* and *cognitive* perspectives, broadening, in this way, the analytical scope developed in my previous investigation. My approach is grounded in foundational studies in *multimodal research* (Kress; Leeuwen, 2006), *social semiotics* (Hodge; Kress, 1988), *functional linguistics* (Halliday, 1985; 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004; 2014; Fuzer; Cabral, 2014), *cognitive linguistics* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999; Duffy; Feist, 2023), *childhood studies* (Benjamin, 2009; Ariès, 1981, 1986; Vygotsky, 1998; Nicolopoulou, 1993; Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; Peers, 2004; Almeida, 2006; Brougère, 2010; Heljakka, 2013; Rolim, 2020; Sarinho Júnior, 2023; Prochner, 2024) and *gender studies* (Duby, 1993; Caballero, 1999; Perrot, 2005; Barata, 2016), with a focus on the role of the Barbie doll as a cultural artifact in play.

Moreover, through this study, I aim to deepen the understanding of Barbie's role in *shaping female identities* and in the ongoing pursuit of *representation* and *inclusion*. Recognizing that Mattel has, over the years, sought to respond to contemporary social demands by diversifying Barbie's image, I also engage with insights from research in the fields of *toys* and *inclusion* (Sarinho Júnior, 2023).

In this sense, my analysis draws on three main linguistic approaches: (i) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as proposed by Halliday (1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014); (ii) the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005); and (iii) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), as well as extended discussions regarding Frames, Play, and Fantasy in Children's Barbie Narratives (Bateson, 1972) and Embodiment and the Construction of Imaginative Narratives (Johnson, 2017). Through these theoretical lenses, I seek to investigate how children construct meanings related to women and, consequently, to empowerment, as widely publicized by Mattel, through their spontaneous narratives generated during play with Barbie dolls and their subsequent reflections on this activity.

Then, in this thesis, I focus on three main dimensions of analysis: i) First, I examine the lexico-grammatical choices within the Transitivity system in the sentences produced by children, with the aim of identifying the ideational meanings conveyed in their discourse (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004; 2014). This dimension highlights how *actions*, *attributes*, and

states are linguistically represented, and how children encode *agency*⁸, *roles*, and *relations of power* in their interactions with the dolls. ii) Second, I investigate the evaluative mechanisms of the Appraisal framework (Martin; White, 2005), which make it possible to analyze *attitudes*, *judgments*, and *appreciations* embedded in the children's discourse. This approach reveals how values related to beauty, professional recognition, and social inclusion are negotiated during play. ii) Third, I explore how *conceptual metaphors* and *metonymies* structure children's discourse (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). By tracing these mappings, it uncovers how *embodied experiences* and *cultural models* shape children's meaning-making, both during the play sessions and in their subsequent reflections.

Finally, I consider how the children's discourse on Barbie's physical attributes intersects with broader socio-political categories of empowerment. In particular, I relate their discursive practices to the four dimensions of power (*power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*) outlined by Charlier and Caubergs (2007). In this way, my analysis integrates Systemic Functional Linguistics, Cognitive Linguistics, and critical perspectives to examine how children's meaning-making processes reconfigure gender *roles*, *identities*, and possibilities for women's empowerment within the context of play with Barbie dolls.

To accomplish this overall objective, the following research questions were outlined: (1) what do the *ideational* metafunction processes in SFL (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), encoded in children's narrative discourses during play with Barbie dolls and in subsequent reflections, indicate about the meaning constructed in relation to power and empowerment, based on the four levels of power that constitute the term 'empowerment' (Charlier; Caubergs, 2007)?; (2) How do children's experiences of playing with empowered Barbie dolls, and their subsequent reflections, externalized through the processes of the *ideational metafunction*, contribute to their *Attitude positioning* (Martin; White, 2005) regarding the social and ideological meanings constructed about women's roles in society and their perceptions of their own bodies?; (3) how do *conceptual metaphors* and *metonymies* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) manifest in children's narrative discourses while playing with Barbie dolls, considered empowered, and in their subsequent reflections, especially regarding issues of inclusion and respect for diversity?; (4) what do *conceptual metaphors* and *metonymies* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) suggest about children's

⁸ I find it important to emphasize that, when I refer to "*agency*", I am referring to Barbie (as a woman) and to the capacity to *act*, *make decisions*, and be a *social agent* in the world.

cognitive and social meanings regarding their perception of women, based on the bodies of Barbie dolls, considered empowered?

These research questions guided me through Barbie's journey and her impact on the lives of children who interact and play with her, focusing on children's perceptions of Barbie's design in relation to the physical and social roles assigned to women. Thus, with the research questions established, I listed the following specific objectives in this investigation to guide the analysis. Through them, I proposed: i) to identify the processes, based on the system of Transitivity (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), in children's narrative discourses about power and empowerment, derived from their experiences when playing with Barbie dolls and in subsequent reflections; ii) to interpret the most prominent processes in children's narrative discourses, both during play with Barbie dolls and in subsequent reflections, about power and empowerment, based on the evaluation mechanisms of the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), examining sentences according to the actions, events or states in which the participants are involved; (iii) to identify, from a cognitive perspective (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), through cross-domain mapping, the conceptual metaphors present in children's discourses during play with Barbie dolls and in their subsequent reflections, with particular attention to discussions of power and empowerment, while also examining the role of conceptual metonymies. iv) to examine, from a cognitive perspective (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), how the metaphorical patterns in children's narrative discourses, both during play with Barbie dolls and in subsequent reflections, construe their perceptions about Barbie and women; v) to discuss how the four levels of power outlined by Charlier and Caubergs (2007) are linguistically configured in children's narrative discourse from both social and cognitive perspectives, with the aim of understanding how playing with Barbie dolls, considered empowered (Rolim, 2020), can promote the struggle for representation, respect, and inclusion regarding the diversity of women and their roles in society.

These objectives were applied as a final step in my initial research on empowerment (Rolim, *ibid.*) in order to analyze whether and how empowerment manifests itself at the ultimate level of a toy: in the context of play. This final dimension of analysis, the analysis of play and reflections on play, is particularly relevant, since the social roles of women embodied by Barbie are also enacted in the act of play. Play, according to Vygotsky (1998), offers children an opportunity to interact with peers and to explore and enact social norms and roles embodied in the material and symbolic attributes of social actors, in this case, Barbie dolls. Although often perceived as innocent, play serves as a crucial platform for the construction of gender identity.

As Louro (1996) argues, gender identity is “a learned identity” that is shaped and maintained through “a multiplicity of social relations, institutions, symbols, discourses, doctrines, and strong social organization” (p. 12).

Therefore, I found it necessary⁹ to incorporate the *embodiment principle* into this study, given its central role in Cognitive Linguistics for explaining how meaning arises from bodily experience. As Johnson (1987, 2017) argues, thought and imagination are grounded in sensorimotor interactions with the world, which provide the basis for abstract reasoning. This perspective is, then, particularly relevant for the present analysis, since both conceptual metaphors and metonymies are understood not as ornamental linguistic devices but as cognitive operations anchored in embodied experience. In this sense, the embodiment principle provides the cognitive grounding for interpreting how children’s discourse, during and after play, transforms physical perception into social and ideological meanings related to women and empowerment.

Thus, with all that being pointed out, and building on the preceding theoretical considerations, I position myself as a researcher attentive to social issues, and specifically as a woman undertaking this investigation, with Barbie as the central instrument of analysis. I approach this doctoral thesis with the premise that the study of female empowerment through the Barbie doll, associated with the changes observed in her representations (including diverse cultures, professions, body types, ethnicities, and disabilities, as well as efforts to challenge the stigma surrounding physical disabilities), must go beyond the doll’s body and packaging to encompass the experiences of children during play and their subsequent reflections on this activity. This approach also enables the exploration of how power dynamics emerge during play with Barbie dolls, analyzed through the children’s discourses and based on the four levels of power proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007) from social and cognitive perspectives.

In conclusion, building on this positioning and analytical framework, this research seeks to contribute, through cognitive and systemic-functional analyses, to the understanding and awareness of Barbie’s role in shaping children’s identities, particularly those of girls, during childhood. The focus is on the relationship between gender and power, the struggle for women’s

⁹ After reading further on Cognitive Linguistics, following the committee’s suggestion that it would be relevant to incorporate this principle into the analysis of my data, I concluded that there was no need to include embodiment explicitly in the specific objectives or in the research questions. This is because, in my view, embodiment functions as a theoretical premise of Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff; Johnson; Johnson, 1987, 2017). In other words, it is not a “research focus” in itself (as SFL, Appraisal, or conceptual metaphors and metonymies are), but rather an explanatory foundation that underpins the analysis. That is, I am not investigating embodiment in itself, but employing it to justify why metaphors and metonymies make sense as cognitive strategies.

representation and inclusion in various social spheres, and the promotion of respect for the diversity of female bodies and womanhood. In addition, it advocates for broader representations of beauty to challenge the stigma associated with physical disabilities. Finally, it underscores that playing with dolls like Barbie in school contexts may also contribute to reducing early teenage pregnancy, promoting education, and raising awareness of violence against women.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

As it was previously said, the analysis is grounded in three linguistic approaches: (i) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as proposed by Halliday (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), applied to understand transitivity processes in children's narratives during play and their subsequent reflections on this act; (ii) the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), used to examine children's lexical choices and evaluations; and (iii) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), complemented by the analysis of *conceptual metonymies*, in order to explore how children construct meanings related to women and, consequently, to empowerment, during play with Barbie dolls and in their subsequent reflections on this experience.

With respect to Halliday's Systemic-Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), this framework was applied as a system of sentence description, used to understand how the *processes*, *participants* and possible *circumstances* are configured in play, that is, in the experience of children playing with the Barbie doll. The aim was to elucidate the implicit meanings that could go unnoticed without a detailed analysis of the narrative of play, given that this research seeks to investigate how children construct ideological meanings related to empowerment from this interaction. I also emphasize that systemic-functional analysis was used to examine the children's discourse after playing, that is, from the reflections expressed through their discourses after the experience of interacting with Barbie.

Therefore, the analysis of discourse within SFL derives from the System of Transitivity, which belongs to the *ideational* metafunction and serves as a resource for the analysis of experience. In this case, I argue that examining the six types of processes present in children's discourse makes it possible to access their experiences of the external world through *material* processes (actions or events involving physical activities) and of the internal world, that is, their consciousness, through *mental* processes (internal states or cognitive activities such as thinking,

feeling, or perceiving). In addition, the *relational* processes (relationships or states of being, such as identification, attribution, or possession) enable me to access the experiences that the children have regarding the topic addressed, in this research, empowerment through playing with Barbie dolls. The *behavioral* processes, in turn, described in SFL as lying at the border between material and mental processes and concerning psychological behaviors and their physiological manifestations, are here reinterpreted from the perspective of embodied cognition. My point here is that this articulation is intended to provide a broader understanding of how externally demanded actions are not only reflected in the observable behavior of children at play but also grounded in embodied experiences that integrate physical action and cognitive meaning. In addition, the *verbal* processes (acts of saying or communicating) serve to highlight and help me to understand issues related to the ideas and thoughts of the speakers regarding the topic addressed. Finally, the *existential* processes (existence or the presence of something) offer insights into children's perception of female empowerment, based on the existence of a Barbie, a woman, who can do something she could not do before, for instance, or perhaps hold or possess something she did not have before, such as a wheelchair, prescription glasses, or a guide dog for the blind, thereby promoting inclusion.

Regarding the Appraisal System proposed by Martin and White (2005), my focus is on the investigation of the categories of *Affect*, *Judgment*, and *Appreciation*, which constitute the subsystem of *Attitude*. This involves examining the feelings expressed by children (Affect), observing how they articulate positive or negative evaluation toward women through the Barbie doll during play experiences; the moral and social evaluations they attribute to behaviors, identifying attitudes of admiration, criticism, or disapproval (Judgment) directed at the doll they are interacting with; and, finally, the evaluative stances they adopt toward phenomena, objects, and situations, specifically regarding Barbie as a representation of women in the context of play (Appreciation), highlighting how they ascribe meanings of beauty, importance, or relevance to women. From this perspective, I believe it becomes possible to understand how children's discourse constructs meanings of empowerment, revealing through language, not only emotions, but also judgments and appreciations that reflect perceptions of power, respect, and recognition concerning women's roles in society, that is, women in their bodily diversity as well as their social positions, within the context of playing with Barbie.

As for the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), this framework is used to map *conceptual metaphors* in children's discourse during play with Barbie dolls, as well as in their subsequent reflections on this interaction, conducted in an interview, in the format of a focus

group, detailed in the methodological chapter of this study. This is for the fact that according to these authors, “[...] metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not only in language but also in thought and action. Our conceptual system, in terms of which we not only think but also act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (p. 45). Building on this foundation, the aim here is to examine how children cognitively perceive and experience the objects and situations with which they interact in terms of metaphors, that is, how these objects and situations are processed metaphorically.

Complementing this perspective, the analysis incorporates conceptual metonymies, which, alongside metaphors, operate as fundamental cognitive mechanisms that structure thought and discourse (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980). Analyzing this data from a cognitive perspective is extremely significant, as it allows for a deeper understanding of language, not just as a reflection of momentary experience, but as a path leading into the cognitive processes it unveils. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), language functions as a cognitive mechanism where speech, thought, and knowledge interact to shape phenomena within human consciousness.

Along these lines, this analysis is also grounded in the *embodiment principle*, as argued by Johnson (2017), who emphasizes that meaning and reasoning emerge from bodily experience. In this way, both conceptual metaphors and metonymies are understood not as ornamental figures but as cognitive operations anchored in embodied experience, which proves essential for interpreting children’s meaning-making processes in play.

In this sense, I assume that the analysis from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, which understands language as a system of categorizing the world, reflecting not only general cognitive abilities, but also individual experience, including the perception of one’s own body, in addition to social and cultural influences (Soares da Silva, 1997, p. 28), combined with the description of the experience narrated through the act of playing with Barbie dolls, analyzed via the *ideational* metafunction of SFL, as well as children’s reflections on this interaction, collected in a focus group, provides deeper insight into both the Barbie doll and the children who play with it. This approach also offers a more comprehensive examination of the purpose behind the creation of the Barbie doll, its role in children’s lives, and its contribution, or lack thereof, to the promotion of female empowerment, a theme I explored in my master’s research (Rolim, 2020) and which was prominently highlighted in the film released in 2023.

Building on these insights, I also sought to understand, through the analysis of language, how children’s human cognitive faculties articulate their feelings and reactions towards the woman represented by Barbie, who carries in her body representations of real adult women,

and how children are shaped by the experiences accumulated throughout their lives, even at an early age.

1.5. Outline of Thesis

This study is structured into seven (07) chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study and begins with Section 1.1., which presents *the genesis of philosophical concerns*, that is, the researcher's trajectory through a compilation of studies on gender and power interactions, with a focus on female empowerment in the context of the Barbie doll. Then, section 1.2., establishes *the research landscape*, providing the necessary framework for the study. Section 1.3., outlines the *purpose of the study* along with objectives, and guiding questions. Section 1.4., offers a brief explanation of the *theoretical framework* used for data analysis, including Halliday's Systemic-Functional Linguistics (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), and Cognitive Linguistics, particularly Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Finally, Section 1.5., the present one, provides an overview of the thesis, outlining its overall structure and organization.

In chapter 2, I present theoretical contributions on key themes including: (i) *childhood*, (ii) *the significance of play*, (iii) *playing as a social practice*, (iv) *play and cognitive frameworks*, and (v) *toys, dolls, gender and their multimodality*. These theoretical contributions are grounded in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1889), Philippe Ariès (1981; 1986), Brougère (1998, 2010, 2014, 2018), Vygotsky (1998), Nicolopoulou (1993), Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Peers (2004), Almeida (2006), Walter Benjamin (2009), Heljakka (2013), Rolim (2020), Sarinho Júnior (2023), Prochner (2024), among others, with purpose to provide a deeper understanding of childhood, play, and toys within social and cognitive frameworks, emphasizing their significance in academic discourse. Specifically, this chapter explores Barbie's influence on perceptions of gender, power, and identity in children's life.

As for Chapter 3, in an effort to honor of women researchers, philosophers, and scientists whose contributions have historically been overlooked simply because they were women, this chapter focuses exclusively on the perspectives of female writers regarding the concept of 'being a woman' from past to present. To this end, I based my studies on the works of influential writers, theorists, scientists, philosophers, and linguists, including Wollstonecraft (1792), Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan (1963), Kate Millett (1970), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), and bell hooks (1982; 1986; 1990), as well as South American decolonial feminist thinkers such as Lugones (2008, 2010, 2020) and Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso (2017).

I also draw upon influential Brazilian voices, including Nísia Floresta ([1832] 2009), Lélia Gonzalez (1982), and Beatriz Nascimento (2006).

Next, in Chapter 4, I present the linguistic theories used to analyze the corpora. To this end, I divided the chapter into five (05) sections. In Section 4.1, I introduce and explain Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014) and the System of Transitivity, which outlines the processes within the ideational metafunction. In Section 4.2, I focus on the Appraisal System, a theory within Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Martin and White (2005). Then, in Section 4.3, I present the principles of Cognitive Linguistics, with particular emphasis on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). In the following sections, I extend the discussion of Cognitive Linguistics through Section 4.4, Frames, Play, and Fantasy in Children's Barbie Narratives (Bateson, 1972), and Section 4.5, Embodiment and the Construction of Imaginative Narratives (Johnson, 2017).

After presenting the main linguistic theories that form the foundation for the analysis of this thesis's corpora, I provide readers, in Chapter 5, with an overview of the methodology used to select the corpora and conduct the research. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into the following subsections: 5.1., the nature of the study, 5.2., the study context and background, 5.3., the context in which the corpora were obtained, 5.4., the criteria for data selection and 5.5., the selection of Barbie dolls.

As for Chapter 6, I present the examination of the corpora, analyzing the acquired data through the lens of the main linguistic theories mentioned earlier. Simultaneously, I engage with the theoretical contributions of the scholars discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, ensuring a comprehensive analysis that integrates all previous discussions on play, toys, and, consequently, the Barbie doll. Such an approach was designed to incorporate social and cognitive linguistic perspectives into the analysis of the present corpora, drawing on contributions from studies already conducted on this topic in other fields of research.

Finally, in Chapter 7, the concluding chapter of this investigation, I reflect on the findings (fruits) from the analysis of the corpora and their contributions to future research. I revisit the research questions to assess whether they were effectively answered throughout the study.

2. SERIOUS PLAY¹⁰: A WALK-THROUGH CHILDHOOD AND GENDER STUDIES

“Anything I do
 I'll try better than I've ever tried
 Wherever my destiny is to be
 I'll search for luck and be happy
 Everything I want
 The Guy up in the sky will give it to me
 Give me all the bravery He can
 Shall I not lack my strength to fight”.

(Xuxa¹¹, 1990)

Childhood holds unique and remarkable flavors, sensations, smells and sounds (Betjeman, 1960) that are marked in the history of every human being. Through each experience in childhood, whether with toys or plays, without the use of tangible instruments, the child gets to perceive and construct intrinsic meanings to the society and culture in which he or she is situated.

In light of this, I draw on Ariès studies from his book *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1986), a reissue and expansion of his ideas from *L'Enfant et la Vie Familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, as well as on the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1889), Sarmento (2002), and Brougère (1998, 2010, 2014, 2018), among others, to explore various aspects of *Childhood*.

Additionally, I incorporate contributions from scholars such as Heljakka (2013) to delve into the topic of the *Significance of play*; Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), and Brougère (2014, 2018) to address *Play as a social practice*; Nicolopoulou (1993), Vygotsky (1998), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Ferrari (2022) to examine *Play and cognitive frameworks*; and finally, Walter Benjamin (2009), drawing from the studies of Karl Gröber (1928) –, along with Peers (2004), Almeida (2006), and Sarinho Júnior (2023), to discuss *Toys, dolls, gender, and their multimodality*.

Each of these topics is explored in the following paragraphs to provide a deeper understanding of the world of childhood, its nuances, and its intersections with various fields of study throughout human history.

¹⁰ Theme discussed at the ITRA 2023 conference – which is part of Sutton-Smith's studies.

¹¹ The song “*Lua de Cristal*”, composed by Muniz and Massadas and performed by Xuxa, was released in 1990 by *Som Livre* alongside the film of the same name. Xuxa was a highly acclaimed Brazilian singer between the 80s and 2000s, considered the ‘queen of the little ones’.

2.1. Childhood

To understand the depth of childhood throughout human history, I begin this timeline by examining its conceptual origins. Over time, the notion of childhood has undergone various phases and transformations, shaping the contemporary understanding of what it means to be a child. These transformations are presented by the French historian Philippe Ariès, one of the main references in the history of childhood, who in his book *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1981, 1986), narrates, through a chronological sequence of events, how the adult human being began to reflect on the stages of life, emphasizing the importance of childhood as a distinct and valuable phase, one that deserves recognition and respect.

The chronological order of events that Ariès refers begins with something that may go unnoticed today, but which required struggles to achieve: a standardized system for recording each human being, the registration number, which signifies the recording of a name and, consequently, the existence of an individual. Ariès (1981) explains that in the Middle Ages, period of human history that is delimited between the years 476 AD¹², with the fall of the Western Roman Empire, and 1453 AD, with the fall of Constantinople (Souza, 2024), things were not as organized as they are today, but in order to establish a direction for ‘organization’ that went beyond ‘fantasy’, since the first name was considered something fanciful at that time, it was designated that there should also be a surname, which is part of the world of ‘tradition’ that passes from family to family and generation to generation. According to Ariès (1981), age was registered with a view to the world of ‘exactness/precision’ and ‘number’ (p. 30, our translation), being three worlds of which human beings are part.

It is worth noting, as Ariès (ibid.) emphasizes, that these systems of registration were developed during different periods in human history to create an organizational framework, so that there was a system of organization until we reached what we have today. This system of registration was conceived because, before it, people had many problems with personal identification. Most of the personal information available at the time was found in documents such as “commercial titles, bills of exchange, or checks, or even wills” (p. 30, our translation).

Once this registration system had been created, Ariès (ibid.) draws readers’ attention to the fact that even in the Middle Ages, ‘the ages of life’ occupied a prominent place in thoughts related to human beings or ‘the ages of humanity’ (our translation), of their existence regarding their physical conditions. The scholar highlights some phases that were part of this reflection,

¹² Anno Domini is a Latin phrase that means ‘In the year of the Lord’. It designates the years calculated from the presumed birth of Jesus Christ (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2025, online).

namely: childhood and puerility, youth and adolescence, old age and senility, which can be summarized as:

Table 1: Stages of Life in the Middle Ages

	Stages of Life	Description
1	Childhood	The age when teeth grow; from birth until 7 years old.
2	Puerility	The time of childhood that goes until 14 years old.
3	Adolescence	From 14 years old to 30 or 35 years old; the period when humans are able to procreate.
4	Youth	The peak of physical strength and fullness, lasting until 45 to 50 years old.
5	Old Age	From 70 years old until death; senses decline, no longer in the fullness of their days.
6	Senility	The result of old age, referring to degenerative processes and associated limitations.

Source: adapted from Ariès (1981)

According to Ariès (ibid.), ‘the ages of life’ were “one of the common ways of conceiving human biology” (p. 35, our translation) and, in this way, understanding the potential of each stage of life and its duration. This absence of a defined meaning for childhood, one that was not centered on the ‘stages of life’, that is, understood not merely as a mathematical progression of years or a biological phase, persisted until the end of the Middle Ages.

It was only with the transition to the Modern Age that childhood began to be seen as distinct from adulthood, as explained by Ariès (ibid.). See the table below:

Table 2: Historical Evolution of Childhood Concepts

Stages of Life	Aspect	Description
17 th Century	Change in the Concept of Infancy	Infancy began to be associated with the ‘idea of dependence’. Children were considered to leave childhood once they became less dependent on care (Aries, 1981, p. 42).
17 th Century	Children’s Clothing	Children of higher social classes stopped dressing like adults and started wearing age-specific clothing that distinguished them from adults (Aries, 1981, p. 70).
17 th Century	Language Deficiency	The French language lacked a specific term for early childhood stages. It had to rely on borrowed terms from other languages (Aries, 1981, p. 44).
Late 18 th - Early 19 th Century	Language Borrowing	Shortly before the 19th century, French borrowed the word ‘baby’ from English, which had previously referred to school-age children in the 16 th and 17 th centuries (Aries, 1981, p. 45).

Source: adapted from Ariès (1981)

This shift presented in the table above was accentuated in the following years, especially until modern times, influenced by the evolving roles of schools and the family – particularly the ‘nucleus family’ – in modern societies (Sarmento, 2002). With this transformation, Ariès (ibid.) highlights that various aspects of childhood became subjects of discussion, including the

very concept of childhood, feelings of childhood (when society perceived childhood as a distinct phase of life, separate from adulthood), children's clothing (when they began to be dressed as children, not as adults), the history of games and play (reflecting the evolving role of children's games and recreational activities in society), the emergence of schools (the institutionalization of childhood), and other related factors.

At that time, children were no longer seen and treated as 'little adults'. They began receiving support from Public, universally accessible schools (Sarmiento, 2002), as well as from "the State, families, and international organizations such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the International Labor Organization (OIT¹³), and the World Health Organization (OMS¹⁴)" (Rolim, 2020, p. 21). This support ensured that children played a recognized social role in the world they lived in, with their rights protected and no longer remaining invisible to society.

However, as argued in my master's thesis (Rolim, *ibid.*), I continue to emphasize that, despite all these studies and the fight for the appreciation, dignity, and respect of children as human and social beings with inherent rights, there remains a persistent bias in society, particularly within academia. This is especially concerning, given that academia should foster collective awareness of children's studies. Yet, prejudice against scientific research on toys and play still prevails, based on comments I faced throughout my master's and doctoral studies. Therefore, I once again emphasize the importance of conducting research like the present dissertation.

2.2. The significance of Play

As discussed in the previous topic, when society acknowledges the significance of childhood in human development and recognizes children not as 'little adults' but as individuals requiring Public, family, and educational support, among others, a social movement, led by adults, emerges, advocating for children's rights, including their right to play, as highlighted by Ariès (1981). From that point on, play began to be explored across various theoretical fields, including linguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and related fields (Burghardt, 2005). These disciplines analyze play as an integral part of children's daily lives, whether using toys or other forms of activities and in various sociocultural contexts.

¹³ Organização Internacional do Trabalho

¹⁴ Organização Mundial da Saúde

But what is play? According to Heljakka (2013), recognizing the phenomenon of play requires a clear and concrete definition. However, based on previous studies conducted in this attempt to define the term ‘play’, such as Chudacoff’s (2017), she emphasizes that formulating a single universally accepted definition of this phenomenon is nearly impossible, as it is examined from various perspectives depending on the field of study. Therefore, I drew on Heljakka’s studies from her 2013 thesis, along with Brougère’s (1998, 2010, 2014, 2018) research on play and other theorists, to provide an answer to this question.

Since this doctoral thesis focuses on children playing with Barbie, an iconic object of American culture, I rely on the definition of play focusing especially in the social and cognitive dimensions. In Heljakka’s (2013) studies, she presents some key insights on the importance of play, which revolves around studies by several theorists such as Henricks (2010), who reinforces the idea that ‘play’ is an autonomous and structured activity within its own limits; Caillois (1961), who argues that ‘play’ is also about make-believe; Spencer (1898), who suggests that ‘play’ is autonomous, motivated by the intrinsic pleasure of the experience, rather than being a means to achieve practical or utilitarian ends; Piaget (1958), who sees ‘play’ as a cognitive process in which new experiences are assimilated into preexisting mental schemes; Vygotsky (1998), who ‘defends’ that ‘play’ is as an activity that allows the expression of creativity, freeing the individual from the immediate constraints of reality; and Freud (1973) who addresses ‘play’ in terms of pleasure, rather than as adherence to the reality principle.

Given that this study was developed in the context of Brazil, where Portuguese is the native language, I believe it is important to note the polysemous nature of the English word ‘play’ when translated into Portuguese. In Portuguese, ‘play’ can be considered in playful action as ‘*jogar*’ (to play a game), and ‘*brincar*’ (to play regarding playful activity), Biscoli (2005), explains that ‘*jogar*’ refers to activities governed by rules, while ‘*brincar*’ denotes freeform play without rules. According to the author, both in games and in play, toys can be used, but for different purposes, differentiated precisely according to whether rules are applied.

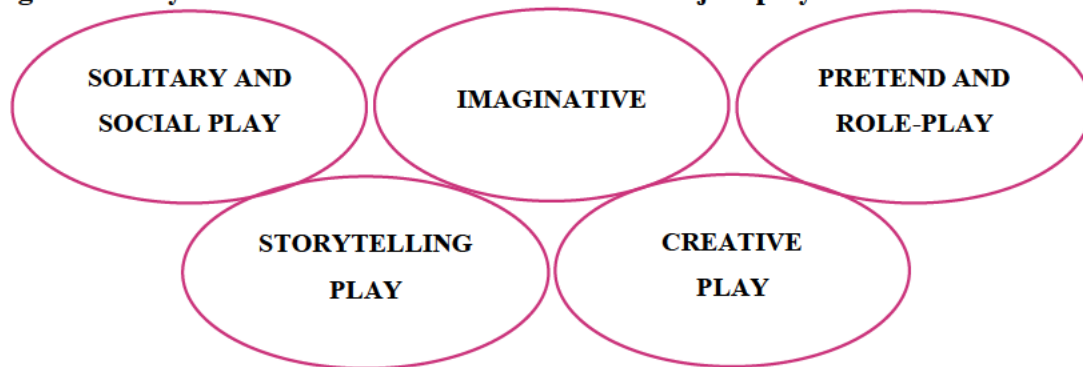
In this regard, as for the study conducted by Heljakka (2013) in her doctoral thesis, she emphasizes the significance of play, noting that ‘play’ predates culture itself (Huizinga, 1992, apud Heljakka, 2013, p. 194) while also incorporating culture-specific aspects. This aligns perfectly with the focus of the present study, as I aim to analyze the sociocultural aspects of children playing with Barbie dolls from both a social and cognitive perspective. Notably, from a cognitive analysis standpoint, my focus is specifically on examining cultural metaphors related to female empowerment. Therefore, the importance of play cannot be overlooked.

Although play may seem innocent to many, both within and outside academia, it holds significant learning potential and plays a crucial role in shaping children's identity.

Gilles Brougère (1998), a renowned French theorist and researcher in the field of studies on play and playful culture, explains that play is configured as a space for social learning, also functioning as a psychological mechanism. Through the contributions of Freud's studies (1973), the author informs that, when playing, the child does not just pretend to be something or someone, but that he/she, in fact, becomes an actor/actress by bringing content from his/her own social world into the universe of play, attributing meaning to what is being performed.

Play, then, carries within itself both social, psychological and cognitive factors (Burghardt, 2005), accentuated in and by language. This aligns with the categories that Heljakka (2013, p. 197) discusses in her studies on 'toy play', where she argues that toy play is best categorized under 'object play', which can be divided as follows:

Figure 1: Playful behavior of humans in terms of object play



Source: adapted from Heljakka (2013, p. 197)

The playful behavior exhibited by humans, especially through object play as depicted in the image above, underscore the significance of play. Children are constantly engaged in play, during which they learn, socialize, and develop essential linguistic, social, and cognitive skills. Such significance is evident in the works of scholars, such as Brougère (1998), who explains that our contemporary understanding of play, shaped by numerous studies over time, would not exist without the awareness brought by modernity.

According to the theorist, before Romanticism, it was common in the culture of the time to establish a contrast between playing and working. From a modern perspective, this opposition appears contradictory, as it not only reinforces the notion of children's inferiority in relation to adults but also perpetuates the misconception that play-related activities are neither meaningful nor socially relevant for children's development as human beings and social actors. Sutton-Smith (1997) had already emphasized the importance of play in a child's life and, one

could argue, in every stage of human life, when he stated that the opposite of play is not work, it's depression.

That said, play assumes a position of significance, as it has been the subject of numerous theoretical studies, as seen so far. It brings to light various socially relevant themes in children's lives, enabling them to become aware of what happens to them, for them, and through them in the context of play and toys. As highlighted by Izumi-Taylor *et al.* (2010, apud Heljakka, 2013), these themes include "process and learning, source of possibilities, empowerment, creativity, child's work, and fun activities" (p. 193). All of them are relevant to this study; however, empowerment is the one I aim to explore in depth.

Finally, I emphasize that play-based practices, drawing on the playful behaviors described by Heljakka (2013) and incorporating the theme of empowerment embodied by the Barbie doll, can yield significant social, critical, and cognitive benefits for girls. I believe that these practices foster a more conscious mindset regarding key themes, including the development of self-esteem and self-confidence; the promotion of gender equality; the stimulation of imagination and creativity; the enhancement of socio-emotional skills; and, most importantly, the cultivation of awareness in the fight against violence toward women, which is the *ultimate* goal of this study.

2.3. Playing as a social practice

When playing, children are exposed to social experiences that range from the context in which they are inserted, whether at home, in schools, parks and public squares, children's clubs, libraries and museums, private leisure spaces, etc., to the themes made possible through the games and toys they engage with, whether these are store-bought or crafted from various materials by the children themselves (Almeida, 2006), as "a fabric to serve as a protective cape and a sword [broom handle] to fight and protect oneself" (Sarinho Júnior, 2023, p. 33).

Play empowers children to (re)interpret and enrich their social roles. Through play, they communicate, interact, and internalize societal norms and roles (Brasil, 1998, p. 22), imitating, (re)interpreting, and transforming them, a process aligned with the playful behaviors described by Heljakka (2013). This is what Brougère (1998), based on the studies of Jean-Paul Richter and E. T. A. Hoffmann, explains about play precisely as a space of cultural creation, of underlying cultural interpretation linked to language. For the theorist, play is an activity whose existence relies on a specific interpretation of its relationship to the world. It is a free, spontaneous activity. Therefore, as children play, they are also learning and adapting their play

behaviors to the unique demands of each social context. Throughout play, they continuously exchange social roles, interacting with peers, caregivers, and even with the toys themselves.

Thus, considering the act of playing, it is important to emphasize that children come from diverse social backgrounds, varying in gender, race, ethnicity, and more. These differences, therefore, influence both the act of the play and the themes that emerge, being particularly evident in their choice of toys, a focal point of this research, which specifically examines children's play with the Barbie doll.

When playing with a Barbie doll, it is assumed that the child engages through the themes represented in each edition, conveyed through the doll's design and attributes. These features reflect the social values of a specific period, transferring adult social configurations into the child's world through established roles and practices (Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; Almeida, 2006). Consequently, these artifacts must be understood in light of their cultural and social meanings to uncover the potential communicative messages inherent in play, a perspective supported by Brougère (2014; 2018).

Moreover, the theorist explains that play not only involves enacting social roles, but also supports the development of psychomotor, social, affective, cognitive, and emotional skills. See the table below, which outlines the aspects of Integral Development as proposed by Ayres and Riveiro (2024).

Table 3: Integral Development Diagram towards Play

Dimension	Description
Psychomotor	It is related to dynamic, kinetic movements, etc.
Social	It encourages collective engagement and mutual understanding through dialogue and shared activities.
Physical	It requires action and reinforces strength, health, and movement.
Affective	It concerns affection.
Cognitive	It intricates patterns that reflect thought, learning, and creativity.
Emotional	It regards the diverse spectrum of feelings.

Source: adapted from Ayres and Riveiro (2024)

These factors highlighted in the table above provide a context conducive to light, playful learning in emotionally supportive conditions. Kishimoto (1999) argues that play enables children to express their ideas and thoughts, through language and spontaneous, uninhibited behavior. However, since it is a cultural activity, even though there are no rules for playing, which differentiates it from games, Vygotsky (1998) states that there are social rules that guide children's behavior. For example, a child role-playing as a mother with a doll illustrates how

play provides opportunities to experiment with social roles. Similarly, an analysis of Barbie demonstrates that play can encourage the expression of different forms of behavior.

This approach is extremely important for the context of Barbie doll production, as their representations have the power to shape the attitudes and behaviors of an entire generation of girls. Consequently, this research focuses on how playing with Barbie dolls can foster female empowerment.

2.4. Play and cognitive frameworks

When discussing play, I cannot fail to reference foundational cognitive studies. Focusing on play only from a social perspective, without addressing its cognitive dimensions, would be like examining only half of an orange, it leaves a critical gap in the understanding of childhood.

Therefore, when considering play in relation to cognitive development, I can clearly state that I encounter a lack of structured frameworks within the broader field of linguistics, particularly within Cognitive Linguistics. As Nicolopoulou (1993) notes, the dominant theoretical influences on cognitive development in relation to children's play stem from scholars such as Piaget and Vygotsky, as well as others like Freud (1973) and Durkheim (1978), whose work significantly contributed to early studies on education, socialization, and the formation of thought.

However, these theorists approach children's play from a psychological perspective. Thus, in an attempt to summarize the key aspects of their research, I draw on Nicolopoulou's (1993) work, which argues that play as explored in the studies of Piaget, Vygotsky and Durkheim, should be understood and analyzed on its own terms, that is, considering *cognitive*, *linguistic*, and *social dimensions*.

I consider these studies to play a crucial role in articulating the connection I propose between these perspectives and Lakoff and Johnson's Cognitive Linguistics (1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). Following this reasoning, Ferrari (2022) explains that Cognitive Linguistics "conceives meaning as a mental construction, in a continuous movement of categorization and recategorization of the world, based on the interaction of cognitive structures and shared models of sociocultural beliefs" (p. 15, our translation). This view aligns closely with early research on childhood cognition.

Regarding these first studies, it is important to highlight that Piaget was among the first psychological theorists to contribute to studies on childhood, particularly in the realm of the

theory of cognitive development. However, as explained by Nicolopoulou (1993), his seminal work faced several criticisms for not sufficiently addressing social and cultural factors. In light of this limitation, in the following lines I will focus on exploring some contributions from Vygotsky (1998) who, drawing on the sociocultural theory of mental development, sought to implement Piaget's theory, thereby complementing his approach. It is worth noting that the purpose here is not to disregard Piaget's work, but rather to introduce arguments that align more closely with the cognitive analysis that I propose to analyze in this study, particularly in relation to Lakoff and Johnson's Cognitive Linguistics (1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) as a framework for data analysis.

With this in mind, Vygotsky's (1998) studies on children's play emphasize that play must be examined in its full potential, as it promotes cognitive development through two interrelated components: i) *the imaginary situation* and ii) *the implicit rules within the imaginary situation*. Vygotsky explains that the *imaginary situation* component is present in both games and play itself. However, when it comes to games, this component manifests through explicitly rule-governed ways, meaning that within games, the imaginary world is actively shaped by predefined elements and characters. The theorist illustrates this with the example of chess, where pieces such as knights, queens, and kings operate within a structured framework of rules. But, we can extend this idea to modern board games such as *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, *Digimon*, etc. where players have access to several cards with a variety of characters, navigating an imaginary world through explicit, rule-based gameplay. These games align with Vygotsky's notion of rule-governed ways, in which the rules are readily apparent and explicit. Below, see images illustrating these types of games:

Figure 2: Yu-Gi-Oh! Cards – Rule-Governed Characters



Source: retrieved from MYPCards

The image above depicts the board game *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, which was released by Kazuki Takahashi in 1996, in Tokyo, Japan. However, it only gained immense popularity in Brazil in the 2000s, largely due to its widely beloved animated series that aired both globally. In Brazil, the series was broadcast on *TV Globinho*, part of ‘Rede Globo’¹⁵. During that time, the game had a significant impact on children, becoming a nationwide craze.

Figure 3: Digimon Cards – Rule-Governed Characters



Source: retrieved from Fandom (2021)

Regarding figure 3, it represents *Digimon* cards, a game inspired by the Japanese animated series that gained significant popularity in Brazil in the 2000s. While the card game already existed at the time, it had not yet become widely known among children in Brazil. It was only between the 2010s and 2020s, particularly in the years leading up to 2020, that the game saw a surge in popularity, with increased interest in purchasing and playing Digimon cards.

With the examples on these cards, we can have access to a broader perspective on Vygotsky’s explanation of how games manifest components through explicitly rule-governed mechanisms. However, the theorist goes further, he also argues that play itself also presents rules, but implicit ones. Implicit in the sense that when playing, children use social rules or behaviors that are part of the rules of the play itself or of the artifact they are playing with, thus affecting their behavior. In the case of Barbie dolls, there are several themes that can be raised

¹⁵ *Rede Globo* is one of the largest media companies in Brazil and Latin America. Founded in 1965 by Roberto Marinho, it is part of *Grupo Globo*. The network is known for producing and broadcasting a wide range of content, including news programs, soap operas, series, sports, and children’s cartoons – with emphasis on *TV Globinho*, which was broadcast from 2000 to 2015. For more information, you can visit the website: <https://www.globo.com/>

during play, thus causing children to implicitly follow the rules or behaviors imposed by that toy. This is why Vygotsky explains in his studies that play is not merely a form of entertainment for children, but a critical space for the development of higher psychological functions. According to him, when children play, especially when playing make-believe or role-playing (such as playing school, doctor, or house), these same rules become important and are followed seriously. In other words, play functions as a space where children internalize and practice social behaviors that they have not yet mastered in real life.

That is why, according to Vygotsky, play empowers children by providing them the opportunity to internalize social rules while also fostering the development of various other aspects, including emotional, creative, linguistic, and cognitive skills. These cognitive skills encompass problem-solving, logical reasoning, and critical thinking, among others – aspects deeply explored in linguistic studies within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics.

In this way, building on Vygotsky's contributions and considering Cognitive Linguistics (CL), I consider that play, whether through spontaneous activities or through artifacts such as games and toys, stimulates the articulation of creativity, ideas, and learning across multiple dimensions in a playful and experiential manner, aligning with CL principles. In this way, play also enables children to “act on general cognitive principles shared by language and other cognitive capacities, as well as the interaction between language modules, more specifically, between linguistic structure and conceptual content” (Figueiredo, 2022, p.93, our translation).

Therefore, considering the points discussed thus far, I cannot help but be moved by the fact that the central concept of Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development concerns the *zone of proximal development*. To better explain this concept, I will use the example of playing with Barbie, a cultural artifact shaped by social influences, embedded with ideologies and social values reflective of the time in which it was produced (Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002, 2004). When playing with Barbie, considering the concept of ‘zone of proximal development’, a child, starting from what Vygotsky calls their *actual* level of development, navigates problem-solving related to the artifact, the Barbie doll, and, in doing so, can reach their *potential* level of development. That is, the instrument with which the child plays (the toy itself), whether through guidance from an adult or interaction with peers, introduces a social world that stimulates the child's development across multiple domains, including linguistic, cognitive, and social skills, among others.

In sum, this process unfolds not only through social interaction but also through cognitive engagement, reinforcing Vygotsky's view that learning occurs within a dynamic

interplay of social and mental processes. Reinforcing, then, the necessity of a systemic-functional and cognitive linguistic analysis for the present study.

2.5. Toys, dolls, gender and their multimodality

When thinking of toys today, especially at the time this research was developed, people often picture store shelves lined with a vast array of creations from designers, manufacturers, and companies both of small and large renown. However, that is not how the origins of toys began.

In *Reflections on the Child, Toy and Education*, Walter Benjamin (2009) revisits Karl Gröber's (1928) *Children's Toys of Old Times: A History of the Toy* to explain that, before the nineteenth century, there was no specialized toy production. The earliest toys, he notes, came from the workshops of carvers and artisans. According to Gröber, toys were not primary goods, there were no factories or craftsmen dedicated exclusively to making them. They were instead *secondary creations*, fashioned from leftover materials in various trades: "animals carved in wood by carpenters, sugar figures made by confectioners, and wax dolls created by candle makers" (Benjamin, 2009, p. 90, our translation).

The fact is that the toy production process has evolved since the beginning of production. Throughout the 18th century, in the city of Nuremberg, Germany, the local producers began to manufacture toys on a larger scale. However, with the detail that carpenters were prohibited from painting toys, making the product (the toy) more expensive, as the finishing work had to be outsourced to other professionals. Once previously crafted for the Church, toys gradually became commercial products, though still considered objects of 'minor art', as Benjamin (ibid.) explains, bringing "joy to children on the toy shelves" (p. 90, our translation). Over time, toy production became specialized and industrialized, representing an important change in the industry.

As this transition unfolded, the family-based craft model gave way to industrial manufacture, distancing production from both homes and children. I would argue that this shift also led to a decline in material diversity. *Plastic* emerged as the dominant medium in the nineteenth and especially the twentieth century (Edwards, 2017, apud Rolim, 2020, p. 17), overshadowing the rich variety of materials that had once defined handmade toys. Benjamin (2009) recalls that earlier toys had been fashioned from "stones, plasticine, wood, paper, bones, fabrics, clay, metals, glass, paper, alabaster", among others (pp. 90-91).

However, one fact that cannot be ignored is that since the beginning of toy production, whether handcrafted by artisans or manufactured by specialized industries – the materials and objects used in play have exhibited a multimodal nature, enriching children’s playful experiences. This aspect has long been, and continues to be, a subject of study for theorists from diverse fields, such as linguistics (Fleming, 1996; Kress; van Leeuwen, [1996] 2006; Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; Almeida, 2006; Rolim, 2020; Sarinho Júnior, 2023; Prochner, 2024), the focus of this study.

Thus, I consider that when examining multimodality within the field of linguistics, it is important to have in mind that with the advent of machine-based production, the toy production shifted, ultimately leading to limiting and summarizing production on a single dominant material: *plastic*. According to Benjamin (2009), this transition diminished the richness and visual appeal of dolls, which had previously been made from a variety of materials. For instance, *glass*, that not only added a delicate quality to toy but also imparted a certain fragility to the doll, enhancing its sensitivity and uniqueness, he argues. However, in contrast, Peers (2004) explains that plastic dolls became more durable and could be transported with a lower risk of damage or breakage, which increased their sales at both local and international levels.

With these considerations in mind, I find it important to note that throughout the history of doll production, even after plastic became the predominant material, particularly during World War II (Rolim, 2020), dolls have been, and continue to be, made from a variety of materials, including those mentioned earlier. As is the case with dolls made of fabric. Although they are not produced on the same large scale as plastic ones, studies emphasize their importance, as they promote interactive and affective experiences, as illustrated by Sarinho Júnior (2023).

In any case, within the context of multimodality and the various semiotic modes that shape the discursive possibilities embedded in the materiality of the doll, these elements point to the “re-significations of society and its roles, identities, ideologies” as texts (Sarinho Júnior, *ibid.*, p. 24, our translation). Therefore, the materiality of the toy, in this case, the doll, directly influences how it is perceived and engaged with by the child.

In the case of plastic dolls, for instance, it is common to see that they have often preserve traits inherited from their porcelain predecessor, above all, the emphasis on physical beauty aligned with contemporary fashion. This connection leads back to the *Pandora doll*, which Peers (2004) identifies as a pivotal figure in the history of fashion dolls. Producers designed Pandora dolls with meticulous attention to bodily form and accessories, down to

undergarments, in order to display the styles of their time. They were made in different sizes and circulated widely as miniature ambassadors of fashion.

The figure below presents one such example.

Figure 4: A Pandora Doll



Source: retrieved from Voyles (2019)

The image above shows a Pandora doll, highlighting fine details that extend from her physical features to her carefully crafted accessories. As Peers (2004) explains, these dolls were not merely mannequins for dressmaking or tailoring clothes to fit the contours of a body; they used to be sent to wealthy households accompanied by samples of fabric and miniature garments in order to help members of the upper class choose suitable outfits for social events, parties, or ceremonies. One notable example comes from the court of *Marie-Antoinette*, who, according to Voyles (2019), once received a Pandora doll so valuable that it was escorted by a military guard to ensure its safe arrival.

As mentioned earlier, Pandora dolls were made in a range of sizes, as illustrated in Figure 5. Today, some of these historical pieces can still be admired at the *Théâtre de la Mode* collection housed in the Maryhill Museum of Art, in Washington State (see below).

Figure 5: Fashion dolls from the ‘Theatre de la Mode’



Source: retrieved from Voyles (2019)

I included the image above to help illustrate the purpose behind the creation of the Pandora dolls, which, as Peers (2004) explains, were designed to circulate and popularize fashion trends. As this evolution of fashion dolls unfolds, it becomes easier to trace how designers eventually arrived at Barbie, the focus of this study, created by Ruth Handler (1916–2002) and her husband, Elliot Handler.

At this point, I would like to stress that, when it comes to Barbie, she has long inspired both *admiration* and *critique* in cultural and academic debates around the world. Scholars such as Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), Rolim (2020), Sarinho Júnior (2023), and Prochner (2024), among others, have explored the many layers that the Barbie figure encompasses. Among these reflections, Almeida (2006) points out that one of the main criticisms within the fashion-doll category concerns Barbie’s *materiality*, since her *static body*, *limited movement*, and *adherence to beauty ideals* reinforce traditional notions of femininity, together with themes such as “sexuality, capitalism, consumerism, and female beauty” (p. 63).

Building on these critiques, I turn to Campenni’s (1999) argument that dolls “may influence gender-schematic role identity in children and may play a part in the differences noted in the cognitive and social skills of girls and boys” (p. 123). Such assertion is, then, carried forward by later scholars such as Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002) and, more recently, Prochner (2024), who notes that Mattel has sought to diversify Barbie’s image through *new professions*, *skin tones*, and *body shapes*, positioning *empowerment* as a central goal. Yet, as Prochner reminds us, beside these efforts, debates about Barbie’s influence on *gender identity* and *beauty ideals* remain very much alive.

It is precisely this persistence that motivates me, as a researcher of childhood contexts, to explore how children's play and their encounters with the doll's more diverse representations can indicate fresh insights into the meanings attached to Barbie today. In this regard, I find it important to remember that Barbie was created by Ruth Handler to inspire children, especially girls, to imagine themselves as capable of becoming whatever they wish to be (see Rolim, 2020). Within the framework of multimodal semiotic diversity explored in this study, I understand that Barbie's representation must encompass diverse nuances of womanhood, involving not only the doll as an object but also the themes I sought to illustrate in the table below, so that we can better understand how these meanings unfold.

Table 4: Themes of Female Representation in Dolls

Themes	Description
<i>Diversity of bodies and appearances</i>	Including various body types, skin tones, and real-life traits (scars, vitiligo, etc.).
<i>Cultural and social representation</i>	Reflecting cultural heritage through clothing, features, and accessories.
<i>Professions and aspirations</i>	Featuring women in diverse careers to inspire dreams and ambitions.
<i>Life experiences</i>	Representing women at all life stages, including motherhood and aging, recognizing them as valid and valuable experiences.
<i>Inclusion of women with disabilities</i>	Featuring dolls with wheelchairs, prosthetics, hearing aids, and other visible disabilities.
<i>Representation of female identity and struggles</i>	Honoring historical figures and including gender/sexual diversity to expand womanhood.

Source: adapted from Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), Rolim (2020), Sarinho Júnior (2023), and Prochner (2024).

I consider that the themes identified above can guide my choice of the Barbie dolls to be used in the children's play-based activity. They were organized not only in light of Barbie's original purpose, as previously discussed, but also through the work of scholars who study childhood, play, and toys, especially those who focus on Barbie, as cited in this section. Together, I believe that their insights shape my own understanding of what a doll like Barbie can symbolize. More than a toy, I argue that she has the potential to reflect the many ways of being a woman and, through her diverse representations, to inspire in children a broader and more inclusive understanding of female diversity.

From this perspective, I believe that playing with different Barbie dolls can offer children a space for reflection on their place in society. In this way, play becomes more than mere entertainment, it can subtly promote *awareness, education, and even the prevention of early pregnancy and gender-based violence.*

3. FEMINISM AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT: A WALK TO REMEMBER

“My mother sensed a war in her womb, and so she raised me to fight.”

(Atique, 2024)

This chapter explores the social, political and philosophical dimensions of the movement known as feminism. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of women’s multifaceted struggles for equity, the core aim of the feminist movement, and to move beyond the superficial perception, still common among those unfamiliar with the topic, that feminism is merely the opposite of male chauvinism, I structured its subsections based on key works, both classical and contemporary. They are organized according to their historical and theoretical contexts, allowing readers to navigate the different waves of feminism up to the present moment in which this thesis was developed.

Thus, this navigation begins with its origins in the Enlightenment¹⁶ and extends to the most recent debates, which center on intersectionality and decoloniality, thereby deepening the discussion on feminism I initiated in my master’s thesis (Rolim, 2020). To this end, this chapter is grounded in major works, both classical and contemporary, organized by historical and theoretical context as follows: (i) *Origins of Feminism: Enlightenment and suffragism*; (ii) *Feminism and Existentialism: the body as a social construction*; (iii) *Intersectionality: race, class and gender*; (iv) *Contemporary debates: fluid gender and decolonization of feminism*; and (v) *Empowerment*; (vi) *Feminist Studies in Brazil*.

This trajectory is what I call: *a walk to remember*.

3.1. Origins of Feminism: Enlightenment and suffragism

The origin of feminism lies in a desire, and, more profoundly, a plea, for gender equality. At its core, the movement emerged primarily in Europe and the United States, demanding nothing more and nothing less than the right for women, and all genders, to live life with dignity, grounded in their independence and the recognition of their humanity (Rolim, 2020). It calls for the same rights afforded to men, particularly in the political and social spheres, and has developed across four distinct waves, each one with its own singularities. The first wave of

¹⁶ It lasted from the late 17th to the late 18th centuries.

feminism, which is the focus of this subsection, was marked with an outstanding achievement: women's right to vote.

One of the earliest figures to direct her thoughts and writings toward the political and social role of women, well before the historical rise of feminism, was the English philosopher and writer Mary Wollstonecraft. Engaged in the intellectual debates of 18th-century philosophy during the Enlightenment, an era known as the *Age of Reason*, when philosophers and thinkers began to question traditional institutions, including those of the Church, Wollstonecraft was and remains widely recognized as the first thinker, often referred to as the “Mother of Feminism” (Menig, 2018), to systematically reflect on feminist ideas. See the figure below:

Figure 6: Image of Mary Wollstonecraft and students



Source: retrieved from TPM (2025)

Her seminal work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is considered a milestone in feminist philosophy and emblematic of the first wave of feminism. In it, she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men but appear to be for the fact that they do not have equal access to education. Wollstonecraft (ibid.) explains that her motivation for addressing this subject stemmed from her “affection for the whole human”, together with a desire “to see women placed in a station in which she would advance, instead of retarding, the progress of these glorious principles that give a substance to morality” (p. 09), thus encapsulating her central argument: the pursuit of women's rights beginning with the right to education. This thought marked the first wave of feminism, where “women believed that they could achieve equality of their rights through education and a more harmonious and balanced relationship within marriage” (Rolim, 2020, p. 24-25).

It was from the desire for education as a means to ensure women's independence that the fight for the right to vote emerged. In her seminal work, Mary Wollstonecraft (ibid.)

emphasizes that, with regard to education, society at the time prepared women “to become the companion of man”, warning that, otherwise, she would “stop the progress of knowledge” (p. 10). This highlights how the educational system of the period was inherently oppressive as Wollstonecraft further argues: “to see one half of the human race excluded by the other from all participation in government, was a political phenomenon that, according to abstract principles, it was impossible to explain” (p. 11). Through these reflections, the philosopher contends that education was essential for female emancipation, enabling women to exercise reason and autonomy and to become active citizens in society. And as active citizens, they were also expected to participate fully in civic life, including the right to vote.

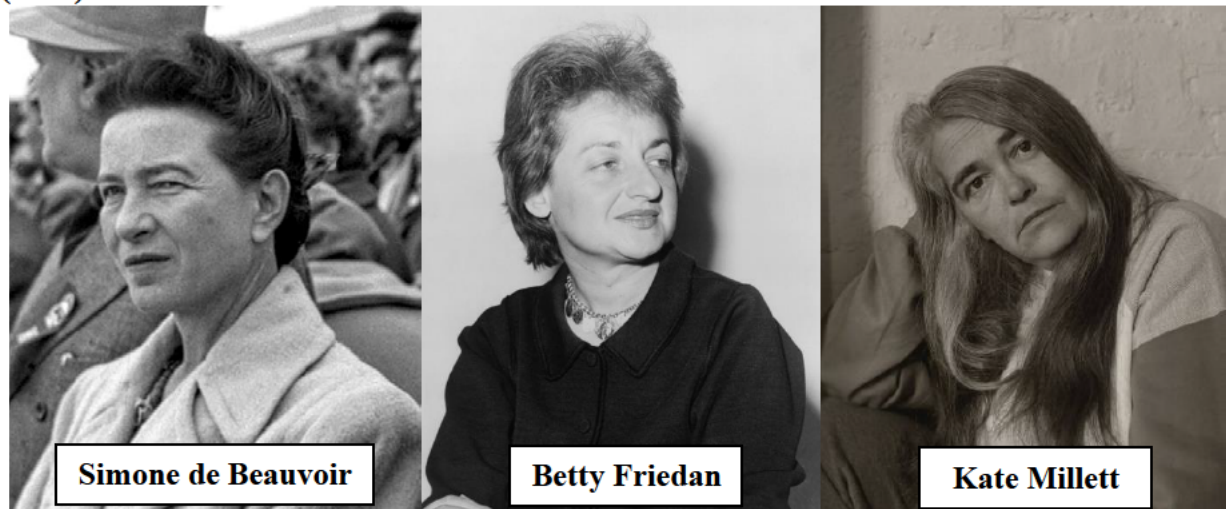
These thoughts also contributed to Wollstonecraft being recognized as an important precursor of liberal feminism. In sum, the first wave of feminism was shaped by three main currents: liberal, socialist, and radical. The liberal current predominated in the early stages of feminist awareness, particularly for the fact that demands for women’s rights at the time were largely restricted to the bourgeois class and focused on political and social equality through positive action policies. It was only with the Industrial Revolution, when women began to enter the workforce, that the radical feminist current emerged in opposition to the patriarchal system. To reach a broader and more diverse audience, feminists with socialist tendencies soon followed, aiming to globalize the feminist movement. This broader reach contributed to the rise of the suffragette movement, which focused on securing women’s right to vote (Rolim, 2020).

3.2. Feminism and Existentialism: the body as a social construction

After the initial phase of the feminist movement, marked by women’s struggles for fundamental rights, particularly access to education and the right to vote as part of their fight for independence, other dimensions of the struggle began to emerge as central concerns. Women realized that their rights went beyond the achievements of education and voting, encompassing issues related to autonomy of their bodies. A shift that, according to Rolim (2020), gave rise to the second wave of feminism, which spanned from the 1960s to the 1980s. During this period, the movement expanded its focus to include reproductive rights, sexuality, and persistent inequalities in both the workplace and private life (Alexander, 2020).

This period was marked by the contributions of prominent female intellectuals such as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Kate Millett, whose writings significantly influenced the debates of the second wave of feminism. Below are images of Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Kate Millett.

Figure 7: Images of Simone de Beauvoir (1955), Betty Friedan (1960) and Kate Millett (1987)



Source: retrieved from Wikimedia Commons (2023), Wikimedia Commons (2024) and NYPL Digital Collections (2025)

The first of these, Simone de Beauvoir, a French philosopher and writer engaged in feminist theory, played a very relevant role in the development of modern feminist thought. Her most influential work, *The Second Sex* (1949), widely recognized and acclaimed by feminists worldwide (Alexander, 2020), explores existentialist perspectives on the role of women, addressing how, throughout history, women have been defined as the ‘other’ in relation to men, thereby being relegated to the status of a ‘second sex’. In her book, she argues that women, though biologically human beings, are shaped into ‘women’ through historically and socially imposed norms. This idea is encapsulated in her assertion: “we are exhorted to be women, remain women, become women” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 13), a reflection, I could say, of the prescribed identity of women in a world governed by male norms.

Throughout her work, Beauvoir (1949) presents philosophical and political reflections that emerged in the period following World Wars I and II, when women began to question their social role within a patriarchal system in which men exercised control over all aspects of life, including women’s own bodies. At the time, issues related to sexual and reproductive rights became central to the feminist agenda, encompassing the struggle for the legalization of abortion, access to contraceptive methods, and the inclusion of sex education (Alexander, 2020).

It is worth noting, as Rolim (2020) explains, that in addition to the aforementioned struggles, many women during this historical period were compelled to take on roles traditionally assigned to men (Aleksiévitch, 2016, p. 10, apud Rolim, 2020, p. 25), particularly as men were mobilized to fight in the war. In the American context, for instance, this event and

the new configurations regarding the role of women that emerged from the context of World Wars I and II played a key role in accelerating the momentum of the feminist movement. The situation was further exacerbated by the precarious and often hazardous working conditions, which posed serious risks to women's health, particularly for those who were mothers or concerned about the impacts on their reproductive systems. It can be said that the feminist struggles at the time were encapsulated in the following statement: *the personal is political*. Thus, Beauvoir's works helped society to reflect on the roles imposed upon women by a patriarchal system, particularly concerning their bodies.

As for Betty Friedan (journalist, writer and American feminist activist) although aligned with many of Beauvoir's ideas, she focused her reflections and analysis on the social roles assigned to women within marriage, motherhood, and domestic life. In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Friedan gave voice to the widespread dissatisfaction experienced by women confined to the roles of wives and mothers, who were both denied autonomy and burdened with responsibilities. In response to these collective frustrations, Friedan, alongside other activists, academics, and lawyers such as Pauli Murray and Muriel Fox, co-founded the National Organization for Women (NOW), becoming its first president. According to Evans (1989), the mission of this American organization was to advocate for genuine equality of opportunity for women across all sectors of society. Its leadership contended that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was not being effectively enforced with respect to women, particularly in the workforce.

The following table outlines a timeline of NOW's key milestones:

Table 5: Timeline – NOW's Major Milestones

Ano	Event / Action
1966	Foundation of the National Organization for Women (NOW), with Betty Friedan as its first president.
1967	NOW launches its action plan for equality: equal pay, public childcare, and an end to workplace discrimination.
1970	Massive women's strike in the U.S., marking the 50th anniversary of women's suffrage. NOW organizes protests across the country.
1972	Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) approved by Congress, with strong support from NOW (but not ratified by all states).
1973	Victory in the Roe v. Wade case: constitutional right to abortion in the U.S. – with involvement of feminist movements such as NOW.
1980s	NOW intensifies actions against domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Source: adapted from Friedan (1963), Rupp and Taylor (1987), Evans (1989), Rosen (2000)

The Civil Rights Movement further encouraged many women to write about the struggle for women's rights. A notable example, and the third woman on this list, is Kate Millett – an American writer, visual artist, and feminist activist, considered one of the most influential intellectuals of the second wave of feminism in the United States and the Western world

(Alexander, 2020). In her seminal work *Sexual Politics* (1970), she analyzes and exposes how women's oppression is deeply embedded within cultural, social, and political structures, particularly through the lens of sexuality. She critically examines the works of authors such as D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Sigmund Freud, demonstrating how sexuality was frequently portrayed as a tool of 'male domination'.

The subtitle of her work reflects much of what women experienced during that period, reflects much of what women experienced during that period, as she presents what she describes as "*a surprising examination of society's most arbitrary folly*". Still in the opening pages, the reader can find the reflection that the relationship between the sexes "has always been a political one" (p. 2). It is political, Millett (1970) argues, because it involves "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another" (p. 23), placing gender alongside historically oppressed and "well-defined", such as "race, caste, and class" (p. 24).

These writings empowered Black women to mobilize and advocate for their own causes in the 1970s. At that time, as Alexander (2020) observes, Black women began to advocate for rights that addressed both their racial and gender identities, marked by founding of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) in 1973. Their collective debates and activism centered on issues of sexuality that had long been marginalized. According to Alexander (ibid.), their struggles encompassed racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, seeking to promote critical reflection and raise awareness of how these systems of oppression intersect across all social categories – *class, ethnicity, gender*, and beyond.

In 1981, Gloria Jean Watkins (North American writer, feminist theorist, educator and social activist, known as Bell Hooks) published the influential work *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. According to Alexander (2020), the book provided an inclusive approach to activism through Black feminism, one that aimed to include all people. In this way, Black women catalyzed a new phase of the feminist movement, one firmly rooted in the intersectionality of their lived experiences, a perspective that would later shape the core agendas of third wave of feminism in the 1990s.

3.3. Intersectionality: race, class and gender

The third wave of feminism is shaped by the concept of *intersectionality*, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her seminal 1989 article, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist*

Politics. In this work, Crenshaw (1989) articulates *intersectionality* as a response to the limitations of previous feminist movements, which often centered the experiences of “white, middle-class women” (p. 139), while neglecting the multiple and intersecting forms of oppression faced by marginalized groups, such as Black people, especially Black women. Although her work precedes the beginning of the third wave, the critical insights it offers profoundly influenced the movement’s theoretical development. See her image below:

Figure 8: Image of Kimberlé Crenshaw (2023)



Source: retrieved from Clarke / The Guardian (2023)

The concept of *Intersectionality* called, then, for a broader, more inclusive feminist framework capable of addressing the complexities of identity and structural inequality. According to Crenshaw (1989), the first and second waves of feminism failed to adequately address the realities of Black women. She emphasizes that Black women were “not considered” (p. 139) and were even “theoretically erased” (p. 139) within mainstream feminist discourse. At the time, feminist narratives tended to generalize women’s experiences as if they were universal, neglecting the fact that the struggles and lived realities, or, as I might say, the *pains*, of Black women differed significantly from those of more privileged members of the group. As Crenshaw notes, “the focus is on race and class-privileged women” (p. 140).

This act of erasure was so pervasive that Crenshaw includes in her book an account of an event at the Women’s Rights Conference in Akron, where, as she relates, Sojourner Truth (an influential American activist for civil rights and women’s rights, particularly for Black women) attempted to speak about her rights. As the author recounts, at that moment white women tried to silence her, “fearing that she would divert attention from women’s suffrage to

emancipation” (p. 153), simply because she was Black. It was on this occasion that Sojourner Truth delivered her now-famous 1851 speech, *‘Ain’t I a Woman?’*. In it, Crenshaw (ibid.) explains that Sojourner Truth directly challenged the racist and sexist ideologies of the time, affirming that Black women were also women and thus entitled to the same rights – a historic milestone at the intersection of anti-racist and feminist struggles. See the speech below, as presented by Crenshaw (ibid., p. 153):

Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me – and ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have born thirteen children, and seen most of ‘em sold into slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me – and ain’t I a woman?

Sojourner Truth’s discourse reveals how deeply rooted prejudice against Black people, particularly Black women, was, not only among men but also among women who advocated for and participated in the feminist movement. Consequently, that day arose a need for transformation and intervention within the very structures of feminism. In this context, Crenshaw (1989) argued for the necessity of a specific framework capable of addressing the intersecting forms of oppression experienced by Black women, oppressions rooted not only in gender, but also in race.

In this regard, the concept of *intersectionality* came to define a feminist perspective that recognizes the interconnectedness of class, race, gender identity, cultural diversity, and patriarchy as overlapping systems of domination, making the third wave of feminism, which developed from the 1990s onwards, having as its central theme the diversity of female experiences and criticism of the generalizations made by previous waves, notably the second wave, which was often centered on the experiences of white, heterosexual, middle-class women.

In light of this context, and despite the richness of feminist scholarship detailing the lived experiences of women, in particular Black women, during the earlier waves of feminism, I do not feel fully qualified to articulate, through my own writing, the depth of the pain that has marked their existence throughout history, even though I am often identified as Latina due to being born in Brazil. For this fact, I emphasize that those who seek to understand more deeply

the pain experienced by Black women should turn to the work of bell hooks, particularly *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1982; 1986; 1990). In this text, dedicated to her mother, Hooks offers profound insights into the feminist struggle, especially from the perspective of Black women, whose lives pulse with resilience and vitality. To her, I express deep reverence, for the strength of her soul and the legacy of her being. To all the women who came before me, in particular Black women, your lives, though so often rendered invisible, are forever imprinted on my existence. It is through Bell Hooks's work that I have been able to grasp, in part, the depth of their pain.

I emphasize that, for those who feel the need to know more deeply about the pain of black women, they can read the work of bell hooks (ibid.) *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, where in her work dedicated to her mother, she reported details about the feminist struggle, especially regarding black women, with a lot of latent life in their veins. For her, I venerate the existence of her being and strength of soul. For all the women who came before me, especially the black women, your lives, even though they often seemed to go unseen, will forever be part of my existence, which I was able to learn about their pain through the work of bell hooks (ibid.).

Therefore, I believe that what remains for me is, at the very least, to promote awareness and inspire action so that other women, even from childhood, can learn more about their rights in society, embracing their identities as women in all their diversity, regardless of gender expression, class, race, or other differences. Therefore, through my research on the Barbie doll, I dedicate myself to using this play instrument as a means for children to increasingly see themselves as owners of their bodies and their lives, as women worthy of respect, dignity, and, above all, the right to exist free from oppression and violence in any form.

3.4. Contemporary debates: fluid gender and decolonization of feminism

The fourth wave of feminism emerges with a powerful tool for disseminating struggles that initially originated primarily in Europe and the United States: *technology* (Rolim, 2020). In a world that is increasingly interconnected not only by technological advances, but, also, by social media, the fourth wave of the feminist movement 'explodes' as a means of raising awareness, mobilizing communities, and enabling public denunciation, characterized by emergence of online feminist activism (Mattoni, 2017; Tufekci, 2017).

As Mattoni (2025) points out, digital and social networks provide a new dynamic of political participation for the new generation, marked by organizational flexibility, the appreciation of diverse voices and the visibility of historically marginalized discourses.

It is important to highlight that, in Brazil, the context in which this thesis is situated, social networks have gained increasing prominence, particularly due to their accessibility via mobile phones. This technological expansion, thus, has enhanced the circulation of information not only within households but also in educational environments: schools. Some authors such as Perez and Ricoldi (2019) even say that nowadays “feminism is in fashion” (p. 2, our translation), meaning a reflection of the growing visibility and engagement of feminist discourses in the digital sphere. Since around 2010, many women have begun to break their silence, turning to social media as a platform to raise their voices in the fight against rape culture and the objectification of women.

Some examples of these time frames are presented by Torres (2021), who, writing for the *Politize!* platform and drawing on the work of Perez and Ricoldi (2019), highlights that the street demonstrations of June 2013, recognized as the “Slut Walk” (*Marcha das Vadias*), gained significant visibility through digital platforms. Taking place in several Brazilian cities, the movement also had one of its key centers in João Pessoa, where this thesis was developed. Photographs of this local demonstration are presented below.

Figure 9: Protesters at the Slut Walk, João Pessoa, 2013



Source: G1 (2013). *Confira imagens da Marcha das Vadias 2013 em João Pessoa* [Foto].

According to Torres (2021):

With the democratization of universities and the growing aversion to institutions, combined with the popularization of the internet, new voices and discourses have begun to amplify online, calling upon a new mass of women who identify with feminist causes to take to the streets against recent setbacks in gender and socioeconomic issues as a whole (*no pagination*, our translation).

As these campaigns gained wide visibility, I can observe that they began to open space for other discussions to emerge, for instance, *gender inclusivity* and the *long-standing feminist struggle* for the deconstruction of aesthetic standards deeply reinforced by patriarchy. These transformations have become increasingly visible in different areas of social life, including childhood, especially through the world of children's toys.

Mattel, as Prochner (2024) notes, “has undergone a massive transformation” (p. 42) in its approach to Barbie dolls, which now reflect a broader range of female identities. Today, it is possible to note that the brand presents dolls that portray women in different professions and everyday contexts, with varied *body shapes*, *skin tones*, and *disabilities*. Some dolls are bald, a feature that may allude to either gender nonconformity or medical conditions, and others display vitiligo or other distinctive traits, all of which contribute to a wider sense of inclusion and representation.

In light of these realities, I understand this transformation as something made possible by the determined struggles of feminist movements over time, especially those that gained, I would say, a kind of “renewed” force during the fourth wave. While studying this period, I could observe that new debates began to surface, addressing issues such as *harassment*, *gender-based violence*, *digital activism*, *intersectionality*, and *decolonial thought*. At the same time, other nuances emerged, including a growing focus on activism through *social media*, greater *visibility for LGBTQIA+ perspectives*, and the emergence of new forms of *empowerment* within *virtual spaces*.

Within this context of renewed feminist debates and decolonial perspectives, I would like to draw attention in this subsection to two decolonial feminists who are not only central to these discussions but who also offered me valuable insights that helped me see more clearly, and more deeply, the questions that shape womanhood and, in particular, the nuances that guide the analysis of data in this thesis. These two scholars are María Lugones (2008, 2010, 2020) and Yuderlys Espinosa Miñoso (2017).

The first, María Lugones, was a researcher and activist engaged in *feminist*, *antiracist*, and *decolonial* struggles, especially those rooted in the realities of *Latin America*. Below, I include her photograph so that we can see the face of a woman whose presence and thought were deeply influential in the development of decolonial feminism.

Figure 10: Portrait of Maria Lugones



Source: CLACSO (2020)

Building on Aníbal Quijano's notion¹⁷ of the *coloniality of power*, Lugones's reflections center on the idea that colonialism not only imposed economic and political domination but also reshaped the very notion of gender itself, establishing a Western, binary, and hierarchical system that erased Indigenous and Afro-diasporic forms of kinship, sexuality, and social organization.

In her influential essay *Toward a Decolonial Feminism* (2010), she expanded on this argument, showing that gender cannot be understood apart from coloniality, since the modern/colonial project made it a tool of domination intertwined with *race*, *sexuality*, and *labor* exploitation. Based on these arguments, she critiques both Eurocentric feminism, which neglects the colonial dimension of gender oppression, and Marxist traditions, which overlook how gender and race structure material exploitation.

When reading her work, I find myself deeply moved by the strength of her insight that theory alone is never enough. This, I believe, is one of the main reasons why I carry on with this thesis. Even after her passing in 2020, I see that María Lugones's intellectual and political legacy continues to resonate powerfully today, reminding us that decolonial feminism is not only a theoretical project but also a collective practice, one shaped by *solidarity*, *resistance*, and the *ongoing struggle to transform* not only how knowledge is produced, but also how women's *lives* are *touched* and *changed*. Her contributions remain forever inscribed in the history of feminist struggles.

As for the other decolonial feminist previously mentioned, and no less important, I would like to speak respectfully about her influence as well. In this regard, Yuderkys Espinosa

¹⁷ I find it important to mention that the concept of *coloniality of gender*, formulated by Lugones (2008), emerges in critical dialogue with Aníbal Quijano's (2000) notion of *coloniality of power*. While Quijano emphasized the ways in which colonialism structured a global matrix of economic, political, and epistemic domination, Lugones expanded this framework by demonstrating that the very category of gender was itself a colonial construction – racialized and hierarchical, and inseparable from the dynamics of power described by Quijano.

Miñoso, a Peruvian-born scholar whose work has been central to my readings on women's empowerment, has long been a leading voice in decolonial feminist thought in Latin America. See her image below.

Figure 11: Portrait of Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso



Source: SOARES (2019). In Terra, V. *Por mais vozes e novas epistemologias*.

Influenced by Lugones's work, Espinosa Miñoso gives voice in her writings to the lived experiences of Black and Indigenous women. Her reflections center on the persistence of Eurocentric frameworks that continue to shape feminist thought and practice. Throughout her works, she argues that feminism must be rooted in the political and epistemic realities of Latin America rather than borrowed from foreign models. For this reason, her place within decolonial feminism stands out, as she does more than simply continue the project, she reshapes it, keeping it alive in contemporary academic debates and in collective struggles for social justice. This, I believe, is of great relevance to the analysis and conclusions presented in this thesis.

In this regard, and following Lugones's idea of the "coloniality of gender", I see that Espinosa Miñoso develops a complementary critique that points to how Eurocentric ways of thinking still persist within Latin American feminist traditions. Her writing brings together rigorous theory and political practice, grounding each reflection in the lived experience of social movements. This connection is especially visible in her involvement with the *Grupo Latinoamericano de Estudios, Formación y Acción Feminista* (GLEFAS), revealing her deep and heartfelt concern for the women of Latin America.

In her article *De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de feminismo decolonial* (2017), I see that Espinosa Miñoso helps give shape to what we now understand as decolonial feminism. She differentiates it from postcolonial perspectives and anchors it in the specific histories and struggles of Latin America. What stands out to me is how, when she introduces the notion of "*feminismo hegemónico blanco-mestizo*", she speaks directly to the contradictions inside the movement itself, showing that even within regional feminisms, universal models can still

dominate, centering white or mestizo, middle-class women and leaving Indigenous, Black, migrant, and working-class voices at the margins.

I understand that, for Espinosa Miñoso, this reflection is not only about pointing out exclusion; it is also about urging feminist theory to listen in new ways, to recognize forms of knowledge that arise from the experiences of those who have historically been silenced. Her later book, *Escribir desde el cuerpo: Ensayos de crítica feminista* (2021), extends this invitation, placing the *body* at the center of her thought as a space where subordination and resistance continuously intersect and reshape one another.

Building on this reflection, I see that Espinosa Miñoso affirms the epistemic power of racialized and colonized women, showing that the *body* is not only a target of oppression but also a *source of knowledge* and *political change*. From this viewpoint, the relevance of her ideas becomes evident in my own work, especially when I look at children's play with Barbie dolls. Barbie, after all, often stands as a symbolic image of women's *bodies, diverse, idealized, and contested* all at once.

When children interact with dolls that display different *physical features, identities, and abilities*, we can begin to see how beauty norms and social hierarchies are *repeated, questioned, or even undone* through play. In this light, Espinosa Miñoso's view of the *body* as both a site of domination and of resistance offers a sensitive and critical lens for reading these moments. Her perspective helps me look more closely at how children negotiate ideas of *femininity, beauty, and empowerment* while they play, turning play itself into a space where broader struggles over representation and belonging gradually take shape.

In this way, Espinosa Miñoso not only helps systematize decolonial feminism as a distinct field of inquiry but also reaffirms its force as a transformative political project. In this regard, I find it important to note that the photograph above, which portrays her, was taken during an event held from November 21 to 27, 2019, at the Fórum de Ciência e Cultura (FCC). On that occasion, she opened the cycle of activities with her lecture "A Astúcia das Condenadas: Hipersexualidade e a agência dos corpos negros no Caribe" [*The Cunning of the Condemned: Hypersexuality and the Agency of Black Bodies in the Caribbean*]. In this talk, she addressed three central issues (Terra, 2019, [s.p.], our translation):

- i) disputes within academic spaces;
- ii) for whom and by whom do we speak?;
- iii) what kind of emancipation are we talking about?

In one of her interventions, Espinosa Miñoso explained:

“For us, the possibility of debating and thinking about the world becomes a fundamental task for feminist politics. I believe that decolonial feminism arises precisely to assume this idea in its utmost radicality and to produce its own feminist epistemology. The possibility of a more adequate interpretation of domination should come from the bottom up, rather than from the top down.” (Terra, 2019, [s.p.], our translation)

She further added:

“Hegemonic feminism has always assumed that, in the so-called social pyramid, those at the bottom were women, that they were at the base. Yet if there is a woman upon whose body a whole social structure and its mechanisms of domination are sustained, she is not just any woman. She is a woman produced within coloniality, produced as non-human, as existing beneath the line of humanity. It is upon the community of these racialized women that structures of domination continue to be upheld.” (ibid., [s.p.], our translation)

These reflections reveal the depth and boldness of Espinosa Miñoso’s decolonial feminism. She invites us to re-think not only the epistemological roots of feminist theory but also the very ways in which *bodies*, *hierarchies*, and *power relations* come to be defined. By placing racialized women at the center of her analysis, I can see that she exposes the limits of dominant feminist narratives and reminds us that no project of emancipation can ignore the colonial matrix of power.

What moves me most in her approach is the way she connects knowledge with lived experience, showing that the production of feminist thought must remain grounded in the lives of those who have long been denied their full humanity. In this sense, I understand that decolonial feminism becomes not just a theoretical framework, but a political and ethical necessity.

That said, I find it important to emphasize that her ideas do not stand alone. When read alongside the work of other key thinkers, it becomes evident that decolonial feminism questions the idea that feminism can be confined to a Euro-American paradigm of equality or emancipation, one that too often takes white, middle-class women as the universal subject. Instead, it invites us to recognize how *race*, *class*, *colonial history*, and *hierarchies of knowledge* intersect with gender oppression itself.

In this sense, as discussed throughout this subsection, two voices stand out within decolonial feminist thought, at least in my own readings following my qualification defense: Lugones (2010), who expands feminist debates by placing them within a broader theoretical

framework. Drawing on Quijano's concept of the *coloniality of power*, she demonstrates that gender itself was reshaped by colonialism, making women's oppression inseparable from racial and colonial domination. And, secondly, Espinosa Miñoso (2017), who pushes the discussion further through her notion of *feminismo hegemónico blanco-mestizo*, showing how even within Latin America, feminist discourses often privilege the perspectives of white and mestizo middle-class women.

Viewed as a whole, I conclude this subsection by reflecting that these interventions not only unsettle the Eurocentric foundations of feminist thought but also root decolonial feminism in the lived realities and ways of knowing of subaltern women. Their collective legacy continues to *inspire, provoke, and expand* contemporary feminist debates. From this perspective, I see how their contributions offer transformative insights to new generations, calling attention to the urgent need to confront enduring patterns of *oppression, discrimination, and inequality*.

In the context of the fourth wave of feminism, these reflections gain “renewed” relevance, as the movement increasingly engages with intersecting struggles, *racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism*¹⁸. Such forms of oppression intertwine and shape everyday experiences, particularly those of women, who remain at the heart of this doctoral study.

3.5. Empowerment

In my own experience, the term *empowerment* inevitably evokes the idea of power. Yet, its morphological composition, through the prefix *em-* and the suffix *-ment*, endows it with a richer sense: power conceived not merely as domination, but as an intrinsic force that arises from within and radiates outward. In this perspective, empowerment does not reproduce oppression; rather, it gestures toward transformation and ascension.

In light of this aspect, based on what is discussed in the previous paragraphs, the term *empowerment* began to gain prominence through the women's struggle within the Black movement. As Crenshaw (1989) points out, Black women often did not see themselves fully represented within the movement itself. From that point on, the term *empowerment* took on

¹⁸ I mention ableism here because decolonial feminism embraces all these forms of struggle. It is also particularly relevant to this research, since among the dolls I brought for the children to play with was a wheelchair Barbie doll, accompanied by a ramp for accessibility.

broader significance, especially in the context of feminist struggles, coming to encompass the pursuit of autonomy and power by women over their own lives, bodies, desires, social rights, etc.

However, it is important to note that the term *empowerment* is not limited to feminist struggles; rather, it applies to diverse contexts and realities, encompassing multiple domains, from the individual and social to the economic, educational, and political as argued in my master's research (Rolim, 2020), each of which plays a role in human life. According to Charlier and Caubergs (2007), the empowerment process can be understood across four dimensions of power: *power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*. The table below provides a summary of the key aspects of each dimension.

Table 6: The four dimensions of power

Type of Power	Definition / Focus	Key Characteristics
<i>Power over</i>	Moderated guidance in relationships of domination/subordination	Involves helping others (with less power) to be themselves and reach their goals; not oppressive, but supportive leadership
<i>Power to</i>	Know-how and intellectual capacity	Includes decision-making, authority, problem-solving, creativity, and enabling others
<i>Power with</i>	Collective power for shared goals	Relates to social and political collaboration; focuses on common objectives among a group
<i>Power within</i>	Self-awareness and internal strength	Refers to self-sufficiency, personal empowerment, and the ability to change one's own life

Source: adapted from Charlier and Caubergs (2007) and Rolim (2020)

By considering the four levels of power discussed by the aforementioned theorists and illustrated in the table above, I argue that they form a fundamental framework for understanding what it means to be an empowered person, someone capable of empowering others by focusing on these core dimensions. It is important to emphasize, as previously noted, that *empowerment* manifests across various contexts and applies to people of all genders, whether referring to the social and cultural identities attributed to sex, or to political, legal, educational, economic, and representational dimensions.

In sum, empowerment permeates a wide range of human experiences, including childhood contexts. This is particularly evident in play with Barbie dolls, the central focus of this doctoral research, which has often been dismissed as trivial or naïve, despite its deep social and symbolic implications.

3.6. Feminist Studies in Brazil

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, being a Brazilian woman researcher, I could not fail to acknowledge Brazilian feminist writers who have also developed, and continue to develop, significant studies in this field, which are essential to the debate in Brazil.

However, before providing even a brief overview of these writers, I would like to introduce a subject that I have been discussing in my thesis, but which was recently highlighted in the article “*Discurso*¹⁹ *da discórdia, silenciamentos e resistências: a fala feminina na arena política*” by Piovezani and Braga (2024, p. 265): “pains”. Indeed, to speak about women’s struggles for their rights is to speak about pain. Pains that permeate their personal and intimate lives, and that remain in the silence of their souls, where for so long they were erased, neglected, and treated as nonexistent, particularly in the context of Black women (bell hooks, 1982; 1986; 1990).

In their article, the authors observe that the history of women’s speech, referring to *public*²⁰ speech, “encompasses a history of the body, of gestures, and of the voice” (Piovezani; Braga, 2024, p. 268, our translation). Yet I would go further and argue that this is not only a reality of public speech, but also of the silencing of women’s voices within their own homes and, at times, within their very selves. This has led, throughout history, to the erasure of women’s voices and, ultimately, to the denial of their very being.

To be a woman has long meant to experience the silencing of one’s existence. For this reason, women’s history is marked by so many layers of pain²¹, as I noted at the beginning of this thesis and as Piovezani and Braga (ibid.) affirm. With these aspects in mind, I now turn to three²² Brazilian feminist scholars whose works represent fundamental milestones in the consolidation of feminist thought in Brazil.

The earliest reference dates back to Nísia Floresta, who, in *Direitos*²³ *das mulheres e injustiça dos homens*, originally published in 1832 and republished in 2009, challenged the

¹⁹ *Discourse of Discord, Silencing, and Resistance: Women’s Speech in the Political Arena* (our translation)

²⁰ I underscore that the authors reported on a specific context of women’s speech in the public sphere, analyzing an interview given by Manuela D’Ávila on *Roda Viva* in 2018, in which her speech was interrupted 62 times (Piovezani; Braga, 2024, p. 273).

²¹ I emphasize here that, prior to reading this specific article published in 2024, I was already referring to women’s experiences – particularly those of Black women – in terms of “pains”. This is not to diminish the pains inherent to human existence in general, but rather to underscore the notion of “pains” as I came to articulate it after engaging with the works of bell hooks. I also find it reassuring that other authors have expressed similar perspectives on this theme.

²² The range of Brazilian feminist scholars/writers in Brazilian literature is broad; however, I chose to include those who were suggested to me during the qualification defense of this thesis.

²³ *Women’s Rights and Men’s Injustice* (our translation)

patriarchal structures of her time by denouncing gender inequalities and advocating for women's education and rights. According to Valera (2016), in composing *Direitos das mulheres*, Nísia Floresta drew inspiration from Mary Wollstonecraft's work, contextualizing the author's ideas within Brazilian society and highlighting "the importance of women's education for their moral and intellectual formation" (p. 18, our translation).

But not only that, she also stood out for defending and fighting for women's rights, education, and the abolition of slavery in Brazil, with her work being regarded as a *revolutionary milestone* for the context of her time. Among her legacies, Nísia Floresta ([1832] 2009) addressed issues such as *gender equality*, *women's education*, and *social justice*. She also criticized the notion that women existed solely to serve men, as she declared:

"if each man, individually, were obliged to state what he feels about our [women's] sex, we would find them all in agreement in saying that we were born for their use, that we are suited only to procreate and nurture our children in infancy, to manage a household, to serve, obey, and please our masters, that is, men" (p. 17, our translation).

In light of this statement, we can trace the origins of Nísia Floresta's concerns and struggles, a restlessness that arose from within the self but was inevitably shaped by the broader context of home and society. Her words reflect not only an individual dissatisfaction but also an early awareness of the structural inequalities that confined women to domesticity and subordination.

Turning my gaze to the present day, I observe that women are still fighting many of the same battles regarding the social roles historically attributed to men and women. Although significant advances have been made, particularly in terms of education, political participation, and public visibility, the persistence of gender inequalities demonstrates that the questions raised by Floresta remain pressing. Her legacy thus serves as both a reminder of the historical roots of feminist struggle in Brazil and a call to continue confronting the structural forces that perpetuate exclusion and subordination.

Below is the image of Nísia Floresta, taken from the book *Direitos das mulheres e injustiça dos homens* ([1832] 2009):

Figure 12: Portrait of Nísia Floresta



Source: retrieved from Floresta, N. ([1832] 2009)

Within this framework, more than a century later, in the Brazilian context, feminist writer Lélia Gonzalez carried forward this legacy in her writings with the publication of *Lugar de negro* (1982). Her seminal work not only placed *race* and *gender* at the center of Brazilian social debates but also inaugurated a critical perspective that exposed how *racism* and *sexism* were structurally intertwined in the formation of Brazilian society. By challenging dominant narratives of national identity, Gonzalez advanced the foundations of *Black feminist* and *decolonial* thought in Brazil, situating the experiences of Black women as central to understanding both social inequality and the possibilities of resistance. See her picture below:

Figure 13: Portrait of Leila Gonzalez



Source: retrieved from Garcia, J. Photograph. In: Carneiro, Sueli. (2020)

As I look at her image, I see that it does more than simply show who she was, it embodies the strength of an intellectual life deeply intertwined with political struggle. Her presence in Brazilian feminist thought speaks not only to the urgency of confronting racism and sexism but

also to the creative force of Black women in reimagining society itself. By placing her portrait alongside this discussion, I also locate myself, a Brazilian woman researcher working within a *quilombola* educational context, as part of that broader continuum of resistance and creation. In doing so, I hope to remind our society that ideas are never detached from the lives, the struggles, the “pains” and the commitments of those who brought them into being.

In this regard, I find essential to recall the work of Beatriz Nascimento (1942-1995), a historian, intellectual, and activist in the Black movement, whose ideas were later compiled in *Beatriz Nascimento: textos, entrevistas e poemas* (2006 [2015]), organized by Alex Ratts and Bethânia Gomes. Through her historical *research*, *essays*, and *poetic reflections*, I can observe that Nascimento brought together questions of *race*, *gender*, *class*, and *diaspora*²⁴, placing Black women at the heart of debates on identity and resistance in Brazil. See her image below:

Figure 14: Portrait of Beatriz Nascimento (1942–1995)



Source: Arraes (2017)

As Arraes (2017) notes, Beatriz Nascimento is described as

“a scholar, researcher, activist, and author, holding a degree in History from UFRJ [who] participated in a group of Black activists that established study centers in the state, while also maintaining close ties with the broader Black movement of the period” (ibid., [n.d.], our translation).

As I learned more about her life and work, I realized that she turned *writing* and *activism* into one *powerful act*, blending thought and action so her voice could be heard both inside and outside the university.

²⁴ Diaspora refers to the dispersion of a people from their homeland to different parts of the world, while preserving, to varying degrees, cultural, historical, and identity connections with their place of origin (Safran, 1991; Clifford, 1994).

However, I believe one aspect of Nascimento's life cannot go unnoticed. As Arraes (2017) notes, her very existence "was erased from the history of poetry" (ibid., [n.d.], our translation). She was a victim of femicide, a form of violence that, according to Fundação Perseu Abramo (2024), remains a harsh reality in Brazil, revealing how women, especially Black women, continue to face gender-based aggression. In 2023, they represented 63.6% of femicide victims, 68.6% of intentional homicides of women, and 52.5% of rape victims in the country.

Thus, in her memory, and in the memory of many other women whose lives, stories, and absences still echo in the reality of Brazil, I share below an excerpt from her poem *Sonho*, published in *Todas (as) distâncias: poemas, aforismos e ensaios de Beatriz Nascimento* (2015, p. 30), which, to me, captures this lived reality with both sensitivity and strength.

"Seu nome era dor
 Seu sorriso
 dilaceração
 Seus braços e pernas, asas
 Seu sexo seu escudo
 Sua mente libertação
 Nada satisfaz seu impulso
 De mergulhar em prazer
 Contra todas as correntes
 Em uma só correnteza
 Quem faz rolar quem tu és?
 Mulher!..."

"Her name was pain
 Her smile
 laceration
 Her arms and legs, wings
 Her sex, her shield
 Her mind, liberation
 Nothing satisfies her impulse
 To dive into pleasure
 Against all currents
 In a single stream
 Who sets in motion who you are?
 Woman!..."
 (our translation)

To me, her poem expresses a fervent longing for *social justice* and for the simple right to *live freely*, a longing, an impulse of life itself, that was ultimately taken from her body. In the same way, I emphasize here that it was the death of another Black feminist woman that moved me to begin the journey of research that now culminates in this thesis: *Marielle Franco*.

As Alvarez and Nunes (2018) explain, Marielle Franco was a Brazilian sociologist, activist, and politician whose life became emblematic of the struggle for social justice, gender equality, and human rights in the 2010s. Elected as a city councilor in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 for the *Partido Socialismo e Liberdade* (PSOL), she was one of the few Black women to occupy such a position in Brazilian politics. Throughout her mandate, she denounced police violence, defended the rights of *favela* residents, and worked tirelessly to advance feminist and LGBTQIA+ causes (ibid.).

The authors argue that her assassination on March 14, 2018, revealed the vulnerabilities faced by women, particularly Black women, in Brazilian politics and transformed her into a global symbol of resistance against structural racism, sexism, and political violence (Nunes, 2019; Amnesty International, 2019). Her death not only exposed the risks and hostilities confronting marginalized groups who dare to occupy spaces of power but also generated a wave of national and international mobilizations that reasserted the urgency of protecting democracy and human rights in Brazil.

In this sense, I see that Marielle Franco's legacy extends far beyond her own political trajectory: it inspires new generations of activists, especially Black women and LGBTQIA+ communities, to claim visibility and demand structural change. Her memory has thus become a rallying point in the collective struggle for justice, equality, and the democratization of political participation. See her image below:

Figure 15: Portrait of Marielle Franco



Source: Bernardo Guerreiro. In.: Veja. Radar

The lives and trajectories of these women, Brazilian feminists, demonstrate that the history of feminism in Brazil is inseparable from struggles historically marked by pain, resistance, and the pursuit of justice. Each of them, within her own historical situatedness, confronted the structural intersections of patriarchy, racism, and class oppression. In doing so, they forged genealogies of resistance whose enduring legacies continue to inspire contemporary feminist thought and activism, particularly through an intersectional lens that foregrounds the lived experiences of marginalized women.

Their voices, whether expressed through theoretical writings, poetic reflection, or political engagement, were forged in confrontation with systemic silencing, yet they transformed this silencing into new forms of speech, agency, and collective mobilization. To recognize the significance of these lives is to acknowledge not only their individual contributions but also the broader struggles of women in Brazil, particularly Black women, whose experiences of marginalization remain central to understanding both historical erasure and contemporary forms of resistance.

In this sense, their memory is not confined to the past; it persists as a living force that shapes feminist scholarship, social movements, and the democratic imagination in Brazil and beyond. This thesis, which I write, is thus another attempt to carry forward the legacy of feminist struggles, not merely for the sake of continuity, but to grant myself, as well as women and children around the world, access to knowledge, whether through the reading of this text or through the act of playing with toys (dolls) that encourage us to live, that is, to act, to respect differences, to speak, to be heard, and to have our rights guaranteed as human beings.

4. THREAD THAT CONNECTS: THE PLAY OF WEAVING THEORIES

*“The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver’s skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver”*

(Ten Boom, [s.d.])

This chapter concerns the explanation of the main theoretical tools employed in the analysis of the data. To illustrate the categories of each linguistic theoretical approach, I draw on examples taken from the research corpus, particularly children’s discourse during play with Barbie dolls and from the focus group interview.

The analytical framework adopted in this thesis is primarily grounded in: i) Systemic Functional Linguistics, primarily proposed by Halliday (1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014); ii) the evaluation mechanisms, based on the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005); and iii) the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and his colleagues (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999).

Also, complementary perspectives further illuminate the analysis of children’s play with Barbie. Gregory Bateson’s (1972) notion of *play frames* highlights how children organize interactions within a “make-believe” logic, constructing imaginative boundaries that allow them to explore alternative social roles and narratives. Although not central to the linguistic analysis, this concept reinforces the role of play as a site of creativity and negotiation of meaning. Similarly, the idea of embodiment, already fundamental to Cognitive Linguistics (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987), underlines that metaphorical and narrative constructions are rooted in bodily experience.

In this sense, I argue that while SFL and CMT provide the core analytical tools to my analysis, Bateson’s theory of frames and the embodied mind perspective offer me complementary insights that contextualize how children’s imaginative play generates discursive spaces in which identities, values, and power relations are symbolically rehearsed.

Having established this context, the following section begins with a discussion of the first topic: Systemic Functional Linguistics.

4.1. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

To understand the development of the theory, I draw upon the insights presented in the last three editions of Michael Halliday's *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), along with contributions from other theorists over the course of this topic such as Halliday and Hasan (1976, 1989), Eggins (1994, 2004), Butt et al. (1998), Thompson (2004), Fuzer and Cabral (2014), and Martin and Wang (2023).

4.1.1. Whispers from Halliday's studies

Numerous studies have contributed to the current understanding of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL). It is no coincidence that Halliday's seminal work has gone through four editions over the years (1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), with the latest edition, the fourth, expanding and refining its concepts, thus developing Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG).

It is important to highlight that SFG is just one component of the broader SFL framework – a social semiotic approach. In Halliday's (1994) words, SFL is a theory of “meaning as choice, by which a language, or any other semiotic system, is interpreted as networks of interlocking options: ‘either this, or that, or the other’, ‘either more like the one or more like the other’, and so on” (p. 14). Therefore, it can be said that this is a theoretical approach to language that explores the relationship between grammar, meaning, and discourse. According to Fuzer and Cabral (2014), LSF is concerned with the use of language in the social context, as it recognizes that language is a living entity, present in situations, groups, places, varied events and, as such, under the influence of these and other factors” (p. 13, our translation).

Throughout his studies, the founding theorist of the framework, Michael Halliday explains that whenever people, human beings, speak or write, they are producing text. And this text does not merely float in a void; rather, it is received by listeners and readers who actively engage with it. In this instance, the text is “affected by the social environment and ideologies that come to life through social relations of communication” (Rolim, 2020, p. 32), as it concerns any instance of language, functioning within a context (Halliday; Hasan, 1976; Halliday, 1985, 1994).

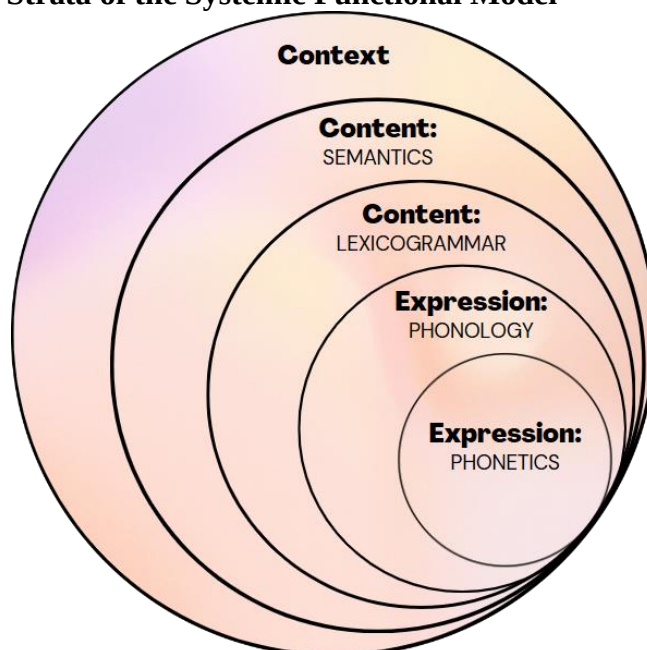
These insights, derived from Halliday's extensive in-depth studies over the years, illustrate the term assigned to the theory: *Systemic Functional Linguistics*. According to

Halliday (1978), the term *functional* reflects the idea that language is “a product of the social process” (p. 1), while *systemic* refers to the conception of language as “a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning” (Halliday, 1994, p. 15).

Thus, in this regard, Halliday (ibid.) draws special attention to the fact that SFG is functional because its conceptual framework has a functional and not a formal basis, focusing on how language is used. It operates on three levels: i) the interpretation of data from written and/or spoken texts, ii) the system, and iii) the elements of linguistic structures, all contributing to the interpretation of meaning, which is based on function. The author also highlights that spoken texts can be analyzed, as they can be transcribed. This, because spoken texts are also produced “in meaningful functional contexts, all equally needing to be taken into account” (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014, p. 4). That is why, in the process of understanding a text through the analysis of linguistic elements, “multiple meanings, alternatives, ambiguities, metaphors and so on” can be revealed (p. 15).

Consequently, Halliday (1994) points out that, within SFG, text analysis is systemic, allowing each element of a clause to be examined in terms of its function. However, this analysis extends beyond the clause to all linguistic units, including groups, phrases, and more, considering the context in which it was produced. Therefore, due to this layered approach, Halliday employs the term *strata*, as his analysis progresses through different levels, namely: context, semantics, grammar, phonology and phonetics. *Context*, in relation to categories of social situations; *Semantics*, to the system of meaning; *Lexicogrammar*, to wording; *Phonology*, to sounding (as a system); and *Phonetics* to physical articulation and perception of sound. The image below, titled *The Five Strata of the Systemic Functional Model*, visually represents the hierarchical organization inherent in the concept of strata, highlighting its layered structure and meaning.

Figure 16: The Five Strata of the Systemic Functional Model

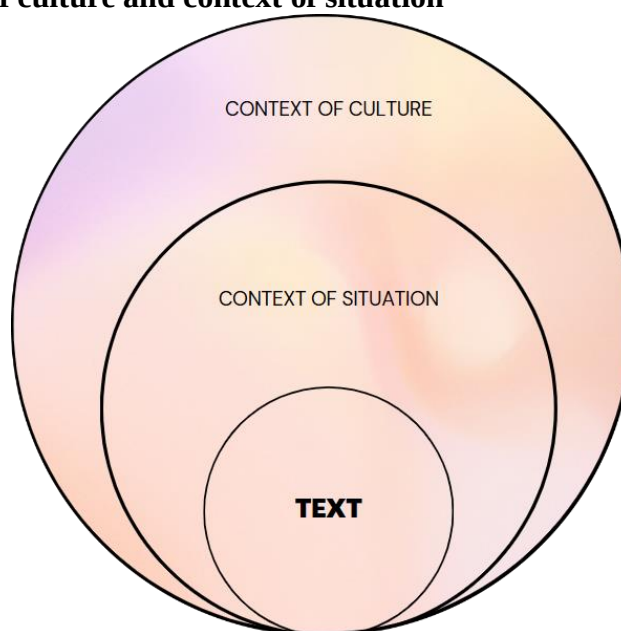


Source: adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 26)

The five *strata* of the Systemic-Functional Model function as stages of analysis. Halliday (2014) explains that these *strata* are related through the principle of *realization*. In other words, phonetics realizes phonology, which in turn realizes lexicogrammar, that realizes semantics, and ultimately, semantics realizes context. The *strata* are interconnected and influenced by context. Thus, according to Souza and Dionísio (2005), in a systemic-functional linguistic analysis, lexicogrammatical choices made by the writer or speaker only gain meaning when examined within their communicative context, as language use is shaped by everyday interactions.

In this way, among these terms found within the *strata*, Halliday (1994) clarifies that, in formal linguistics, the term *grammar* is typically referred to as *syntax*. However, in Systemic-Functional Linguistics, the term *grammar* is applied because he views language “as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realized” (p. 14). Halliday (ibid.) emphasizes that the focus in this theory is not merely on structure but on the question: “How are these meanings expressed?” (p. 14). This perspective provides, then, researchers with the tools to *understand* the principles of texts and apply them across various contexts. It is particularly, then, relevant to this doctoral thesis since it deals with the analysis of children’s narratives, spoken texts, emerging from spontaneous play activities, considering both the context of *culture* and *situation*. The following image illustrates the positioning of both contexts as revealed through text analysis.

Figure 17: Context of culture and context of situation



Source: adapted from Fuzer and Cabral (2014, p. 26, our translation)

Regarding the information illustrated in figure 17, in relation to the context of *culture* and *situation*, Halliday, in his seminal 1994 work, explains that a systematic analysis of the relationship between context and text enables the evaluation of how and why a text succeeds (or fails) in achieving its intended purpose, this occurs based on two key aspects. First, the *evaluation*, that revolves around the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a text, considered as the highest level of achievement in any piece of discourse analysis. The second, the *understanding* of the text, as previously described.

Thus, the *context of culture* encompasses social spheres, that is, it includes “ideology, social and institutional conventions” (Fuzer; Cabral, 2014, p. 27, our translation), and concerns the differences “between one culture and another” (Butt *et al.*, 1998, p. 12). According to Fuzer and Cabral (2014), it represents the ‘broadest’ context in terms of comprehensiveness. In this instance, considering play within the context of culture, studying it scientifically and academically might be perceived as irrelevant in some cultures. That is why I once again emphasize the importance of toy research associations, such as ITRA, in analyzing and raising awareness of the significance of children’s specific cultural contexts.

As for the *context of situation*, Fuzer and Cabral (*ibid.*) define it as the most ‘immediate’ context. It serves as “a theoretical construct for explaining how a text relates to the social processes within which it is located” (Halliday, 1978, p. 10). This context includes the three key variables (*Field*, *Tenor*, and *Mode*) which together constitute what is known as the *Register*. According to Fuzer and Cabral (2014), the *Register* is “the configuration of meanings that

emerges from the situation” (p. 25, our translation). In this case, each of these variables plays a specific role in shaping the text. Thus, as explained by Butt *et al.* (1998), *Field* refers to what is being talked or written about, encompassing the subject matter of the discourse; *Tenor* relates to whom one is communicating with, emphasizing the relationship between the speaker and the listener or the writer and the reader; and *Mode* describes how the communication takes place, focusing on the type of text being produced and its function within the discourse (p. 12).

Therefore, considering these principles of Systemic-Functional Linguistics SFL exemplified and discussed thus far, which serve as one of the foundations for analyzing children’s play in this doctoral thesis, I argue that articulating SFL with Cognitive Linguistics is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of how children construct meaning while interacting with Barbie dolls, particularly in the context of Mattel’s campaign for female empowerment. This theoretical articulation enables me, as a researcher, to examine, through the figure of Barbie, the cultural and situational contexts experienced by children, especially from an SFL perspective. Moreover, although Systemic-Functional Linguistics does not explicitly claim that language reflects conceptualization processes, I understand that its three metafunctions (*ideational*, *interpersonal*, and *textual*) align with this view, particularly when integrated with principles from Cognitive Linguistics (Langacker, 1987; Evans; Green, 2006).

Thus, in order to gain a clearer understanding of these principles, it is essential to examine how the metafunctions of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) operate. As Eggins (2004, p. 2) explains, these metafunctions are embedded in the context of situation and function simultaneously within clause structures, demonstrating how language constructs meaning across diverse communicative settings. This perspective underscores that language is not merely a system of formal rules, but a dynamic and context-sensitive resource for meaning-making (Halliday, 1985; 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004; 2014). According to these authors, the metafunctions are the manifestations, within the linguistic system, and ensure that every sentence people produce simultaneously expresses: (i) what is happening in the environment (*ideational*), (ii) how people interact with others (*interpersonal*), and (iii) how the message is structured (*textual*). Fuzer and Cabral (2014) illustrate this organization in a clear and comprehensible manner through the following table.

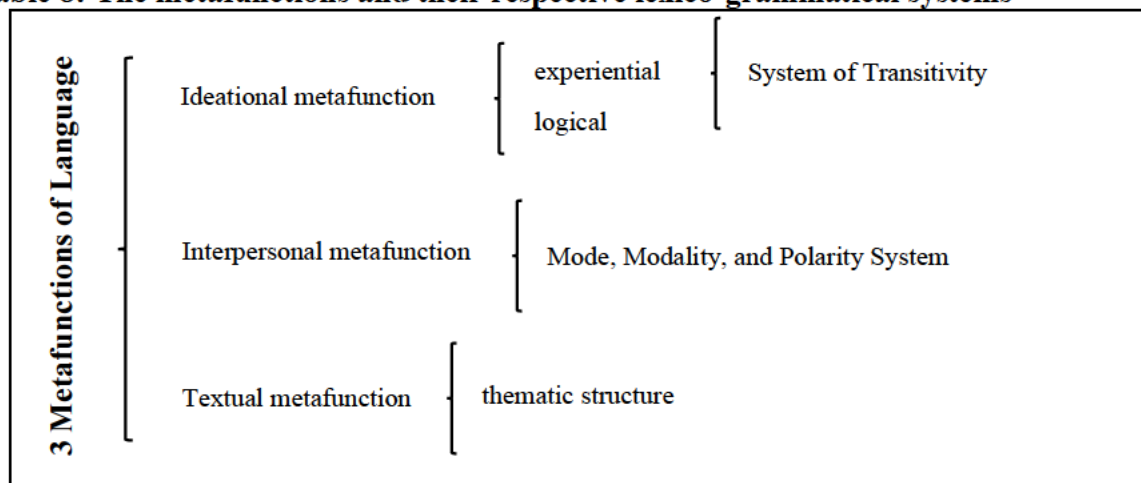
Table 7: Variables of the context of situation and metafunctions of language

Context Element (Registry Variables)	Metafunction of language	Representation system (Lexical-grammatical realization)
Field	Ideational	Transitivity
Tenor	Interpersonal	Mode
Mode	Textual	Theme and Rheme

Source: adapted from Santos (2014)

Therefore, understanding the present variables of the *context of situation* and the metafunctions of language, and considering that this doctoral thesis focuses on analyzing the *ideational* metafunction, examining human experience and the world through children's discourse during play with Barbie dolls and their subsequent reflections, I concentrate solely on this metafunction among the three in GSF (ideational, interpersonal, and textual).

Specifically, I highlight the *System of Transitivity*, as it pertains to the representation of experiences, as shown in the image below:

Table 8: The metafunctions and their respective lexico-grammatical systems

Source: retrieved from Fuzer and Cabral (2014, p. 32, our translation)

As shown in the table above, the *System of Transitivity* is situated within the *ideational* component: experiential. It pertains to how processes (verbs), participants (nouns), and circumstances (adverbials) are structured within a clause to convey meaning.

Thus, to better understand how the System of Transitivity operates, the following section presents the key aspects of the *ideational* metafunction, which is embedded within the System of Transitivity.

4.1.2. The System of Transitivity

In Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, the *System of Transitivity* is a fundamental element of the *ideational* metafunction, which, as explained earlier, is situated within the variable of the context of *situation: Field*. According to Halliday (2004), each metafunction is realized through its own system in the lexical *stratum*. Therefore, the *ideational* metafunction, specifically, is concerned with how language constructs representations of experience and is divided into two components: the *experiential* and the *logical* (Halliday, 2004). Among these processes, however, there is a dynamic relationship that categorizes them as primary and secondary. To enhance clarity for readers, I chose to follow the color-coded²⁵ classification system developed by Fuzer and Cabral (2014, p. 42-43), later adapted by Sarinho Júnior (2023, p. 71). This classification is presented below:

Table 9: Types of processes present in clauses and their experiential representations

Representations of human Experiences through processes	Primary	Representation of external experience (material processes) E.g.: Our students <i>play</i> the flute harmoniously. (performs)
		Representation of internal experience (mental processes) E.g.: This situation <i>touched</i> me a lot. (moves)
		Representation of relationships (relational processes) E.g.: This <i>suggests</i> gold. (seems/appears)
	Secondary	Representation of behaviors (behavioral processes) E.g.: The students <i>coughed</i> throughout the entire class. (physiological process)
		Representation of sayings (verbal processes) E.g.: The police officer <i>suggested</i> caution. (recommended)
		Representation of existence (existential processes) Example: <i>There is</i> an increase in the price of medications. (exist)

Source: adapted from Sarinho Júnior (2023 apud Fuzer; Cabral, 2014, p. 42-43).

As illustrated in Table 9 above, *experiential* meanings are conveyed “through the *System of Transitivity*, or process type, with the choice of process implicating associated participants roles and configurations” (Egins, 2004, p. 206). This marks the point at which I apply Systemic Functional Linguistic analysis to the corpora of the present study.

²⁵ It is worth noting that it was necessary to translate the table into English.

For the *experiential* component, Fuzer and Cabral (2014) explains that it concerns the representation of the experience of the world itself, with the unit of analysis being the ‘clause’. In the *experiential* component, the analysis is centered on *processes* (verbs), including *participants* and potential *circumstances*. The processes are divided into: *Material* (physical or concrete actions), *Mental* (thoughts, feelings, perceptions), *Relational* (states of being and attributions), *Verbal* (speech and communication), *Behavioral* (physical and psychological behaviors), and *Existential* (existence of something). I will provide a more detailed explanation of each process in the following paragraphs using examples from children’s discourse during play with Barbie dolls.

Regarding the *logical* component, it pertains to the hierarchical and structural organization of clauses within a clause complex, which is defined as ‘a grammatical construction consisting of two or more (simplex) clauses and accounts’ (Andersen; Holsting, 2018, p. 2). It focuses on the logical relationships between propositions, such as subordination and coordination, and is analyzed in terms of parataxis (coordination) and hypotaxis (subordination). Below, table 10 summarizes and illustrates the two components of the *ideational* metafunction:

Table 10: The two components of the ideational metafunction

Component	Focus	Structure
Experiential	Representation of the experience of the world (processes, participants and circumstances)	Transitive structure
Logical	Relations between clauses (coordination and subordination)	Parataxis and Hypotaxis

Source: own authorship

Building on this foundation, I now explain and illustrate the *processes*, *participants*, and *circumstances* that constitute the *System of Transitivity*, a fundamental component of the ideational metafunction, clarifying the key participant roles associated with each in discourse. To this end, I designed the following table, which presents the terminologies proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, 2014), supplemented with authentic examples drawn from children’s spoken discourse during play with Barbie dolls at *Escola Quilombola Municipal Professora Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado*, in Paraíba, Brazil.

In addition, to preserve participants’ anonymity, the following labels were employed to identify the children’s utterances across the analyzed segments: C1 (Child 1), C2 (Child 2), C3 (Child 3), C4 (Child 4), C5 (Child 5), C6 (Child 6), C7 (Child 7), C8 (Child 8), and F (Facilitator). Furthermore, the consonant X was inserted in the dialogue excerpts whenever a child’s name appeared. These same labels are consistently used throughout the data analysis.

This procedure complies with the ethical guidelines of the *National Health Council – CNS Resolution n° 466/2012*, which regulates research involving human beings in Brazil, ensuring confidentiality and dignity while preserving the integrity of the discourse for analytical purposes.

Table 11: SFL Process Types, Terms and Examples

Ethical Pseudonym	Process Type	Subtype / Class	Key Participants	Example Sentence	Clause Analysis	Note
C1	Material	--	Actor: I Goal: this Barbie	“Eu vou quebrar essa Barbie” I am going to break this Barbie.	I (Actor) am going to break (Material Process) this Barbie (Goal).	--
C4	Mental	Perception	Senser: (elliptical ‘you’) Phenomenon: a soccer ball	“Olha! uma bola de futebol.” Look! a soccer ball.	Look (Mental Process: Perception) a soccer ball (Phenomenon).	Elliptical Senser recoverable from context.
C2	Mental	Cognition	Senser: I Phenomenon: her	“Eu nunca vi ela brincando de boneca.” I have never seen her playing with a doll.	I (Senser) have never seen (Mental Process: Cognition) her (Phenomenon) playing with a doll.	--
C2	Mental	Affection	Senser: I Phenomenon: [X’s doll – Elliptical Phenomenon]	“Eu gostei muito da... o da X é muito bonitinha.” I really liked it... X’s is very cute.	I (Senser) really liked (Mental Process: Affection) it (Phenomenon). .. X’s is very cute.	Phenomenon implied in the utterance.
C2	Mental	Desire	Senser: I Phenomenon: [the Barbie – Elliptical Phenomenon]	“Eu queria levar...” I wanted to take...	I (Senser) wanted (Mental Process: Desire) to take...	Phenomenon implied in the utterance.
C2	Relational – Attributive	--	Carrier: My [Barbie] Attribute: skinny	“A minha [Barbie] é magrinha, óia.” My [Barbie] is skinny, look.	My [Barbie] (Carrier) is (Relational Process: Attributive) skinny (Attribute), look.	“Óia” (interjection) does not interfere with clause structure.
C4	Relational – Identifying	--	Token: She Value: good	“Ela [a boneca] é do bem.”	She [the doll] (Token) is (Relational Process:	--

				She [the doll] is one of the good ones.	Identifying) good (Value).	
C2	Verbal	--	Sayer: She Verbiage: her 'original' one was blonde.	"Ela disse que a 'original' dela... era loira" She said her 'original' one... was blonde.	She (Sayer) said (Verbal Process) her 'original' one... was blonde (Verbiage)	--
C1	Behavioral	--	Behaver: C1 Elliptical Behaver: [you/plural]	"Olha aqui, gente." Look here, people.	Look (Behavioral Process) here, people.	[you/plural] – elliptical; 'people' as vocative. Circumstance: here.
SOG	Existential	--	Existent: 45 minutes	"Tem 45 minutos..." There is 45 minutes...	There is (Existential Process) 45 minutes... (Existent)	In spoken BP, 'ter' functions like 'there is/are'.

Source: own authorship

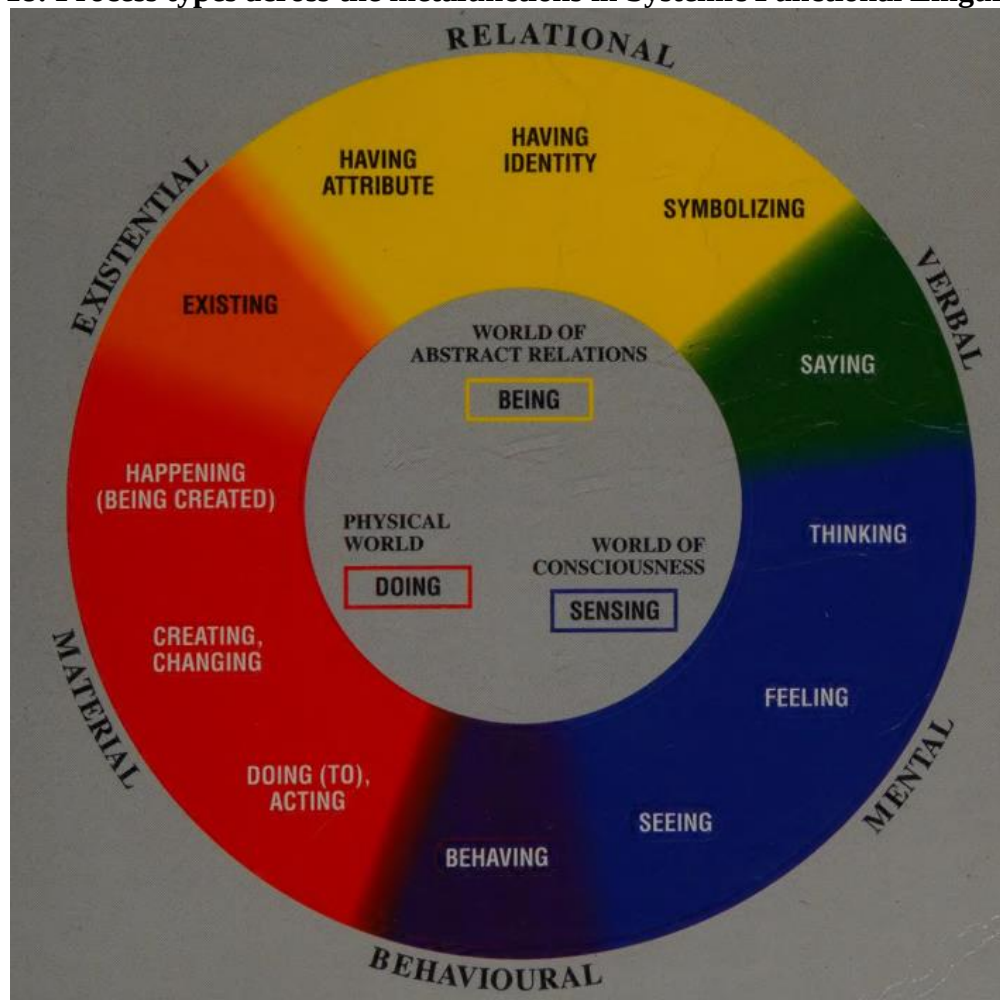
The examples presented in Table 11 are intended to assist the reader in understanding how terminological labeling operates through the *processes* and *participants* defined within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as outlined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004; 2014).

It is important to clarify, however, that my objective here is not to undertake a reflective or discursive analysis of the terminologies found in the students' utterances. Such analysis is developed in a more critical and interpretative manner in the analysis chapter of this thesis, where I, as previously mentioned, examine conceptions of *childhood* through the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1889), Sarmiento (2002), and Brougère (1998, 2010, 2014, 2018), and explore the *notion of play as a social practice* based on the contributions of Heljakka (2013), Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), and Brougère (2014, 2018). Furthermore, I investigate play in relation to *cognitive frameworks* through the perspectives of Nicolopoulou (1993), Vygotsky (1998), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Ferrari (2022). I also discuss *toys, dolls, gender*, and their *multimodal aspects*, drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin (2009), particularly through the lens of Karl Gröber's (1928) studies, as well as the contributions of Peers (2004), Almeida (2006), and Sarinho Júnior (2023). Lastly, I also examine and present more in-depth reflections on the social roles of women based on the analysis of children's discourse during and after play with Barbie dolls, drawing on feminist contributions from Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan

(1963), and Kate Millett (1970), as well as from intersectional and decolonial perspectives including those of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and bell hooks (1982, 1986, 1990), among others.

Thus, given that this section explores Systemic Functional Linguistics and seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of the processes associated with each metafunction, I present, in figure 18, a diagram, originally proposed by Halliday (1994). This visual resource employs a color-coded format to illustrate the integration of these processes, including those situated at the intersections between metafunctions. Furthermore, I emphasize that particular attention should be paid to these boundary processes, as their overlapping characteristics often complicate their identification and classification in analytical contexts.

Figure 18: Process types across the metafunctions in Systemic Functional Linguistics



Source: retrieved from Halliday (1994)

The color-coded diagram above was retrieved from the cover of Halliday's *An Introduction to Functional Linguistics* (1994), with the aim of making the reading process more dynamic. Additionally, to facilitate a clearer and more engaging understanding of the theory,

especially given that some of the sentences under analysis extend beyond short utterances, I sought to apply Halliday's (2014) concept of 'boundary markers' to segment the clauses appropriately. This methodological choice seeks to improve the clarity and interpretability of the analysis of children's discourse, as demonstrated in the following table.

Table 12: Boundary markers

Stratum	Symbol	Unit (complex)
Lexicogrammar		Clause complex
		Clause
		Phrase, Group
	[[[]]	Rakshifted (embedded) clause complex
	[[]]	Rakshifted (embedded) clause
	[]	Rakshifted (embedded) phrase, group

Source: adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 11)

Within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the *clause* is considered the fundamental grammatical unit of language (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), since it is the level where the three linguistic metafunctions (*ideational*, *interpersonal*, and *textual*) occur simultaneously. Therefore, I use the lexicogrammatical symbols shown in table 11 in the analysis to differentiate clauses from other grammatical units, such as groups and phrases. In this analysis, the clauses brought by children during play serve as the most important functional unit for constructing meaning within the linguistic system. Accordingly, I segment each clause to examine the verbal process of the ideational metafunction present in each one.

However, when separating the clauses, it is also necessary to use other boundary markers. Thus, I also rely on the use of the symbol referring to the *clause complex*, the *phrase*, *group*, and the *rankshifted (embedded) phrase, group*. The *clause complex* refers to the set of clauses, interconnected by logical-semantic relations, expressing meanings through logical and structural relations. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (ibid.), the clause complex is used to understand cohesion and coherence in discourse, since it organizes information in a hierarchical and functional manner.

As for the symbol *phrase, group*, this represents a group or a phrase within the grammatical hierarchy, that is, smaller units within the linguistic structure. In this case, the term *group* can refer to a *Nominal Group*, *Verbal Group*, *Adverbial Group* and *Prepositional Group*. Below, I provide some examples to help readers to visualize them more clearly when reading the data:

Table 13: Examples of Group

Nominal Group	e.g. The big black dog.
Lexicogrammar	e.g. was running quickly.
Adverbial Group	e.g. very quickly.
Prepositional Group	e.g. inside the house.

Source: adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014)

Once the concept of the term *group* has been explained and its examples have been provided, the next symbol regarding the term *phrase* refers to a unit that is more fixed than a group and is often linked to a preposition. It typically denotes prepositional structures or fixed expressions as follows: *Prepositional Phrase*, with phrases such as *on the counter*, *in the afternoon*, *under the bridge*; and *Fixed Expressions*, such as *at the end of the day*, *by the way*, and *in my opinion*.

In relation to the other symbol used in my analysis, it refers to the *rankshifted (embedded) phrase or group*. The term *rankshifted* describes a unit that typically operates at a higher level (such as a clause) but functions within another unit at a lower level (such as a nominal group). This commonly occurs in embedded constructions. See table 14 below²⁶:

Table 14: Examples of Rankshifted (embedded) phrase or group

Examples of 'Rankshifted' Phrase/Group		
Grupo Nominal Rankshifted (Embedded Nominal Group)	The book [that Barbie bought]	[that Barbie bought] is a lowered clause within the nominal group 'The book'
Grupo Preposicional Rankshifted (Embedded Nominal Group)	The answer [inside the Barbie doll package]	[inside the Barbie doll package] acts as a modifier within the nominal group 'The answer'
Grupo Adjetival Rankshifted (Embedded Adjectival Group)	A Barbie teacher [very interested in technology]	[very interested in technology] is an adjectival group embedded within the nominal group 'A Barbie teacher'

Source: adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014)

As it could be seen, these lexicogrammatical symbols exemplified in Tables 12, 13, and 14 above are derived from the theoretical framework proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and are accompanied by illustrative instances constructed specifically for this study. From a researcher's perspective, the operationalization of these symbols presented considerable difficulty, as comprehensive explanations were largely confined to the original source, requiring extensive engagement with the authors' theoretical formulations. Consequently, this effort to elucidate the symbolic conventions of the transitivity system seeks not only to enhance the reader's understanding of how I delineate and analyze clause structures in children's

²⁶ Once again, I had to adapt the examples in the table to align with the Barbie theme.

discourse, but also to serve as a pedagogically informed resource for scholars aiming to apply Systemic Functional Linguistics in the empirical analysis of spoken data.

Therefore, having outlined the core principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics, I now turn to what Martin and White (2005) refer to as the *Appraisal System*.

4.2. The Appraisal System

Emerging in the late 1990s, based on Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), originally proposed by Michal Halliday, the *Appraisal System* (Martin; White, 2005) is an approach constituted as one of the main resources of discursive semantics, used to evaluate the linguistic postures guided by writers and speakers through discourse.

In their book *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*, Jim Martin and Peter White (2005) make significant contributions to the development of appraisal theory, particularly in addressing questions related to evaluation in language. As reviewed by Lima-Lopes & Vian Jr. (2007, p. 372, our translation), their work addresses key questions, including:

- (i) How do writers and speakers establish themselves in the texts they produce?
- (ii) How are involvement, attitudes, emotions, judgment, appreciation, approval, disapproval, enthusiasm, and disappointment linguistically realized in relation to meaning-making?
- (iii) How do writers and speakers construct their identities within texts?

Within the *Appraisal System* framework, these questions reflect and contribute to what is considered an expansion of *interpersonal* meanings²⁷, specifically focusing on how speakers and writers construct their identities, in the context of this doctoral thesis, how children's identities are shaped through discourse. This perspective highlights the significance of meaning making resources, when the authors emphasize that the linguistic structures employed by writers and speakers shape the different ways, they position themselves in relation to what is being communicated.

In other words, the *Appraisal System*, according to White (2015, p. 1), analyzes the rhetorical effects of these varying positions, aiming to understand the implications when one stance is chosen over another. This refers to how evaluative language shapes the perceptions of readers or listeners. In both written and spoken (multimodal) texts, whether conveying positive

²⁷ It is important to recall that Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), as proposed by Halliday (1985), identifies three types of meaning: *ideational*, *interpersonal*, and *textual*.

or negative assessments, meaning making resources enable “speaker’s/writer’s personal, evaluative involvement” (ibid., p .1) toward two key aspects: (i) *Phenomena*: referring to *entities, events, or states of affairs* directly described in the text, including things, actions, or situations within the discourse; and (i) *Metaphenomena*: encompassing *opinions, interpretations, or evaluations* of phenomena rather than the phenomena themselves.

Regarding the distinction between *Phenomena* (direct description) and *Metaphenomena* (interpretation or judgment of the phenomena), I sought to present an illustration using phrases commonly found in contexts related to playing with Barbie. See below:

Table 15: Examples of Phenomenon and Metaphenomenon

	Category	Evaluation Type	Example
1	Phenomenon	Neutral	My daughter plays with Barbie.
2	Phenomenon	Positive	My daughter engages creatively in Barbie’s world, creating stories and exploring her imagination.
3	Phenomenon	Negative	My daughter spends excessive time playing with Barbie, raising problematic issues for discussion.
4	Metaphenomenon	Neutral	Some experts analyze the impact of toys like Barbie on child development.
5	Metaphenomenon	Positive	Studies indicate that playing with Barbie can stimulate children’s creativity and social skills.
6	Metaphenomenon	Negative	Critics argue that Barbie reinforces unrealistic beauty standards and may influence children’s self-esteem.

Source: adapted from White (2015)

Table 15 illustrates how *Phenomena* and *Metaphenomena* are characterized through the *Appraisal System* framework. It can be seen, through these examples, that the analysis highlights evaluative statements that emerge as speakers/writers engage in discourse, revealing their assessments of the discussed subject, in this case, Barbie. Both *Phenomena* and *Metaphenomena* can convey neutral, positive or negative evaluations. These evaluations are shaped by interaction and contextualized within the writers’/speakers’ context of *culture* and *situation*.

From this perspective, this framework is particularly relevant for analyzing the processes used in children’s discourse during and after play. The evaluative meanings outlined in the *Appraisal System* allow analysts to examine children’s “feelings, tastes, and opinions with greater or lesser degrees of intensity and directness” (White, 2015, p. 1). Since this system focuses on interpersonal language, one must be aware of the fact that writers and speakers, whether in written or spoken texts, “adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate” (Martin; White, 2005, p. 1). In the context of playing with Barbie dolls, I aim to explore how children express approval and disapproval, enthusiasm and

aversion, applause and criticism, and how they position their peers to respond similarly, dynamics highlighted by the authors.

That being said, the *Appraisal System* is, then, divided into three subsystems, namely: (i) ENGAGEMENT, (i) ATTITUDE, and (iii) GRADUATION. As noted by Lima-Lopes & Vian Jr. (2007), each of these subsystems is further subdivided, thus generating a complex diagram. See below the table below:

Table 16: The Appraisal System Summary Table

A P P R A I S A L	ENGAGEMENT	{		Monogloss (e.g. Barbie goes around Ken.)
		{		Heterogloss (e.g. Some say Barbie reinforces stereotypes, while others see her as empowering.)
	ATTITUDE	{		AFFECT (e.g. happy, confident, sad, bored, interested)
		{		JUDGEMENT (e.g. courageous, irresponsible, right, wrong)
		{		APPRECIATION (e.g. yummy, simple, woolly, unbalanced)
	GRADUATION	{	Force	raise (e.g. jubilant)
				lower (e.g. enthusiastic, but a little)
		{	Focus	sharpen (e.g. award-winning)
				soften (e.g. somewhat like)

Source: adapted from WISE (2013)

Considering the aspects of the *Appraisal System* and its subsystems, as summarized and illustrated in Table 16, the data analysis will specifically focus on the *Attitude* subsystem within the evaluation framework. In particular, I aim to examine children's discourse during and after play, exploring how they evaluate, in terms of *affect*, *judgment*, and *appreciation*, the physical attributes of the Barbie dolls they interact with, including body, professions, race, ethnicity, and disability. This analysis places a special emphasis on the four levels of empowerment identified by Charlier and Caubergs (2007): *power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, I will address only the aspects relevant to this subsystem.

In line with this, *Attitude*, as explained by Martin and White (2005), encompasses “three semantic regions covering what is traditionally referred to as emotion, ethics, and aesthetics” (p. 42). The authors categorize the subsystems of *affect*, *judgment*, and *appreciation* within

these three semantic regions, acknowledging the gradable nature of meaning, as feelings possess depth, as illustrated below (p. 41-43):

- (i) *Affect* (emotions; reacting to behaviour, text/process, phenomena)
- (ii) *Judgement* (ethics; evaluating behaviour)
- (iii) *Appreciation* (aesthetics; evaluating text/process, natural phenomena)

In light of this reasoning, *affect* refers to “the record of positive or negative feelings that we build in relation to something or someone, whether we feel sad, angry, anxious, interested, or upset” (Lima-Lopes; Vian Jr., 2007, p. 374); *judgment* “deals with attitudes towards behavior, which we admire or criticize, praise or condemn” (Martin; White, 2005, p. 42); and *appreciation* “involves evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena, according to the ways in which they are valued or not in a given field” (ibid., p. 43).

To illustrate how this subsystem operates within the sentence, I provided in the table below examples related to the three subsystems, based on narratives from children in Group 1 playing with *Barbie Careers*²⁸ dolls, as extracted from the present corpus.

Table 17: Appraisal System – Instances from Children’s Interaction with Barbie Dolls

AFFECT (emotions and reactions)		
Excerpt	Justification	Type of Attitude
C2: “ <i>Meu sonho é ter uma dessa, velho!</i> ” C2: “ <i>My dream is to have one of these, man!</i> ”	Expresses intense desire and emotional admiration for an object.	Affect – positive feeling of desire
C2: “ <i>Eu tou morrendo de medo de tirar isso.</i> ” C2: “ <i>I’m so scared to take this off.</i> ”	Intensification of fear regarding the possibility of damaging the object.	Affect – strong negative emotion
JUDGEMENT (assessment of conduct, ethics, or behavior)		
Excerpt	Justification	Type of Attitude
C2: “ <i>Coitada! Falou que a médica não ajudou a boneca dela.</i> ” C2: “ <i>Poor thing! She said the doctor didn’t help her doll.</i> ”	Empathetic judgment of what was said – either criticism or defense of the doll.	Judgement – commentary on behavior
C2: “ <i>Ela é do bem.</i> ” C2: “ <i>She’s one of the good ones.</i> ”	Positive moral attribution to the doll.	Judgement – character evaluation
APPRECIATION (aesthetic, functional, or social evaluation of objects and phenomena)		
Excerpt	Justification	Type of Attitude
C3: “ <i>Toda boneca aqui é bonita.</i> ”	Aesthetic evaluation of the dolls as a group.	Appreciation – generalized positive aesthetics

²⁸ The selection process of the Barbie dolls is detailed in the methodological chapter of this thesis.

C3: “ <i>All the dolls here are pretty.</i> ”		
C2: “ <i>Essa aqui é meio gordinha mesmo, viu.</i> ” C2: “ <i>This one is kinda chubby, really.</i> ”	Physical evaluation of the doll’s body shape.	Appreciation – functional physical assessment
C2: “ <i>A minha se mexe isso aqui, ó!</i> ” C2: “ <i>Mine moves this part, look!</i> ”	Functional evaluation of the doll’s movement capability.	Appreciation – functional value
C6: “ <i>Parece o meu cabelo, gente!</i> ” C6: “ <i>It looks like my hair, people!</i> ”	Aesthetic and identity-based appreciation.	Appreciation – aesthetics + personal identification

Source: own authorship

The examples above, drawn from Corpus 1 (Children’s Interaction with *Barbie Career*) illustrate how each of the *Attitude* subsystems functions in the analysis, not only in relation to the multimodal configurations of the Barbie dolls, but also in terms of the children’s engagement, which is not merely playful, but also emotional and symbolic. These interactions reveal genuine affective bonds with the dolls. This type of analysis enables a deeper understanding of how children construct meaning through play, considering historical-cultural, political, and ideological dimensions as reflected in the *Attitude* subsystem. Thus, a more detailed discussion is provided in the chapter on corpora analysis later in this thesis.

Therefore, based on these examples, in the context of data analysis, Lima-Lopes and Vian Jr. (ibid., p. 374) highlight that Martin and White (2005), the founding authors of the *Appraisal System* theory, emphasize the importance of considering five specific questions when analyzing structures related to the *Attitude* subsystem, such as:

- (i) are the analyzed feelings generally classified as positive or negative within a given culture?
- (ii) are these feelings conveyed alongside paralinguistic or extralinguistic manifestations, or are they merely the result of an internally experienced feeling?
- (iii) are these feelings triggered by some external factor, or are they part of a “general mood” that permeates the context?
- (iv) do these feelings have a degree of intensity or gradation?
- (v) do these feelings involve intention (rather than mere reaction)?

The reason I raise these questions developed by Martin and White (2005) is that the corpora collected for this research focuses on children studying at a *Quilombola* school in João Pessoa, Paraíba, a low-income community. For the study, I introduced dolls with diverse body types, professions, ethnicities, and disabilities. The *Attitude* subsystem analysis in this case enables me to examine how these children, within this specific context, evaluate the Barbie

dolls provided for play. In turn, this analysis helps reveal how they perceive women and their social roles in relation to female empowerment, as well as how they see themselves, ultimately encouraging critical reflection.

In summary, drawing on these two linguistic frameworks, the discussion of Systemic Functional Linguistics and the Appraisal System shows that language can be examined both as a network of choices that realizes meaning in context and as a resource for expressing attitudes, emotions, and values. It becomes evident that, taken together, they provide tools to investigate how children, through discourse, construct representations of experience and evaluate the world around them during play. Yet, while SFL and the Appraisal framework illuminate how meanings are structured in context and interpersonally negotiated, I observe that they do not fully capture the cognitive mechanisms through which children's imaginative play unfolds.

For this reason, the following section turns to Cognitive Linguistics, presenting its origins, key principles, and major theorists, as a way of extending the analysis beyond functional and interpersonal dimensions to the cognitive processes that underlie meaning-making. By emphasizing how language is grounded in bodily experience and conceptual mappings, this framework helps explain how metaphor, metonyms, imagination, and embodiment shape children's discourse.

In this trajectory, I also draw on Bateson's (1972) notion of play frames as a complementary insight, highlighting how children construct a "make-believe" logic that enables them to experiment with alternative social roles and narratives. When considered together, I understand these perspectives broaden the analytical lens, showing that play with Barbie dolls is not only a site of negotiated meanings but may also constitute a symbolic space in which identities, values, and power relations are imaginatively rehearsed.

With this in mind, Section 4.3 begins below.

4.3. Cognitive Linguistics

According to George Lakoff and Johnson (1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), Cognitive Linguistics is an approach to the study of language that is based on the principles of cognitive science. From this standpoint, language cannot be separated from *mental processes, bodily experience* and *culture*.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) identify three major findings of cognitive science: "The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical" (p. 14). These insights, developed through pioneering research, were

instrumental in reshaping the understanding of the nature of the mind. Building on these principles, the theorist explains that *reason* is a fundamental aspect of the human mind, characterized by essential attributes that must be considered in a cognitive analysis, which regards the following meanings:

Reason is not disembodied, as the tradition has largely held, but arises from the nature of our brains, bodies, and bodily experience. [...] Reason is evolutionary, in that abstract reason builds on and makes use of forms of perceptual and motor inference present in ‘lower’ animals. [...] Reason is not ‘universal’ in the transcendent sense; that is, it is not part of the structure of the universe. [...] Reason is not completely conscious, but mostly unconscious. [...] Reason is not purely literal, but largely metaphorical and imaginative. [...] Reason is not dispassionate but emotionally engaged. (ibid., p. 14-15).

Lakoff and Johnson (ibid.), considering the various meanings encompassed by the term *Reason*, explain the *concepts* that and *reason* we give things, situations, etc., are *embodied*. That is, “any reasoning you do using a concept requires that the neural structures of the brain carry out that reasoning. Accordingly, the architecture of your brain’s neural networks determines what concepts you have and hence the kind of reasoning you can do” (p. 26).

In this context, the authors assert that as human beings, with minds shaped by social interactions, we make judgments, described as subjective, about situations and abstract concepts based on our lived experiences. They provide examples such as “importance, similarity, difficulty, and morality” as well as subjective experiences like “desire, affection, intimacy, and achievement” (p. 50). According to the authors, our ability to conceptualize, reason about, and visualize these abstract ideas is rooted in other domains of experience, a cognitive mechanism classified as *conceptual metaphor*.

It is worth noting, in relation to these discussions, that, as Rodrigues (2010) explains, mental operations function within cultural frameworks of knowledge; therefore, they vary from one culture to another. This underscores the importance of carefully examining the corpora used in this thesis, which is bilingual, since the original data are in Brazilian Portuguese and have been translated into English.

With these considerations in mind, the first subsection focuses on understanding conceptual metaphors as analytical tools for examining the corpora of the present doctoral thesis, rather than providing a historical overview of all key concepts²⁹ or other aspects of Cognitive Linguistics.

²⁹ Some key concepts that belong to Cognitive Linguistics: *categorization* and *prototypes*, *conceptual metaphors* and *metonymies*, *image schemas*, *cognitive* and *cultural models*, and *cognitive processes in grammar*.

4.3.1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

In this subsection, I offer a brief overview of key concepts and examples from Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), with the aim of giving the reader a clear understanding of its guiding principles and how they inform the methodological choices of this study. My goal here is to make the later analysis of the corpus easier to follow and more transparent. For readers who wish to explore the topic in greater depth, I recommend *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) and *Time, Metaphor, and Language: A Cognitive Science Perspective* by Sarah E. Duffy and Michelle I. Feist (2023). Both works were essential to the development of this part of the research.

Given these considerations, I now turn my attention to explaining what Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) actually is. CMT is a framework within Cognitive Linguistics that emerged from the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, particularly in their seminal book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). In this work, the authors outline the core ideas of the theory, showing that metaphors are not merely stylistic features of language but are deeply rooted in how people communicate and make sense of experience. Grounded in the *body* and in our *interaction with the world*, metaphors function as *cognitive tools* that help us understand *abstract* and complex *concepts*.

According to Gibbs (2008), CMT explores the interplay between language, cognition, and bodily experience within cultural contexts. As Lakoff (1993) explains, “the word metaphor has come to mean ‘a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system’ (p. 203) and represents “a fundamental scheme by which people conceptualize the world and their own activities” (ibid., p. 3). From this perspective, metaphors arise both from human cognition and from cultural experience. They are deeply embedded in everyday thought and language, revealing how people make sense of the world through embodied and socially situated meanings.

4.3.1.1. Source and Target Domains

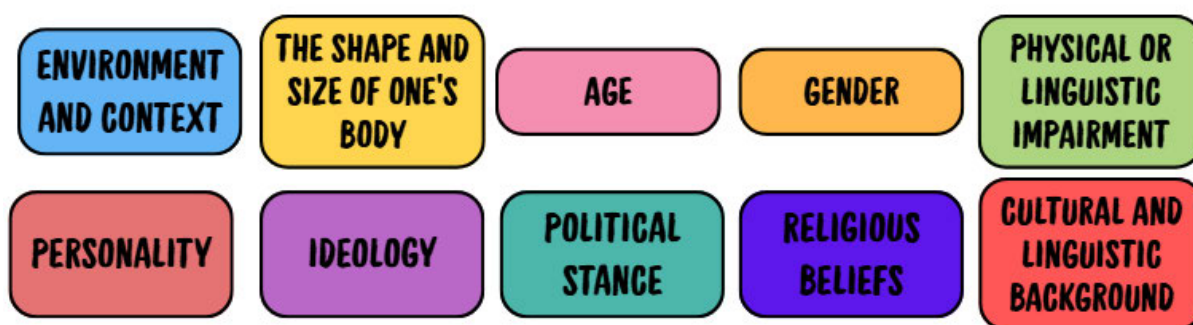
From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, the mappings that structure conceptual metaphors are organized systematically between the *source* and *target domains*. As Duffy and Feist (2023) explain, conceptual metaphors “employ a more concrete or perceptually rich concept as the source domain and a more abstract concept as the target domain” (p. 28). In simpler terms, I can say that the elements of one conceptual field connect with those of another,

allowing meanings to flow and interact. Through this process, abstract ideas become easier to perceive because they are grounded in experiences that feel more *familiar* and *tangible*.

To make this clearer, I would say that this kind of cognitive mapping is deeply rooted in how people *experience* and *move* through the world with their *bodies*. As Duffy and Feist (ibid.) explain, these mappings allow “each individual to conceptualize and draw upon these experiences in their own unique way” (p. 16). They also argue, following Littlemore (2019), that many different factors shape how people interpret and use language, including *cultural background*, *personal history*, and *emotional connection*, among others. In light of this, these differences show that metaphor is not only a linguistic mechanism but also a profoundly human one, shaped by the richness and diversity of lived experience.

The following image illustrates some of the factors that influence language interpretation.

Figure 19: Factors Influencing Language Interpretation



Source: adapted from Duffy and Feist (2023, p 16)

As illustrated in Figure 19 above, and building on Lakoff's theories together with Duffy and Feist's (2023) explanations, I have observed that the children's different backgrounds play a significant and meaningful role in this study, especially when examining how they conceptualize metaphors in their discourse at *Escola Quilombola Municipal Professora Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado*. While the children engage with the Barbie dolls and with one another during play, these variations seem to reveal layers of *cultural* and *personal* experience that influence how they make sense of language and meaning.

Thus, when considering the *source* and *target domains* alongside the children's lived experiences, I perceive that the analysis can uncover how they view women's roles in society through various themes, most notably those related to *female empowerment*, especially when such themes are addressed in instruments such as questionnaires and focus groups applied after

the play-based session, as proposed in this research. In this sense, I understand that these factors deeply influence how children interpret language, and that such interpretations may become visible and accessible through their discourse during play.

An example that I find very striking within Mattel's marketing strategy, when analyzed through the lens of *source* and *target domains*, is the PLAY IS POWER campaign. In this slogan, PLAY functions as the *source domain*, as it is presented as a *concrete, embodied* activity grounded in children's physical and imaginative experience, whereas POWER operates as the *target domain*, an *abstract concept* associated with *autonomy, influence, and the ability to effect change*.

However, from Lakoff's theoretical perspective, I cannot fail to mention that Mattel's slogan PLAY IS POWER holds discursive logic but does not follow the formalization of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, since it inverts *source* and *target domains*. I reiterate here that my intention is not to claim that it is "wrong", but rather that it is misaligned with the theoretical model under study. When analyzed consistently through CMT, however, we can observe that the metaphor that aligns with the theory is POWER IS PLAY. Nevertheless, this does not correspond to the slogan, since the advertising statement explicitly organizes the reasoning as PLAY → POWER, that is, "play" is conceptualized as power. Within this framing, the domains are also inverted in relation to what POWER IS PLAY would imply: in a metaphor such as POWER IS PLAY, the structure of understanding would proceed in the opposite direction, *projecting* the *concrete* and *embodied* experience of PLAY onto the *abstract domain* of POWER in order to make sense of how power operates. In other words, POWER would become the *target domain* to be explained, while PLAY would remain the *source domain* providing the experiential structure. This inversion would frame POWER as something that can be understood through the dynamics, creativity, and interactional patterns of PLAY, an interpretation that, although coherent within CMT, does not match the rhetorical intention of the slogan itself.

Considering these distinctions, and focusing on the metaphor POWER IS PLAY, it becomes clear that *projection* offers an important lens for understanding how meaning is constructed. As Lakoff (1980, 1999) explains, *projection* differs from mapping because it involves the selective transfer of elements from the *source domain* onto the *target domain* in order to structure abstract concepts. In a metaphor such as POWER IS PLAY, features of PLAY, its dynamics, rules, creativity, and interactional patterns, would be projected onto POWER to make the abstract domain of POWER more experientially grounded and cognitively accessible. When we shift to the slogan PLAY IS POWER, however, we observe the inverse operation: elements of the concept of POWER are projected onto PLAY, framing the act of playing not merely as recreation but as a domain infused

with influence, agency, and the capacity to effect change. The mappings can be observed as follows:

(i) *Rules of play* → structure of control and discipline

In this mapping example, we can have a glimpse of what Vygotsky (1991) describes regarding the social rules in shaping children's behavior during play.

(ii) *Creativity and imagination* → capacity for transformation and influence

In these mappings, as far as the *projections* are concerned, we can identify the characteristics of the four levels of empowerment outlined by Charlier and Caubergs (2007): *power over*, *power to*, *power with* and *power within*, referring to the ability to inspire both oneself (who is the author of action during play) and her/his peers to transformation.

With that explained, I now return to the concept of *mapping*. Since *mapping* can often be complex to analyze and understand, Lakoff (1990, 1993) explains how conceptual metaphors help make abstract concepts more comprehensible by linking them to concrete experiences. In the case of more abstract domains (the *target* domain) these are often represented by basic-level categories or their superordinate categories, with their salient attributes being used to structure the abstract concept. In this regard, Kövecses (2010) further explains that the most common *source* domains in metaphorical mapping correspond to categories such as the HUMAN BODY, ANIMALS, PLANTS, FOOD and STRENGTH, while the *target* domains encompass conceptual categories such as EMOTION, MORALITY, THOUGHT, HUMAN RELATIONS and TIME. Similarly, Duffy and Feist (2023) highlights that more abstract domains, such as LOVE, THEORIES, IDEAS and SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS, are specifically understood in terms of JOURNEYS, BUILDINGS, FOOD, and PLANTS (p. 16).

This is due to two key implications. First, the motivation, as opposed to the arbitrariness, of the conceptual metaphor. Since the *target* domain represents a more abstract concept, as stated above, it is more complex to understand or articulate. In contrast, the *source* domain, being more concrete and rooted in direct experience, tends to be more perceptible, as in the examples provided. The second implication concerns the unidirectionality of the conceptual metaphors: *source* and *target* domains are not reversible. For instance:

- (1) Barbie is an icon.
- (2) An icon is like Barbie.

The first example illustrates what was discussed in previous chapters, that is, the fact that Barbie is regarded by American society as a fashion and cultural icon, transcending generations. In this case, the cultural and representational attributes associated with the term ‘icon’ are mapped onto the figure of Barbie, whether as a person or a doll. On the other hand, the second example reveals a notion of desire directed toward this icon in relation to Barbie, an aspirational ideal tied to her image. Leal and Abreu (2009) explain that even when conceptual metaphors seem to be bidirectional, they are, in reality, unidirectional.

4.3.1.2. The Invariance Principle

The aspects discussed above, however, draw my attention to certain *gaps* regarding how the *source* and *target domains* relate to each other. As Lakoff (1999) points out, when we use a metaphor to understand an abstract concept (the *target domain*) through a more concrete one (the *source domain*), we are not transferring information at random. In this case, what gets preserved, rather, are the basic structural relations of the source domain, that remain consistent with the logic of the target domain.

Therefore, for this reason, as Duffy and Feist (2023) explain, Lakoff proposed the *Invariance Principle*, “which stipulates that the metaphorical mappings between source and target domain will preserve the image-schematic structure of the source domain in a way that is topologically consistent with the structure of the target domain” (p. 17).

To make this clearer, I sought to bring a few examples that the authors mention in order to help illustrate how the *Invariance Principle* works. For instance, in the case of the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, the source domain is WAR, a concrete, physical concept involving battles, strategies, attacks, defenses, and victories. The target domain is ARGUMENT, a more abstract idea that relates to discussion and reasoning. However, it is worth noting that not everything from the *source domain* is transferred to *the target*, as there are no *physical weapons*, *injuries*, or *deaths* in an argument.

According to the *Invariance Principle*, the metaphor preserves the overall structure of *war*, for example, conflict, attack, and defense, while leaving aside elements that have nothing to do with the nature of an argument. In this way, the principle ensures that the metaphor’s structure stays consistent and coherent, preventing the mapping from mixing elements that wouldn’t logically fit. This preservation of internal logic is what allows both domains to maintain their integrity. As Duffy and Feist (2023) explain, “when paths are metaphorically

mapped, sources will be mapped onto beginnings, goals onto end points, trajectories onto progressions through change, etc.” (p. 17).

Still following the *Invariance Principle*, Duffy and Feist (ibid.) explain why certain types of metaphors, such as ACTION metaphors, are considered TRANSFERS. The authors provide the example of the verb/action ‘kick’, which according to them is conceptualized “as an object transferred from an agent to a patient” (p. 18). In this case, the person who receives the ‘kick’ does not possess it but rather is affected by the action.

4.3.1.3. The Extended Invariance Principle

As not everything is a garden full of flowers, Lakoff (1999) draws attention to the existence of a limitation of the *Invariance Principle*. This limitation arises from the fact that the *Invariance Principle* asserts that metaphorical mappings must preserve the image-schematic structure of the *source* domain in a way that aligns with the *target* domain. However, the existing problem is that it only considers image schemas (basic cognitive structures related to perception and bodily experience) and ignores other structural aspects of metaphor. Therefore, in order to solve this problem, Duffy and Feist (2023) explain that the *Extended Invariance Principle* was proposed as a refinement of the original concept, of the *Invariance Principle*.

Proposed by Ruiz de Mendoza (1998), the *Extended Invariance Principle* broadens the scope beyond image schemas. It states that the generic-level structure of the source domain – not just its image-schematic structure, must also be preserved in the *target* domain. This means that attributes and behaviors from the *source* domain are mapped in a way that maintains coherence with the inherent structure of the *target* domain, ensuring a more comprehensive and flexible understanding of metaphorical mappings.

Therefore, to illustrate the *Extended Invariance Principle*, Duffy and Feist (2023, p. 18) use the metaphor STRENGTH IS DURABILITY. In this example, the *source* domain refers to strong, durable materials, while the *target* domain pertains to human resilience. They provide some examples where material attributes are mapped onto human attributes, such as:

- (1) “*She has nerves of steel*”, which equates emotional strength to the toughness of steel.
- (2) “*I have asbestos fingers*”, which likens high pain tolerance to the heat resistance of asbestos.

In addition, the authors provide an example of the metaphor *PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS*. In this case, the *source* domain refers to animal behavior, while the *target* domain represents human behavior. To better illustrate this metaphor, the authors cite the following examples:

- (1) “*He is a shark in the boardroom*”, representing aggressive and competitive business tactics.
- (2) “*She is a snake in the grass*”, indicating someone deceptive and untrustworthy.

Therefore, these examples illustrate how animal characteristics are mapped onto human traits and behaviors, emphasizing the role of metaphors in shaping our understanding of social interactions and personality traits, as explored by the theorist Lakoff (1980, 1987).

4.3.1.4. Primary Metaphors

In all these examples illustrated so far, it is possible to see that, in the case of primary metaphors, such as, *PLAY IS POWER*, *ARGUMENT IS WAR*, *STRENGTH IS DURABILITY*, *PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS*, Lakoff (1999), makes it clear that the preservation of *inference* plays a crucial role in cross-domain mappings. According to Lakoff (ibid.), *Similarity Is Proximity*, where the *target* domain (the concept being explained) appears in the subject position, highlighting its similarity to another concept, while the *source* domain (a familiar or concrete idea) is placed in the predicate nominal position, emphasizing its conceptual proximity to the target. In *primary metaphors*, the connection between these domains is explicitly marked by the capitalized copula “is”, which establishes the mapping between them.

Lakoff (ibid.) further explains that, to enhance the clarity of his analysis, he uses arrows to indicate the *source* and *target* domains. In this representation, the *source* domain (Proximity) appears to the left of the arrow, while the *target* domain (Similarity) is positioned to the right (pp. 61-62). See the table below:

Table 18: Examples illustrating source-to-target domain mappings using arrows

(1) POWER IS PLAY	PLAY	→	POWER
(2) ARGUMENT IS WAR	WAR	→	ARGUMENT
(3) STRENGTH IS DURABILITY	DURABILITY	→	STRENGTH
(4) PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS	ANIMALS	→	PEOPLE

Source: adapted from Lakoff (1999)

The author also states that from these *mappings*, it is possible to identify what constitutes a complex metaphor, which can, in turn, give rise to *submetaphors*. To illustrate this, he provides the example A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY. In his words, in the case of this example:

“It is a consequence of (a) the cultural belief that everyone is supposed to have a purpose in life, (b) the primary metaphors Purposes Are Destinations and Action Is Motion, and (c) the fact that a long trip to a series of destinations is a journey” (p. 64).

Therefore, conceptual metaphors, as can be seen so far, according to Lakoff (ibid.), among other authors cited, permeate various aspects of our daily life, be it “cultural models, folk theories, or simply knowledge or beliefs that are widely accepted in a culture” (p. 63).

4.3.1.5. Metaphor as Conceptual Blending

Regarding *Metaphor as Conceptual Blending*, Duffy and Feist (2023) explain that while CMT explains metaphors as ‘stable and systematic’ *mappings* between *source* and *target* domains, Blending Theory (BT), based on Fauconnier’s Theory of Mental Spaces, offers a more dynamic view of meaning construction. This is for the fact that BT employs a four-space model, such as: (i) two *input spaces* (corresponding to source and target), (ii) a *generic space* (containing shared conceptual structures), and a (iii) *blend space*, where elements from both inputs combine and interact. To better understand these concepts, we can come back to the metaphor PLAY IS POWER. According to the Four-Space Model applied to PLAY IS POWER, we can have an analysis like the following:

Table 19: Metaphor “PLAY IS POWER” as a Conceptual Blending

Input Space 1 (Play)	Play involves games, creativity, competition, fun, imagination.
	Players engage voluntarily and can experiment with different roles.
Input Space 2 (Power)	Power involves dominance, influence, leadership, and success.
	Power can be political, social, intellectual, or physical.
Generic Space (Shared Conceptual Structure)	Both play and power involve rules, competition, and strategy.
	Mastery in both domains leads to success.
	Play can involve social hierarchy, similar to power dynamics.
Blend Space (Novel Meaning Construction)	In this blended space, play is not just recreation – it becomes a tool for power.
	Game-like strategies apply to real-world influence (e.g., political strategies, corporate competition, social media virality).
	Creativity and playfulness generate power in fields like advertising, marketing, and leadership.

	Serious play (e.g., simulations, role-playing in business) is a method for gaining influence.
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Source: adapted from Duffy & Feist (2023), Charlier & Caubergs (2007), Heljakka (2013), Rolim (2020), Prochner (2024)

As it is possible to see in the analysis in Table 19, the meaning in the Blend permeates multiple aspects regarding a primary metaphor. This highlights why Blending Theory (BT) was developed, to account for *novel* and *flexible conceptualizations* such as jokes, newly coined words, and unconventional language use, which Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) alone could not fully explain. Therefore, as Duffy and Feist (2023) argue, BT proposes that understanding language involves integrating *source* and *target* domains into a “new blended mental space” (p. 19), which is temporary and context-dependent. These blended structures emerge spontaneously in communication and are often more specific and “short-lived” (p. 19) compared to the broad, systematic mappings characteristic of CMT.

In summary, Duffy and Feist (2023) illustrate these aspects with the metaphor MY SURGEON IS A BUTCHER. Here, they explain that the implicature of incompetence does not stem directly from either butchery or surgery but emerges from their juxtaposition in the blend. By capturing such dynamic and flexible conceptualizations, BT provides “a general cognitive model for meaning-making” (p. 20), explaining how novel metaphors and unconventional expressions arise in thought and language.

To conclude, as demonstrated throughout this discussion, these metaphorical aspects were expanded by Lakoff throughout his studies on conceptual metaphors, along with contributions from other scholars (Gibbs, 1999; Kövecses, 2000, 2005, 2010; Gibbs; Cameron, 2008; Duffy; Feist, 2023), among others. Their work has made metaphorical mapping more comprehensible through a didactic and readable presentation, making it particularly relevant for the corpus analysis in this doctoral thesis.

Above all, their contributions have reinforced the understanding that Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) acknowledges the cultural dimension of metaphor, emphasizing the role of lived experiences in shaping cognition. By examining how individuals interact with their environment, CMT explores the construction of meaning, both general and culturally specific, with a particular focus on metaphor as a fundamental mechanism of thought.

In this context, it is crucial to underscore the role of *conceptual metonymies* in the interpretation of everyday life (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980), as well as to examine how they operate in conjunction with *conceptual metaphors* within the discourse of children playing with Barbie

dolls. Accordingly, I intend to provide a brief explanation of the notion of metonymy as defined by Lakoff & Johnson (1987, 2002 [1980], 2003, among others).

4.3.2. Conceptual Metonymies

When reading Lakoff and Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999), it becomes evident that the authors argue that not only *conceptual metaphors* but also *conceptual metonymies*, together with other categories such as imagery, prototypes, frames, mental spaces, and radial categories, are fundamental to people's everyday reasoning (p. 77).

While *conceptual metaphors* involve mappings across different domains, *conceptual metonymies* operate within a single domain, allowing one entity to stand for another that is closely associated with it (ibid., 1999). Because of this mechanism, people can use concrete, easily perceptible elements to make sense of more abstract, complex, or less tangible phenomena. For this reason, conceptual metonymies should not be regarded as marginal or merely stylistic, but rather as central to the way we think, speak, and act in everyday life. They must therefore be considered when analyzing people's everyday lives and discourses, including the ways children construct meaning in their play narratives.

It is important to highlight, however, that this cognitive view of metonymy differs significantly from the *traditional* conception of metonymy, in which it has often been regarded merely as a *rhetorical* or *stylistic* device, rather than as a cognitive process shaping the way we conceptualize the world, everyday life, and abstract thought. In classical rhetoric and in much of the early linguistic tradition, metonymy was treated alongside metaphor as a figure of speech based on substitution, functioning primarily at the level of language (see Jakobson, 1956; Ullmann, 1962; Genette, 1972). By contrast, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) reposition metonymy within the very architecture of human cognition, claiming that it plays a constitutive role in structuring meaning and experience.

One of the most common cases is what Lakoff and Johnson call the *Event-for-Time metonymy*. The authors explain that when we say, "*The Kronos Quartet Concert is approaching*", the expression does not literally mean that the physical event of the concert is moving toward us in space; rather, the event itself (the concert) stands for the time of the concert. In this way, the metonymy enables us to refer to something abstract (time) by means of a concrete and bounded element associated with it (the event) (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999, p. 141). This illustrates how deeply ingrained metonymic reasoning is in ordinary language: we

do not consciously reflect on the mechanism, yet we employ it effortlessly to structure our temporal experience.

A further illustration is found in the way *time and distance* are mutually substitutable in everyday speech. For example, the authors argue that when someone says, “*San Francisco is half an hour from Berkeley*”, a *measure of time* is used to stand for a *measure of distance*. Conversely, when one hears “*I slept for fifty miles while she drove*”, a *measure of distance* is used to stand for a *measure of time* (ibid., p. 139).

In both cases, the authors argue that reasoning relies on the embodied correlation between *motion, time, and space*. They explain that, since our lived experience of traveling constantly involves mapping temporal duration onto spatial extension (and vice versa), such substitutions appear natural and transparent (ibid. 138-139).

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that metonymy cannot be reduced to a rhetorical ornament or an accidental feature of language. Instead, it is a *core cognitive mechanism* that structures how we conceptualize and reason about domains as basic as time, distance, and events. For Lakoff and Johnson (1999), metonymy, like metaphor, belongs to the “imaginative aspects of mind” that are constitutive of human thought (ibid., p. 77).

This theoretical perspective is strongly confirmed by the discourse of children in my focal group as they played with Barbie dolls. One child, upon noticing her doll was bald, immediately concluded: “*She has cancer*”. Here, it is possible to see that, baldness, a visible physical trait, stands for the broader medical condition of cancer. This corresponds to a PART FOR WHOLE *metonymy*, in which a symptom is used to represent the disease as a *whole*. Another child observed that the doll dressed in blue and yellow “represents children with Down syndrome”. In this case, the *colors of the uniform* stand for an *entire social category*, inferring a SIGN FOR COMMUNITY *metonymy*.

These instances reveal that children spontaneously rely on metonymic reasoning to make sense of their dolls, just as adults rely on *time-distance* substitutions or *event-time* correlations in daily life. Furthermore, metonymy does not operate in isolation: it often interacts with *conceptual metaphors*. For instance, when a child states that the bald doll “does not care, she just wants to be beautiful”, the remark reflects a metaphorical projection in which *beauty is conceptualized as strength or empowerment*. The metonymic link (baldness → cancer) thus becomes enriched by metaphorical reasoning (beauty → resilience), showing how both mechanisms cooperate in the construction of meaning.

From my perspective, these empirical observations confirm Lakoff and Johnson’s claim that our conceptual system is grounded in imaginative mechanisms like *metaphor* and

metonymy. More importantly, they highlight how children, through play, employ these same cognitive tools to interpret physical traits, assign identities, and weave narratives around their dolls. In doing so, they reveal the embodied and social dimensions of figurative thought, where *signs*, *bodies*, and *symbols* are mobilized to make sense of difference, illness, and empowerment in everyday life.

They also suggest that children spontaneously employ these tools to frame differences, health, and identity through play. In this way, *metonymy* emerges not only as a cognitive shortcut, but also as a means of connecting visible details to broader social categories, thereby enriching the symbolic and affective dimensions of their interactions with Barbie dolls.

Finally, in light of the discussion above, I acknowledge that these two subsections do not cover all dimensions of conceptual metaphors or conceptual metonymy, given the breadth of the topic. My aim was to provide only a concise overview of the fundamental concepts. For a more detailed understanding of conceptual metaphor mappings within the framework of *Cognitive Linguistics*, *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* and *Conceptual Metonymy*, I recommend consulting the works cited throughout these subsections.

Building on these contributions, however, I find it necessary to broaden the theoretical discussion beyond CMT in order to account for the communicative mechanisms that sustain play itself. Since the empirical material of this thesis involves children's discourses while playing with Barbie dolls, it is not sufficient to focus solely on metaphorical mappings. It is also essential to conceive of the mind as *embodied*, shaped by the body's physical and social experience within its environment (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980), and as situated within an *ecological network of relations* (Bateson, 1972).

In this regard, Gregory Bateson's reflections on play, fantasy, and frames, originally formulated in his essay *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* and later included in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), become particularly relevant. Bateson (ibid.) offers a framework for understanding how play depends upon metacommunicative signals that mark actions as both "real" and "not real", how the paradox of play creates space for creativity, how the distinction between *map* and *territory* structures representation, and how *frames* guide the negotiation of meaning and identity. When combined with Lakoff and Johnson's theory of *embodied mind*, these insights show that play is simultaneously grounded in bodily experience and interactional framing.

Thus, I regard these perspectives as central to the present study, specifically within the field of Cognitive Linguistics, for they elucidate how children, through playing with Barbie dolls, construct imaginative yet socially consequential narratives that both reflect and transform

cultural understandings of femininity, difference, and empowerment. Accordingly, the following sections present, in a structured manner, the key concepts proposed by Bateson (1987; 1972) on *frames*, followed by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of the *embodied mind*, and examine their theoretical relevance for this analysis.

4.4. Frames, Play, and Fantasy in Children's Barbie Narratives

Building upon the insights of Cognitive Linguistics and following the discussion of the *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (CMT), I consider particularly relevant to introduce Gregory Bateson's reflections³⁰ on *play*, *fantasy*, and *frames*, originally formulated in his essay *A Theory of Play and Fantasy*, later included in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972). This theoretical articulation is justified by the fact that, when dealing with children's discourse and play from a cognitive-linguistic perspective, it is not sufficient to focus solely on metaphorical mappings and conceptual structures. It is also necessary to account for the *metacommunicative mechanisms that sustain the ludic activity itself*, enabling children to construct and negotiate meaning while interacting with toys, in this case, Barbie dolls, the central object of this study.

In this context, in his essay, Bateson (1987) identifies *frames* (enclosures or boundaries of interpretation), *play*, and *fantasy* as fundamental dimensions of communication. He argues that play can only be constituted as such because participants are capable of signaling *metacommunicatively* that "this is play". In doing so, they establish a paradoxical frame within which actions that imitate real behaviors (such as *biting*, *fighting*, or *assuming a profession*) are simultaneously a representation and a negation of those behaviors. This paradox is essential: within the ludic frame, actions are "real" in their performative dimension but "unreal" in their literal consequences.

According to Bateson (1987), the function of such frames is to delimit a set of messages that, while not "true" in a literal or factual sense, nonetheless generate meaning within that specific interactive context. He further demonstrates that these processes of framing are inherently paradoxical, since they operate at the boundary between *map* and *territory*, *reality* and *representation*, *fact* and *fiction* (p. 180-198). In other words, the act of play is not reducible to mere imitation of reality, but constitutes a communicative environment in which *signals*, *identities*, and *roles* are reconfigured.

³⁰ I find it important to mention that the idea of analyzing frames, as well as the reference to this work, came as a suggestion from the examination committee. After further guidance, my supervisor and I concluded that this theory would indeed make a meaningful contribution to my thesis.

Therefore, among the key concepts presented in *A Theory of Play and Fantasy*, I consider that the most relevant for this thesis are: (a) the recognition of *multiple levels of communication* (denotative, metalinguistic, and metacommunicative); (b) the centrality of *frames* in guiding interpretation and shaping interaction; and (c) the paradoxes inherent in *play and fantasy*, which are not flaws but essential conditions for creativity, symbolic thinking, and communicative evolution. These theoretical principles, in my perspective, provide a foundation for analyzing how children, through their playful discourse with Barbie dolls, engage in processes of meaning-making that oscillate between representation and imagination, the real and the unreal.

At this point, I seek to provide a brief explanation of how Bateson's concepts are linked to children's Barbie play, illustrating this connection with examples drawn from the corpus collected for this thesis, specifically from the focus group, the post-play interview with the Barbie dolls.

4.4.1. Linking Bateson's Concepts to Children's Barbie Play

Bateson (1987) stresses that play depends upon *metacommunicative signals* that establish a *frame* within which actions can be both "real" and "not real". In the focus group with children, these signals were evident in their discourse about Barbie dolls, where narratives emerged that were at once representational and imaginative. For example, dolls became *doctors, patients, models, athletes*, or women experiencing *illness*, all within the paradoxical boundaries of play.

In order to clarify these concepts, I present Table 20 below, which summarizes the key ideas proposed by Bateson in his essay *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (1987), and illustrates how they can be observed in the children's discourse.

Table 20: Linking Bateson's Framework to Children's Discourse in Play with Barbie Dolls

Bateson's Concept	Definition (Bateson, 1987)	Children's Example	Interpretation
Metacommunication	Signals that indicate how to interpret interaction. Ex.: "The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite." (p. 186).	"This doll was taking care of us, seeing the heart beating" "Essa boneca estava cuidando da"	The child frames the doll as a doctor, signaling the ludic context where this is meaningful.

		<i>gente, vendo o coração bater”</i>	
Paradox of play	“These actions... do not denote what would be denoted by those actions which these actions denote” (p. 186).	<i>“She has cancer... cancer makes the hair fall, right?”</i> <i>“Ela tem câncer... câncer faz o cabelo cair, né?”</i>	The doll both represents and does not represent illness; real-world knowledge is invoked but negated.
Map vs. Territory	The sign is not the object it denotes (p. 186-189).	<i>“She represents children who have Down syndrome”</i> <i>“Ela representa crianças que têm síndrome de Down”</i>	The doll is a symbolic map of disability, not the territory itself.
Frames	Sets of messages that delimit interpretation; that is, “vast majority of both metalinguistic and metacommunicative messages remain implicit” (p. 184).	<i>“She is a soccer player... she wears cleats so she won’t fall”</i> <i>“Ela é jogadora de futebol... ela usa chuteiras para não cair”</i>	The doll’s outfit and accessories frame her identity within play as an athlete.
Creativity through paradox	Paradoxes of abstraction are essential for communicative evolution (p. 1910198).	<i>“She is happy... she doesn’t care, she just wants to be beautiful... you can be beautiful without hair”</i> <i>“Ela tá feliz... ela não liga, só quer ser bonita... você pode ser bonita sem cabelo”</i>	The paradox of beauty without conventional markers is creatively re-signified.
Frames and possible selves	Play as a frame for imagining future roles.	<i>“We can... I will be a doctor... I will be a veterinarian”</i> <i>“Nós podemos... eu vou ser médica... eu vou ser veterinária.”</i>	The ludic frame allows projection of future identities and empowerment.

Source: adapted from Bateson (1972) based on research corpora

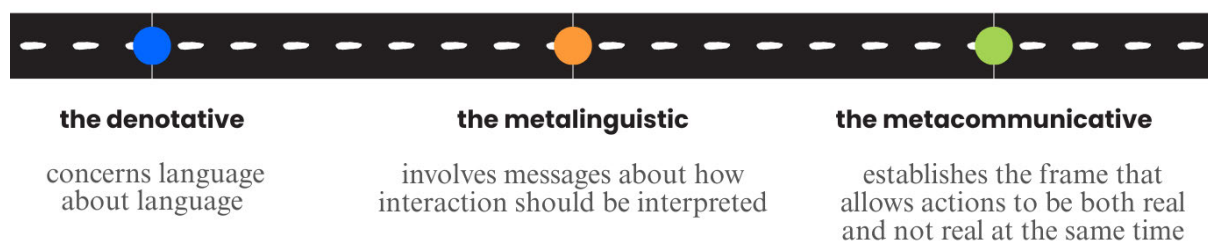
Having presented this synthesis, the following subsection explains each of Bateson’s concepts in a discursive manner, so as to make their relevance to children’s Barbie play clearer to the reader.

4.4.1.1. Frames, Paradox, and the Metacommunicative Logic of Play

The aim of this subtopic is to summarize, in an objective, clear, and also creative manner, the theoretical framework presented by Bateson (1987) in his work *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*, in order to provide a stronger foundation for the analysis and understanding of the children's discourses as they play with the Barbies and reflect on playing with them, which constitute the corpus of the present thesis.

Therefore, I begin by outlining the three levels of communication proposed by Bateson (ibid.), namely: the *denotative*, the *metalinguistic*, and the *metacommunicative*. The image below illustrates what each of these levels represents:

Figure 20: The three levels of communication



Source: based on Bateson (1987, p. 183-198)

Since my aim here is to focus on these aspects within the scope of play, I concentrate on what Bateson (ibid.) calls *metacommunication*, which I understand it to be “the heart of play”, since it establishes the frame that allows actions to be both “real” and not “real” at the same time. In this context, I interpret it in this way because, in his text, the author presents the example of *monkeys in the zoo* (p. 184-187) to explain that when monkeys are playing, it may appear to many people that they are “fighting”. Thus, according to the author, what may initially seem to be *aggression* is actually framed as *non-aggression* through subtle “cues”. How so? For example, these cues, as Bateson (ibid.) explains, can be inferred through *gestures*, *rhythm*, *facial expressions*, and *repetition*, which we can interpret not as a “fight” but as “play”.

That is why understanding the context of the *frame in play* is so relevant, since the author states that *play* itself consists of *frames* occurring at all times. These signals or cues form a *metacommunicative code* that enables participants to differentiate what is happening.

Let us now look at an example derived from the corpus of this thesis. When I apply this understanding to the context of the children's play with Barbie dolls, I notice that the same principle governs their interactions. For instance, when C2 utters, "*Poor thing! She said the doctor didn't help her doll*" (*Coitada! Falou que a médica não ajudou a boneca dela*), I can see that the utterance did not describe an actual event, at least not literally, but rather that C2 signaled to the group that Barbie should now be interpreted as a doctor within the ongoing frame of play, through *imagination*. *This is the logic of play*. In fact, what happened here was a *negotiation of symbolic boundaries*, more specifically what we can infer as an *implicit agreement among participants* about how the scene should be read and what counted as meaningful within that temporary world taking place at that moment, a world that is coming into existence. In this case, I understand that *play is a symbolic zone* where sensitive experiences can be represented, tested, and redefined without real-world consequences.

That is why the author (ibid., p. 183) explains that "*this is play*" carries an inherent paradox. That is, play is not merely an imitation of reality but rather *a symbolic arena where meanings are constantly negotiated*, as if the children were truly dealing with a situation in which they needed help from the Doctor Barbie doll. There is, then, what the author defines as the essence of play as a "double-coded act". Let us now consider F's utterance, when she says: "*She has cancer... cancer makes the hair fall, right?*". In this specific case, it is possible to observe that *within the play frame*, the statement revealed a deep *cognitive* and *emotional* operation, namely, that the doll both *signified* and *denied illness*. This is because, when F posed the question, she created a *liminal space* where the children's imagination could be used for a *safe exploration* of having or not having hair, or, perhaps, of more difficult themes such as cancer.

Additionally, I can also observe that the examples above, "*Poor thing! She said the doctor didn't help her doll*" and "*She has cancer... cancer makes the hair fall, right?*", likewise reveal operations of *conceptual blending*, since in both cases the children integrate two distinct mental spaces to produce a new emergent meaning. In the first utterance, the space of real-life experience (in which doctors are responsible for care and treatment) is *blended* with the fictional play-space of interacting with dolls, creating a hybrid understanding in which the doll is treated as a real patient and the doctor's "failure" elicits genuine empathy. In the second utterance, the biomedical space (cancer, hair loss, bodily processes) is *blended* with the playful space of the doll, producing an integrated understanding in which the doll's body is interpreted through knowledge about real diseases. In both cases, the result is a blended space in which the children *simultaneously articulate elements of the real world and the make-believe world*, giving rise to

meanings that are not fully present in either space alone, as described by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) in the *conceptual blending model*.

Therefore, I can see that the paradox described by Bateson (1987), along with the *conceptual blendings*, does not serve here to undermine meaning but rather to *enrich it*, since within this double frame, children can construct layered understandings of concepts such as *vulnerability*, *resilience*, and *identity*. For instance, the doll might have cancer, or she might have chosen to shave her head, affirming the idea that the doll is a *semiotic object*, or a *semiotic bridge*, between the tangible and the imaginary, allowing symbolic experimentation with different ideas that might otherwise be limiting.

Hence, these concepts are extremely relevant and guiding for me, since my central idea for this thesis was precisely to have children play and create an analytical “laboratory moment”. Through Bateson’s study (ibid.), it becomes possible for me, *through the frame of play*, to see that the concept of *frames* in play function not merely as boundaries but as *semiotic laboratories*, where meanings can be tested and, consequently, re-signified.

In sum, Bateson (ibid.) explains that the *frame* does more than separate play from reality, *it creates the conditions for transformation*, where, through play, children can step beyond immediate reality and enter hypothetical worlds in which professional and social roles are negotiable. The children’s ability to navigate symbolic contradictions thus becomes a form of *linguistic* and *emotional evolution*. This makes it possible for me to analyze these nuances through the concept of frames. Ultimately, I understand that this *paradoxical quality of play* can act as a profound *pedagogical* and *emancipatory force*, a rehearsal for future selves, a *language of possibility*, and a *lived experience of empowerment*.

4.5. Embodiment and the Construction of Imaginative Narratives

This topic concerns, above all, Mark Johnson’s work *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason* (2017). However, before I begin to discuss its central concepts, I consider it necessary to explain that this work did not “emerge” by chance; rather, it arose as the mature expression of a long intellectual trajectory dedicated to rethinking the nature of mind.

If we go back to 1987, with Johnson’s *The Body in the Mind*, at that time Johnson already argued that *imagination* and *meaning* are not detached abstractions but arise from *bodily experience*, something I consider highly relevant to analyze in the context of children’s play with Barbie dolls. The 1980s were crucial years for the development of Cognitive Linguistics, with Johnson’s significant contributions. In 1980, he published the seminal work that has

guided many cognitive linguistic analyses, namely *Metaphors We Live By* (1980); and in the following years, he consolidated what became known as *second-generation cognitive science*, a movement that challenged the computational and disembodied models of mind, with his works *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and later *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999).

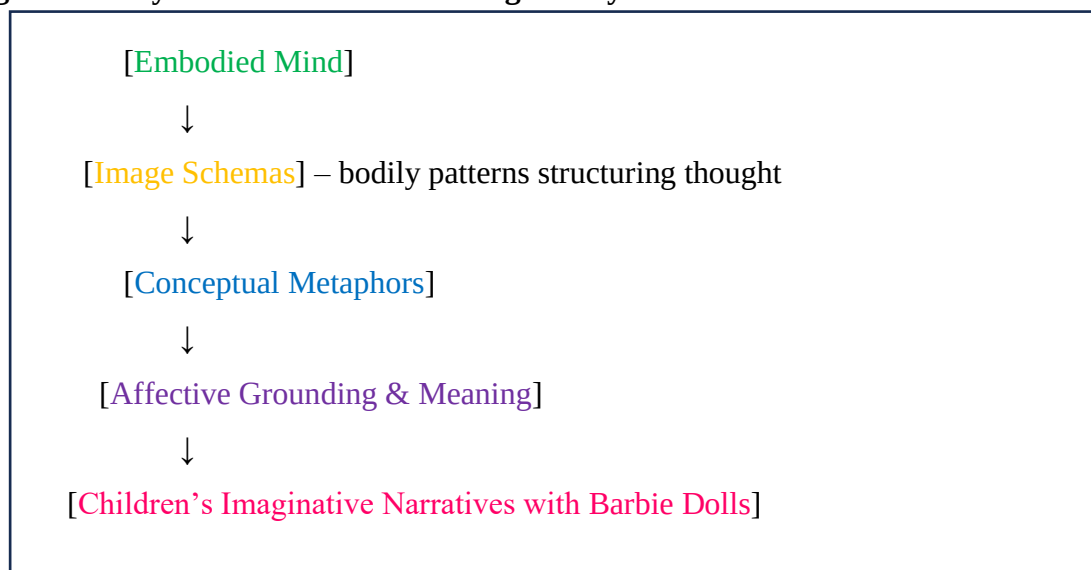
However, focusing on the topic in question, “*Embodiment and the Construction of Imaginative Narratives*”, I note that this book offers my analysis a perspective that resonates with how meaning is constantly enacted in everyday practices, such as *children’s imaginative play with dolls*. Thus, I understand that Johnson’s (2017) work is not about an abstract computational process, but rather an *embodied, ecological, and emotional activity*, one that provides analytical support for the present study.

Therefore, among the concepts that can be found in his book, the ones that stand out in my approach to analyzing the corpus are the following:

- i) the *ecological emergence of mind*;
- ii) the *structuring role of image schemas*;
- iii) the *constitutive function of metaphor*;
- iv) the *affective grounding of thought*.

The table below helps to better illustrate how this sequence is organized up to the point that directly connects to my corpus analysis. To make it more visual, I chose to represent each layer in a different color.

Figure 21: Layers of Embodied Meaning in Play



Source: based on Johnson (2017)

Figure 21, above, presents a schematic model of how meaning unfolds through play. Looking at the information it contains, we can see that meaning begins with bodily engagement (*embodiment*), progresses to recurrent experiential patterns (*image schemas*), then moves to metaphorical projection (*conceptual metaphor*), and finally reaches affective valuation (*emotion and empathy*). It is worth noting, however, that regarding emotions, I also examine them through the lens of the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005). In this framework, my analysis focuses specifically on the children's evaluations of the Barbie dolls. Drawing on Cognitive Linguistics, these layers are considered together to shed light on the *construction of imaginative narratives in children's interactions with Barbie dolls*.

And why is that? I believe that this type of analysis will provide support to examine how children's play reveals the emergent nature of mind, that is, how meaning is co-created through the interaction between the child, the doll, and the surrounding cultural world. In other words, I will not only have access to their *emotional evaluations* toward the Barbie dolls; rather, when the children describe their Barbie dolls as "a soccer player" or "a doctor", for example, I believe I will be able to examine the fact that they are not simply labeling an object (the doll) but *enacting cognition through embodied engagement*. That is why I consider so relevant to understand these "*Layers of Embodied Meaning in Play*".

That said, once these children engage in embodied interactions, it is important to understand that these are structured by *image schemas*, that is, by pre-conceptual patterns of experience that organize perception and reasoning. Examining the corpus, it is, then, possible to identify recurring schematic patterns such as *Container*, *Source-Path-Goal*, and *Balance*. Through these schemas, as cognitive analysts, we gain insight into how children distinguish between "normal" and "different" Barbies. In other words, their discourse provides elements that reveal the bodily foundations of conceptual organization, with each schema functioning as a bridge between sensory experience and abstract thought.

Having this in mind, the next level of analysis, considering the layers in Figure 21, shows that these are extended through metaphor, which, as Johnson (2017) notes, "*recruits sensory and motor experience to perform abstract conceptualization*" (p. 15). In the children's talk, metaphors such as SOCIAL ACTORS ARE TOYS OR SELF IS EXTENDED THROUGH THE DOLL may indicate that they imagine Barbies as professionals or learners. Thus, through these mappings, we can see that their *bodily experiences* of *struggle*, *aspiration*, and *orientation* (how the child perceives and positions herself in the world) are transposed into symbolic narratives of empowerment and identity formation.

Finally, regarding the *affective dimension*, according to the author, it permeates every level of this process, *meaning is felt as much as it is thought*. When a child says, “*I think she is beautiful even without hair*”, it means that the statement reveals the *emotional grounding of cognition*, in other words, the child’s capacity to reinterpret *vulnerability as beauty* and *difference as value*. Similarly, the recognition of a blind or wheelchair Barbie as “*able to walk on the runway*” demonstrates how play functions as a space where *empathy, inclusion, and the revaluation of social norms* are enacted.

In sum, these *Layers of Embodied Meaning in Play*, examined through the recorded moments, demonstrate that the children’s imaginative engagement with dolls materializes Johnson’s (2017) claim that *mind, meaning, and feeling* are inseparable. Thus, we can observe that *play becomes a living site of embodiment*, in which *bodily schemas* shape *conceptualization*, *metaphors* extend those schemas into *symbolic domains*, and *affect* imbues them with *human resonance*.

Within this *ecology of play*, we can see that Barbie dolls emerge not as mere toys but as *mediators of embodied thought*, that is, objects through which children *think, feel, and reimagine* their place in the world.

Given that this research draws on three linguistic approaches, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Cognitive Linguistics (CL), and the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), I consider them both essential and highly complementary to the study. Although they stem from different theoretical backgrounds, they converge, from my analytical perspective, on the key assumption that language functions as a means of expressing and shaping conceptual experience (Langacker, 1987; Evans; Green, 2006).

I find it important, however, to stress that the aim of combining these frameworks is not to promote a comparison or theoretical conflict. Rather, my purpose is to incorporate Conceptual Metaphor Theory in order to access cognitive-linguistic aspects that cannot be fully captured through the analytical tools of SFL and the Appraisal System alone. Thus, the integration of these three perspectives serves to deepen the analysis of the meanings constructed by children through play, broadening and enriching the understanding of meaning-making processes.

For instance, as previously discussed, in Cognitive Linguistics, language is conceived as an expression of embodied and perceptual experience in the world (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), whereas in SFL, particularly through the *ideational metafunction*, language is understood as a resource for representing experience, *actions, events, participants, processes, and circumstances*. This aligns with cognitive theories of categorization, image schemas, and

mental simulation (Lakoff, 1987), as both perspectives explore how conceptual content is structured and expressed through grammar and lexis.

As for the *interpersonal metafunction* in SFL, which focuses on relationships, roles, and evaluations, also resonates with usage-based approaches in CL, which highlight how language emerges from recurrent patterns of interaction. In this sense, while CL emphasizes the cognitive processes underlying meaning, it does not neglect the inherently social dimension of language use.

Similarly, in the *textual metafunction*, concerned with cohesion and coherence, important intersections can also be traced. Again, as previously discussed, CL asserts the inseparability of form and meaning, showing that grammatical choices reflect how individuals conceptualize information. This view aligns with SFL's concern with how texts structure meaning in context, as well as with CL's focus on discourse coherence, perspective, and informational focus (Fauconnier; Turner, 2002; Croft; Cruse, 2004).

In sum, SFL provides a detailed functional toolkit for analyzing language in context, while CL offers a cognitive lens on how meaning is mentally and bodily constructed. Together, these frameworks enable a more comprehensive account of language as a symbolic resource for making sense of human experience.

5. METHODOLOGY: KNITTING PROCESS

“Properly practiced, knitting soothes the troubled spirit, and it doesn’t hurt the untroubled spirit either”.

(Zimmermann, 1971, p. 2).

In this chapter, I detail the methodological path designed with great attention so that, much like the intricate process of knitting, each step contributes to the formation of the narrative for obtaining the corpora of this doctoral thesis. The aim is not only to present the findings of my research on empowerment in and through Barbie, examining play and children’s reflections subsequent to this act, but also to contribute meaningfully to building a more equitable society regarding the role of women, beginning in childhood.

Accordingly, this chapter is structured as follows: (i) the nature of the study, (ii) the study context and background, (iii) the context in which the corpora were obtained, (iv) the criteria for data selection, (v) the selection of Barbie dolls, and (vi) the analysis procedures.

5.1. The nature of the study

This investigation is characterized as qualitative and interpretative in nature, as it focuses on understanding phenomena within their natural contexts. As Denzin and Lincoln (2006) state, this research method allows the researcher to construct meaning through their interpretations of the context presented in the corpus.

According to Neves (2020), qualitative research considers the relationship between the world and the subject, a dynamic that cannot be analyzed through numerical data. This approach also allows the researcher to interpret the data considering the meanings of existing relationships in society, making it particularly suitable for the present investigation. In this sense, I use this interpretation to explore the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of individuals in relation to their experiences with other and the objects that are part of the environment in which they live (Rolim, 2020).

Following this approach, I analyzed two corpora in the present doctoral thesis, namely: i) the discourses emerging from the spontaneous interactions of eight (08) female *quilombola* children while playing with Barbie dolls, and ii) their discursive reflections on their experiences when playing with Barbie dolls. Analyzing the children’s discourses at these two moments provides a deeper understanding of the meanings they attribute to their lived experiences, both

socially and cognitively, while considering the role of women in the context of empowerment and in the context of the broader discussion. Thus, I conducted the research using a qualitative-interpretative approach in a spontaneous, non-manipulative manner. In this case, qualitative analysis is essential to this study, as it enables a comprehensive exploration of human interactions with this cultural artifact. In this context, qualitative research is indispensable, as it incorporates the characteristics outlined by Bodgan and Biklen (1994, p. 110, our translation), who argue that it:

- i) enables the researcher not only to engage in the research, but also to have a greater and more concrete proximity to the empirical object in its natural environment;
- ii) provides the researcher with an understanding of the phenomenon analyzed through a coherent qualitative whole, and not only through numerical data;
- iii) offers the researcher the opportunity to analyze the phenomenon from different points of view, that is, through the lenses of different theoretical approaches within a discursive context;
- iv) enables the researcher to analyze the data using the inductive method, that is, through reasoning that starts from the observation of the data to reach conclusions about what is being observed.

That said, the need for the second corpus, collected through a focus group with the collaborating children, is justified by the fact that play cannot be fully understood through observable elements alone but also requires reflection after the act. To align data collection with the research objectives, a script was prepared for the focus group, consisting of questions designed to stimulate reflection among the collaborating children. The script, structured in a survey, served as the data collection instrument, functioning as an interview.

Following the focus group, the children's statements were transcribed and analyzed using the theoretical and methodological framework of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by Halliday (1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). This analysis incorporated evaluation mechanisms based on the Appraisal System by Martin and White (2005) and the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). The study aimed to address themes such as autonomy, diversity, representation, and respect for different female bodies – including aspects related to disabilities – along with other emerging categories identified during data analysis.

5.2. Study context and background

The idea of analyzing play with Barbie emerged after my visit to Fisher-Price in 2023 during the ninth world conference of the International Toy Research Association (ITRA). Fisher-Price, headquartered in East Aurora, New York, is a subsidiary of Mattel, a U.S. company known for creating educational toys for babies and young children. According to its website³¹, each year, the company tests over 500 toys in laboratories designed to simulate real play environments, allowing experts to observe how children interact with them in a controlled setting. See image below:

Figure 22: Image taken during the 9th ITRA World Conference, where researchers explored Fisher-Price's laboratories



Source: First photograph retrieved from the ITRA Newsletter (2023/2024); second photograph taken by Rolim (2023)

This experience motivated me to expand the research I began during my master's studies (Rolim, 2020), now examining how play with Barbie can indicate social values and ideologies related to gender and power in both social and cognitive spheres. Given the Brazilian context of this doctoral thesis, I saw an opportunity, as a Brazilian researcher, to adopt a creative and tangible approach, so that data collection would better reflect the realities of my country.

Thus, building on research practices adopted by Fisher-Price, where studies are conducted in play spaces and preschool settings located on its campus – environments specifically designed for children, yet structured as school settings –, and where researchers also observe children in their home environments, this study adopts a similar play-based and naturalistic approach. For this reason, I chose to investigate children's play with Barbie dolls in an institutionalized but welcoming, comfortable, and safe space where they naturally interact with peers. By adapting this research model to the Brazilian context, this study situates Barbie,

³¹ Website link: <https://corporate.mattel.com/brand-portfolio/fisher-price>

a North American cultural icon, within the lived experiences of Brazilian children by observing their play in a familiar context: the school environment.

In this sense, through discussions with my advisor and co-advisor, we decided to analyze children's interactions with Barbie dolls in a community school that is deeply connected to my own life history, located in the neighborhood where I was raised. This approach was inspired not only by these experiences but also by the work of Tizard and Hughes (1984), who argue that children's play in natural settings, such as their homes, gardens, backyards, or streets, provides richer and more dynamic experiences. I believe that such experiences foster continuous social and cognitive learning that develops and persists throughout the life course.

Thus, based on these considerations, I chose to analyze play in its real context of activity, during a designated classroom playtime, and children's reflections after the play opportunity presented to them. In the following sections, I present images of the children at play, followed by images of their participation in the Focus Group interview conducted at the school.

5.3. The context in which the *corpora* were obtained

This research was conducted at a *Quilombola Municipal school*, located in the Paratibe neighborhood, in the city of João Pessoa, State of Paraíba, Brazil. As a community school, it was previously studied by Aranha (2017) due to its culturally significant origins. Founded by administrator Antônia Machado, who was later honored by having the institution named after her, the school was established with the mission of preserving and also promoting Afro-Brazilian culture.

The selection of this school was initially influenced by reflections that arose after my presentation at the ITRA awards ceremony in 2023. During my talk, a researcher in the children's field asked me whether, from a systemic-functional analysis of Barbie, it would be more relevant for a country to have a white or a black woman as president. My answer was that a black woman would be the better choice for two reasons: i) her lived experience and identity encompass struggles that include those of women from other ethnic backgrounds, and (ii) her purpose and linguistic choices would likely reflect values of empowerment and inclusion.

In this context and considering my trajectory as a female researcher who grew up in a marginalized community where most people are Black, I sought to access a teacher working at this school. She is a Black woman, a single mother, and the head of her household, raising two daughters, one with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), while also caring for a brother with an intellectual disability.

Considering these realities and life contexts, the investigation was conducted with fourth-grade elementary students. This choice was based on the collaborating teacher's responsibility for accompanying the same group of students throughout the 2025 academic year during the morning period, which was the only time frame available for me to follow the teacher for three months prior to data recording.

I emphasize that this does not constitute a convenience sample, as in Brazilian municipal schools it is an institutional practice for teachers in the early years of elementary education (Ensino Fundamental I) to remain with the same group of students throughout the entire school year. It is only in Ensino Fundamental II that students typically have different teachers for each subject.

5.4. The criteria for data selection

The children who participated in the play-based activity were all from the same class and ranged in age from 9 to 11, which corresponds to the typical age group for fourth-grade students in Brazil. They lived in the Paratibe neighborhood of João Pessoa, Paraíba, an area where some families reside in *quilombo*³² communities, with the majority of students at the school identifying as Black.

In this context, according to the school principal, since most of the students come from *quilombo* communities, the school is committed to empowering the children and affirming their life stories by strengthening their understanding of their historical roots through activities that promote the values of resistance, freedom, and the cultural preservation of *quilombola* heritage.

Considering these factors, with regard to the number of participants, it is worth noting that, out of a class of 35 students (both boys and girls), eight (08) girls were selected to take part in the activity. The selection was based above all on classroom behavior and academic performance. This decision was necessary due ii) to the high cost of the dolls and the lack of financial support from the university where the research was conducted, which made it impossible to acquire additional materials, and (ii) the teacher's concern that other children might damage the dolls, given their monetary value.

Thus, the data recordings were conducted as follows: the two groups, (i) children playing with *Barbie Careers* dolls and (ii) children playing with *Barbie Fashionists* dolls, were placed in the same classroom and engaged in play simultaneously, as the school authorized a

³² In the words of the school principal, *quilombo* is a Brazilian Portuguese term to refer to settlements originally established by escaped enslaved Africans during the colonial period.

maximum of one hour for this stage of data collection. As indicated in the transcription, there were moments when the children interacted with dolls belonging to the other group. Each group had approximately 20 minutes of playtime. Following this period, the focus group interview was conducted with the children, mediated by the facilitator.

With this clarified, Figure 24 presents the eight children who participated in the play-based activity. For ethical reasons, their faces were intentionally blurred to safeguard their privacy and integrity. As explained on page 83, this procedure *complies with the ethical guidelines of the National Health Council – CNS Resolution nº 466/2012*, which regulates research involving human beings in Brazil and ensures participants' confidentiality, dignity, and protection. Thus, while the children's identities remain concealed, their voices and interactions could still be examined with integrity and coherence.

Figure 23: The eight girls selected for the play-based activity with the Barbie dolls



Source: photograph by the author (2025)

Building on these ethical considerations, I also decided to assign *pseudonyms* to them so that I could both recognize their voices in the analyses and also identify them in the videos. This decision was particularly relevant because the audio quality of the recordings turned out to be quite poor, since there were no individual microphones available for each child. The recordings were therefore limited to the use of mobile phones for each group. Concretely, I positioned my phone to capture the video of one group of four (04) girls, while my sister used

her phone to record the other group, also composed of four (04) girls. Finally, in relation to the focus group, I recorded the session with one mobile phone for the video and another device exclusively for audio, which ultimately facilitated the transcription process.

Despite these measures, some sections of the recordings were of very limited quality, as mentioned earlier, making several stretches almost inaudible. I had to listen to all the recordings carefully and transcribe them manually, a task that took nearly three (03) months to complete for Group 1, Group 2, and the focus group. Nevertheless, I believe this effort was highly worthwhile, as it enabled me to develop a deeper engagement with my data. Through this immersion, I can state with confidence that I acquired greater familiarity with the participants' voices and even reached the point of being able to recognize, in the written transcripts, who had produced a given utterance without checking the pseudonym.

Moreover, I observed that this meticulous process reinforced the importance of my proximity as a researcher to the data, especially in qualitative studies involving children's voices. The act of listening repeatedly to the recordings not only sharpened my awareness of their speech patterns, but also revealed nuances of interaction, such as intonation, hesitation, and laughter, that would have otherwise been lost in a superficial transcription. I believe that this labor-intensive engagement enhanced the reliability of my interpretations and strengthened the coherence between the transcribed texts and the analytical categories.

Finally, by undertaking the transcription personally, I was also able to reflect on the challenges of conducting fieldwork in resource-limited contexts. While the absence of institutional support created obstacles, it also pushed me to adopt more creative and collaborative solutions, such as involving family members in the process. Through this experience, I can affirm that I developed a deeper understanding about resilience and flexibility in research, especially when working with vulnerable groups. More than anything, I believe this process strengthened my resolve to ensure that the children's voices were represented with *honesty* and *care*, despite the technical limitations of the context.

Given all these aspects of data collection and ethical care, I find it also important to highlight, finally, that the school principal expressed great enthusiasm upon learning that I would be working with Barbie dolls representing diverse body types, including Black dolls, dolls with different careers, and others portraying disabilities or comorbidities. He explained that my thesis topic aligns closely with the school's ongoing efforts to promote *diversity*, *inclusion*, and *representation*, which he regularly seeks to reflect in its institutional events.

It is worth noting, however, that I was not initially aware of this broader institutional context; I only came to understand it gradually through conversations with the teacher while

seeking her assistance with my corpora. I believe that all these elements contributed to the richness of detail in this thesis, which left me truly amazed.

Therefore, considering that many of the children at this school live in collective territories, *quilombos*, where history and heritage are shared, it was academically enriching to provide a space, through play with Barbie dolls, for the children to reflect on and engage with their ethnic-cultural identity. As will be shown below, some of the dolls represent Black women in various professions and body types, demonstrating how, after years of study and activism, these bodies are now also represented in the Barbie universe.

5.5 The selection of Barbie dolls

The Barbie dolls were selected according to the criteria outlined in Table 4, previously presented in Chapter 2, which addresses the *Themes of Female Representation in Dolls*. These criteria include *diversity of bodies and appearances; cultural and social representation; professions and aspirations; life experiences; inclusion of women with disabilities; and the representation of female identity and struggles*. This selection is grounded in the studies of Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), Rolim (2020), Sarinho Júnior (2023), and Prochner (2024), and takes into account socio-cognitive factors influencing children's interpretation of language, as discussed by Duffy and Feist (2023, p. 16).

In this context, the concepts of *empowerment*, *intersectionality*, and *decolonialism*, emerging from the third and fourth waves of the feminist movement, were incorporated into the selection process, as they have been progressively articulated in the most recent generations of Barbie dolls. By doing so, the choice of dolls sought not only reflect market-driven transformations in the representation of women but also to engage critically with broader cultural debates about *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion*.

In this sense, dolls representing racialized women, women with disabilities, and women in historically male-dominated professions were selected to foreground questions of power and identity that resonate with Charlier and Caubergs' (2007) four levels of empowerment: *power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*. At the same time, by placing different female bodies at the center of children's imaginative play, the selection also sought to reflect Espinosa Miñoso's (2021) insistence that the body constitutes not only a site of subordination but also a locus of resistance and epistemic authority.

Thus, the dolls chosen for the play-based activity were as follows, as illustrated below:

Table 21: Barbie Dolls selected for data collection

Barbie Careers	
Doctor Doll 	Soccer Player Doll 
Ballerina Doll 	Boxer Doll 

Barbie Fashionists	
Bald Doll 	Doll with Down Syndrome 
Wheelchair Doll 	Blind Doll 

Source: photograph by the author (2025)

The selected Barbie dolls exhibit diverse multimodal configurations in their bodies, particularly in terms of movement. a concept extensively discussed by Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002). In their research, they highlighted that doll marketed to boys often displayed strong representations of movement, whereas dolls for girls, such as Barbie dolls produced at the time, were typically portrayed in static poses. However, the images of the Barbie dolls selected for the play-based activity reveal a shift: the body configurations now convey dynamic movement. This includes not only action-oriented poses but also representations of movement in dolls with disabilities, for example, the *Wheelchair Doll*.

Furthermore, the bald Barbie doll represents women without hair, often associated with cancer, while also opening space for the representation of non-gendered dolls (Prochner, 2024). More broadly, it reflects intersectionality and decolonial perspectives through bodily and hair representation. key outcomes of feminist struggles over the past century.

Building on this discussion, the following chapter is dedicated, then, to the analysis of the data collected for this doctoral thesis

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS: ENHANCING PLAY AND (RE)SHAPING BARBIE DOLLS

This chapter presents what I consider the *ultimate* analysis of my investigation into female empowerment explored through play, with a focus on the Barbie doll. As detailed throughout this doctoral thesis, the research stems from an insight first developed during my master's studies in 2018. It evolved into this doctoral investigation in response to the need to examine not only representations of female empowerment in the Barbie doll but, beyond that, within the broader context of play-based activity. This focus was particularly influenced by my visit to the Fisher-Price laboratory in Buffalo, USA, during the 9th World Conference of the International Toy Research Association (ITRA), where my master's research was honored with the 2023 Junior Prize for Outstanding Toy Research.

As previously stated, the analysis presented in this chapter is grounded in the main linguistic approaches:

(i) *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL), as proposed by Halliday (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), applied to understand transitivity processes in children's discourses during play and their subsequent reflections on this act.

(ii) the *Appraisal System* (Martin; White, 2005), used to examine children's lexical choices and evaluations.

(iii) *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), applied to explore how children construct metaphorical meanings related to empowerment during play with Barbie dolls and their subsequent reflections on this experience.

I believe that analyzing children's discourse through these three linguistic approaches provides a stronger foundation for understanding how children construct meaning, while also enabling for critical reflection on my own interpretations. These interpretations are inherently subjective, as this is a qualitative, interpretivist study, open to multiple subjectivities, yet grounded in established linguistic frameworks. As Merriam (2009, apud Rolim, 2020) explains, qualitative research is concerned with "understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 47).

Thus, the linguistic analysis presented here is supported by theoretical contributions from multimodal research (Kress; van Leeuwen, 2006), social semiotics (Hodge; Kress, 1988), systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014; Fuzer; Cabral, 2014), and cognitive linguistics (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999; Duffy; Feist, 2023). In addition, I draw on Bateson's (1972) systemic view of communication and the ecology of mind, as well as Johnson's (2017) *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason*, which together provide a broader framework for understanding meaning-making as embedded within cultural and relational systems. This study also dialogues with key perspectives in childhood studies (Benjamin, 2009; Ariès, 1981, 1986; Vygotsky, 1998; Nicolopoulou, 1993; Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002; Peers, 2004; Almeida, 2006; Brougère, 2010; Heljakka, 2013; Rolim, 2020; Sarinho Júnior, 2023; Prochner, 2024) and gender studies (Duby, 1993; Caballero, 1999; Perrot, 2005; Barata, 2016), particularly concerning the role of the Barbie doll as a cultural artifact in play.

In addition, throughout the analysis, I engage in dialogue with the contributions of influential feminist thinkers from diverse traditions. These include early feminist writers and philosophers such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan (1963), and Kate Millett (1970); critical race and intersectional theorists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and bell hooks (1982, 1986, 1990); and decolonial feminists such as María Lugones (2008, 2010, 2020) and Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso (2017, 2021). I also draw on the contributions of Brazilian feminists, including Nísia Floresta ([1832] 2009), Lélia Gonzalez (1982), and Beatriz Nascimento (2006). Finally, I integrate my own theoretical reflections (Rolim, 2020) in order to deepen the understanding of children's discourses surrounding contemporary Barbie dolls in play. This approach aims not only to examine the semiotic choices embedded in the design of Barbie dolls as cultural artifacts, but also to illuminate how children's social and cognitive constructions are shaped through their interactions with these dolls.

That said, this chapter is organized into three subsections: 6.1 *analysis of Group 1*: children playing with Barbie Career dolls; 6.2 *analysis of Group 2*: children playing with Barbie Fashionist dolls featuring some form of physical comorbidity; and 6.3 *focus group*: children's reflections on the play-based activity. It is important to emphasize however, that, given the scope of the corpus, I chose to concentrate on those segments that most clearly highlighted the themes emerging from the children's discourses.

By focusing on these thematically salient excerpts, I sought to ensure analytical coherence with both the general and specific objectives of this thesis. The *general objective*, to understand how children construct social and cognitive meanings through their interactions

with the dolls, required such a selective approach, since these instances most vividly reveal how *linguistic, evaluative, metaphorical* and *metonymic* resources are mobilized. At the same time, this selection aligns with the *specific objectives*, as it allows: (i) a detailed analysis of lexicogrammatical choices within the Transitivity system; (ii) the mapping of evaluative patterns through the Appraisal framework; (iii) the identification of conceptual metaphors and metonymies structuring children's discourses; and (iv) the connection of these findings with feminist theories of empowerment.

In this sense, I argue that prioritizing the most significant segments does not imply disregarding the broader corpus. Rather, it constitutes an analytical strategy aimed at highlighting those interactions in which meaning-making processes are most explicitly negotiated, thereby addressing the thesis's central aims. Thus, I analyze three segments from each corpus, totaling nine segments overall.

Additionally, it is necessary to acknowledge that this analysis is grounded in a perspective of empowerment and ascension, and that alternative readings of the children's conversations could emerge if the analysis were informed by different theoretical assumptions, such as a conception of power primarily understood as oppression rather than as relational or ascensional. However, pursuing such interpretations would require a redefinition of the research questions and analytical focus and therefore falls outside the scope of the present study. Accordingly, the findings presented in the following paragraphs are coherent and trustworthy within the theoretical and methodological framework adopted and should be interpreted in light of these epistemological commitments. As with all qualitative research, this delimitation constitutes a limitation rather than a flaw, as it reflects the necessary boundaries that ensure analytical rigor and theoretical consistency.

Having clarified these methodological and theoretical choices, I now turn to the analysis of the nine selected segments, which articulate different thematic axes:

- Segment 1 – Preferences and identity
- Segment 2 – Physical difference and stigma/inclusion
- Segment 3 – Race, color, and belonging
- Segment 4 – Aesthetic norms and body judgment
- Segment 5 – Limitation, care, and solidarity
- Segment 6 – Hair, time, and competition
- Segment 7 – Reflexivity and aesthetic evaluation
- Segment 8 – Comparison and unequal access
- Segment 9 – Positive re-signification of baldness.

Subsequently, the following subsection presents the analysis of *Group 1*, focusing on children's interaction with *Barbie Career dolls*. This part of the corpus is particularly relevant, as it reveals how professional roles represented by the Dolls, such as *doctor*, *ballerina*, *soccer player*, and *boxer*, are recontextualized by the children during play.

6.1. Analysis of Group 1: children playing with Barbie Career dolls

In this subsection, the discourses of children playing with *Barbie Career dolls* are analyzed, as previously explained, through the theoretical framework of the three proposed linguistic approaches. Given the numerous analytical possibilities, I chose to focus here on how, through play-based activity, the girls engaged with Barbies representing *different professions* and *diverse body types*, moving beyond the traditional depiction of *tall, white, slim, blonde* women who merely posed, toward representations of professions that involve action and even the potential to *save lives* within the context of play.

To exemplify this shift in representation, Table 22 presents the Barbie dolls selected for the play-based activity. The ballerina and boxer dolls, in particular, display semiotic resources through bodily gestures, such as *bends* and *articulations in the arms, legs, feet, and hands*, that suggest *movement*. The boxer doll, moreover, includes accessories such as *boxing shorts, boots, and gloves*, evoking a high-impact sport often associated with aggression and struggle, attributes frequently ascribed to boys. Likewise, the soccer player doll is accompanied by a *uniform, ball, and cleats*. These features resonate with the concern raised by Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), who emphasized the importance of dolls designed for girls also embodying action and dynamism, that is, kinesthetic features (Almeida, 2006).

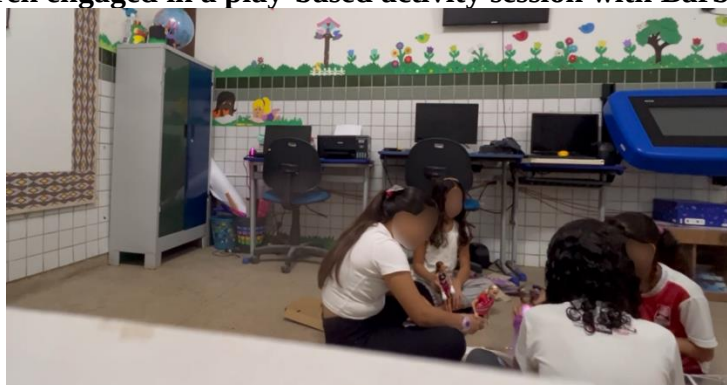
In contrast to these kinesthetic representations, the doctor doll conveys meaning primarily through visual and symbolic resources. While she also exhibits gestural elements, her significance is conveyed mainly through the representation of her skin tone, depicting a Black woman in the medical profession, and through professional accessories such as a lab coat and stethoscope. This characteristic is particularly relevant given the ongoing underrepresentation of Black female doctors in Brazil, the country where this research was conducted, a reality frequently documented in media reports and surveys (Soares *et al.*, 2020).

Having explained these details, before turning to the analysis of the children's discourses, it is important to clarify the labels employed to identify their utterances across the analyzed segments, namely: C1 (Child 1), C2 (Child 2), C3 (Child 3), and C4 (Child 4), in the order in which they appear. These codes were introduced to make it possible to follow the

interaction systematically while preserving the participants' anonymity. Furthermore, I opted to include further markers to capture the speech of children from Group 2 who were playing nearby but were not directly involved in the activity under analysis. In such cases, the label SOG (Student from Other Group) was adopted, allowing these contributions to be distinguished from those of the main participants and ensuring that all relevant voices were registered without compromising ethical standards.

Finally, the image below illustrates the children in this group as they engaged in the play-based activity, each interacting with one of the four dolls. The photograph, which I intentionally blurred to safeguard their privacy, serves as a record of the session, highlighting both the collective nature of their interaction and the distribution of the dolls among the participant.

Figure 24: Children engaged in a play-based activity session with Barbie Career Dolls



Source: photograph by the author (2025)

Before beginning the analysis of *Segment 1*, however, I find it important to clarify the transcription conventions adopted in this study. The dialogues were transcribed using notational procedures employed by Rolim (2020), who in turn drew on Medrado's (2006) framework, itself based on the contributions of Dionísio (2011). These conventions were used to register audio irregularities in the recordings, such as *echo*, *interruptions*, and *background noise* inherent to the school environment where the play sessions took place. It should be noted that this notational system was applied consistently not only to the video corresponding to this group, but also to the other two recordings that form part of the corpus to be analyzed in the post-qualification stage. For reference, the complete table of notations can be found in Appendix B.

With that established, the analysis of this specific group begins with the girls' initial dialogues³³ as they pick up³⁴ their Barbie dolls.

Segment 1 – Play-based activity (Group 1)

Table 22: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 1

Segment 1				
Brazilian Portuguese:				
C2: Essa é MUITO LINDA, sério! C2: Essa combina muito comigo ((enquanto posiciona a boneca jogadora de futebol ao lado do seu rosto)) C2: Eu só... eu só gosto de futebol.				
English:				
C2: This one is VERY BEAUTIFUL, seriously! C2: This one really matches me ((while positioning the soccer player doll next to her face)) C2: I only... I only like soccer.				
Transitivity System				
Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
C2: <i>Essa é MUITO LINDA, sério!</i> C2: <i>This one is VERY BEAUTIFUL, seriously!</i>	Relational (Attributive)	<i>is</i>	Carrier: <i>This one</i> Attribute: <i>very beautiful</i>	--
C2: <i>“Essa combina muito comigo”</i> C2: <i>“This one really matches me”</i>	Relational (Attributive)	<i>matches</i>	Carrier: <i>This one</i> Attribute: <i>me</i>	--
C2: <i>“Eu só gosto de futebol”</i> C2: <i>“I only like soccer”</i>	Mental (Affective)	<i>like</i>	Sensor: <i>I</i> Phenomenon: <i>soccer</i>	--
Appraisal System				
Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	
C2: <i>Essa é MUITO LINDA, sério!</i> C2: <i>This one is VERY BEAUTIFUL, seriously!</i>	Happiness+ (strong positive emotion)	--	Reaction+ (aesthetic admiration)	
C2: <i>“Essa combina muito comigo”</i> C2: <i>“This one really matches me”</i>	Satisfaction+ (self-identification, pleasure)	Normality+ (fit/appropriateness)	Valuation+ (positive valuation, personal match)	
C2: <i>“Eu só gosto de futebol”</i> C2: <i>“I only like soccer”</i>	Satisfaction+ (asserting preference)	Tenacity+ (determination in interests)	Valuation+ (valuation of activity/sport)	

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

³³ The dialogues presented here were translated into English, as the corpus originates from a research study conducted in Brazil, where the original language is Portuguese. However, it is important to note that, since the children belong to a *quilombola* community, some words could not be fully translated. In such cases, I provide explanations of the specific terms and their meanings.

³⁴ The dolls were placed on the floor, with the packages facing down, and the children were told to grab one as a surprise, without picking it themselves.

By observing the utterances in Segment 1, I notice that the analysis, through the lens of the Transitivity and Appraisal systems, reveals how C2 perceives the Barbie doll, now in her possession and actively engaged in play, through an *attributive relational process*. In the first clause, she identifies the doll as “*very beautiful*”, attributing to it a *quality of physical beauty*.

This utterance, however cannot be regarded as neutral. I can observe that it carries an *affective evaluative* marker of *happiness*, signaling, in this way, delight and enthusiasm in an ecstatic tone (“*VERY BEAUTIFUL*” / “*MUITO LINDA*”). Beyond the affective dimension, I note that the statement also falls within the *appreciation* category of the Appraisal framework, conveying a *positive aesthetic evaluation of reaction*, that is, a perception of beauty that reflects the child’s *emotional* and *sensory* response when looking at the the doll.

This spontaneous exclamation therefore leads me to an initial question: what is it about this particular Barbie that triggers such an effusive response? Immediately afterward, I see in the video that the doll so passionately admired by C2 is the soccer player Barbie, a figure that, in itself, embodies both athleticism and femininity.

It is worth noting that this specific doll features semiotic and kinesthetic resources in its body, particularly in its joints and articulations, that enable it to represent the action of playing soccer. These design features materialize the potential for movement, allowing the action of playing soccer to be visually and physically enacted. I believe that this feature can be understood as an innovative development in the Barbie line, especially when compared to earlier representations. Previous studies, such as those by Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), and more recently, Rolim (2020), have criticized the lack of action in Barbie dolls. However, Rolim (ibid.) also notes that such changes were already occurring gradually at that time.

In this particular analysis, it can be observed that the soccer player Barbie doll was released in 2019, symbolically representing the female public in the context of the FIFA Women’s World Cup, as indicated by the doll’s uniform, which reflects the United States team. This representation marks a significant advancement when we consider the growing presence and recognition of women in professions historically dominated, and often exclusively celebrated, by male audiences. Women’s soccer has gained increasing prominence in recent years, driven by numerous female-led initiatives grounded in ideals of sorority and solidarity, particularly in Brazil, where this research was conducted. Internationally recognized as “*the country of football*”, the nation’s identity is deeply rooted in its enduring passion for the sport, I would say both *culturally* and *historically*, since it holds the record for the most World Cup titles, with the men’s national team having secured the championship five times. Within this

context, as a global reference in soccer, Brazil has also seen the rise of women researchers dedicated to highlighting the need for greater representation of women in the sport, not only on the field but also among its supporters.

Building on this knowledge and socio-cultural background and turning to Segment 1, focusing on the reaction of C2, as the sequence unfolds, I observe that the child once again expresses identification, this time through a *material process* “*matches*” (“*combina*”) that indicates a perceptible action of alignment or combination. This can also be inferred from the utterance itself, as the linguistic choice made by the child reflects: (i) an *affective* marker of *Satisfaction*, that is, emotional alignment and identification; (ii) a *Judgment* marker of *Normality*, suggesting familiarity or similarity with the doll; and (iii) an *Appreciation* marker of *Valuation*, that is, the attribution of symbolic value, suggesting that the doll reflects the child’s *identity*.

All these characteristics suggest, however, a *relational* meaning, yet it raises a question: is the identification based primarily on aesthetic similarity (“*the body looks like hers*”) or on symbolic resonance?. This ambiguity, however, is immediately clarified by the child’s statement: “*I only like soccer*”. Here, it can be inferred that the child expresses an *affective mental process*, revealing a strong preference for the sport. This utterance activates an *affective* marker of *Satisfaction*, indicating a strong personal preference and emotional investment toward the referenced sport. It also activates a *Judgment* marker of *Tenacity*, as the child’s discourse conveys dedication and conviction through the expression “*only... only like*” (“*só... só gosto*”) this sport; and an *Appreciation* marker of *Valuation*, that is, a positive evaluation of soccer as meaningful. This moment is crucial for understanding the construction of the child’s social and affective identity, both in relation to the toy and to the meaning that this specific sport represents.

From my analytical standpoint, I understand that the child does not identify with the doll’s physical form itself, but rather with what the doll represents: her own personal interest in the sport. What stands out most at this point is the idea that Barbie, traditionally framed³⁵ by beauty standards, can also be a soccer player. Consequently, this broadens the scope of symbolic interpretation, suggesting that, for the child, being a girl and enjoying soccer are not contradictory. The child learns here that soccer is not restricted to boys; it is both acceptable and *empowering* to be a girl who is passionate about this sport.

³⁵ This point will be further elucidated upon reaching the cognitive analysis.

In this first segment, it can be seen through C2's discourse that her reaction to playing with a soccer-playing Barbie doll breaks longstanding ideological constructs about gender roles. Despite the advances of the 21st century, marked by significant social transformations concerning the role of women, the ongoing efforts of the feminist movement to dismantle stereotypes and growing academic inquiry into toys and the philosophy of play as it could be seen throughout this thesis, her reaction suggests that the world of soccer was still perceived as predominantly male. However, it was through the experience of playing with Barbie that she came to recognize the socially constructed and limiting nature of these meanings. At that moment, it may be said that a paradigm shift occurred in her understanding.

It can be observed that the early struggles of feminism, particularly during its second wave, which focused on issues related to bodily autonomy, are, in some way, reflected in C2's discourse. This connection lies in the idea that being autonomous over one's body also entails the freedom to occupy various professional roles, including that of a soccer player. In this case, the Barbie doll symbolically embodies this feminist achievement. Once frequently reduced to *an object of contemplation, sexual desire, and servitude to men* (Beauvoir, 1949; Friedan, 1963; Millett, 1970), Barbie now represents a space of *belonging, freedom, and empowerment* to women (children), a transformation that is visually and discursively enacted in C2's interaction with the doll.

Based on this analysis, and to further explore how C2 conceptualizes and interprets the world through her discourse during play with this Barbie doll, I now offer an analysis of the same segment grounded in *Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, drawing on insights from cognitive linguistics (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). It is important to highlight that the aim here is to map the metaphors employed in this segment in order to gain a deeper understanding of the thought processes underlying C2's discourse, while also considering how these metaphors³⁶, together with metonymic expressions, contribute to the construction of meanings about her perceptions of women and their *empowerment*. This approach not only enriches social analysis but also incorporates a cognitive perspective, since, according to Cognitive Linguistics, language cannot be separated from *mental processes, bodily experience, and culture* (Gibbs, 2008). This integrative framework strengthens the coherence and depth of the research by addressing all these dimensions within the context of play-based activity with Barbie dolls.

³⁶ The same analytical approach is applied across all segments.

Thus, regarding what was uttered in Segment 1, an analysis of C2's discourse through the lens of *cross-domain mapping* in her conceptual system allowed me to infer the following metaphors:

Table 23: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 1 – Group 1

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
“Essa é MUITO LINDA” “This one is VERY BEAUTIFUL!”	BELEZA É VALOR BEAUTY IS VALUE
“Essa combina muito comigo” “This one really matches me”	O EU É OBJETO SELF IS OBJECT O EU É ESTENDIDO POR MEIO DO BRINQUEDO THE SELF IS EXTENDED THROUGH THE TOY
“Eu só gosto de futebol” “I only like soccer”	AUTODEFINIÇÃO É PREFERÊNCIA SELF-DEFINITION IS PREFERENCE

Source: research data

With regard to the first linguistic expression “*This one is VERY BEAUTIFUL!*” (“*Essa é MUITO LINDA!*”), I consider that the conceptual metaphor that emerges is BEAUTY IS VALUE (*BELEZA É VALOR*). Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), I understand that BEAUTY, in this specific case, functions as the *target domain*, since it represents an abstract and affectively charged category that cannot be directly grasped in concrete terms. To make sense of this abstraction, when C2 utters “*She is very beautiful*” (“*Ela é muito linda*”), her cognition relies on the more *tangible* and *culturally* embedded domain of VALUE, which serves as the *source domain*. VALUE, in turn, is more easily understood through everyday social practices, such as *evaluation*, *recognition*, *prestige*, and *desirability*, making it an appropriate basis for structuring the notion of beauty.

In other words, when C2 exclaims that the doll is “*very beautiful*”, she is not merely making an aesthetic observation. Rather, she is implicitly attributing worth to the doll, showing that in her cognitive and social framework, *beauty is construed as a marker of value*. Also, her emotional emphasis (*VERY BEAUTIFUL!*) suggests that beauty carries significant social and personal meaning for her.

Table 24 below illustrates the conceptual metaphors identified in this segment in terms of their corresponding *source* and *target domains*:

Table 24: Source Domain and Target Domain – Segment 1 – Group 1

Source Domain	Target Domain
VALUE	BEAUTY
OBJECT	SELF
TOY	SELF
PREFERENCES	SELF-DEFINITION

Source: research data

Regarding the broader context of *empowerment*, this utterance implies that, for C2, beauty may symbolize *social power* or *status*, functioning as a form of *recognition* or *symbolic capital* within her sociocultural model. However, some critical questions may arise once again: What kind of beauty is the child referring to? Is it bodily or aesthetic beauty? These questions, however, can be addressed through the subsequent discourse, which reveals that this is not really the case. Rather, the beauty perceived by the child is attributed to the doll's identity as a football player, as previously explained. This *reframing* suggests that C2's evaluation of beauty transcends mere appearance and is linked to symbolic attributes, such as athletic ability or empowerment through professional identity.

In this perspective, I consider that Bateson's (1972) notion of *frames* proves crucial, since it highlights how play establishes a communicative boundary within which meanings can be negotiated. The children's interaction with Barbie operates precisely through this dynamic: by situating their discourse inside a ludic frame, they are able to *reframe* dominant cultural narratives, such as those concerning *beauty*, *disability*, or *professional roles*, transforming them into alternative possibilities of identity and agency. At the same time, as argued by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) and further developed by Johnson (1987, 2017), such *reframings* are only possible because cognition is *embodied*, that is, meaning is grounded in bodily, perceptual, and affective experience. The corporeal features of the dolls (hair, clothes, physical conditions, professions) become semiotic resources through which children externalize lived experiences and reconfigure social categories. Thus, *frames* and *embodiment* act interdependently – while *frames* delimit and enable interpretive shifts, *embodiment* provides the experiential grounding that renders both metaphorical mappings and reframings cognitively and affectively meaningful, as can be seen in C2's utterance.

Following this line of reasoning, the next linguistic expression “*This one really matches me*” (“*Essa combina muito comigo*”) suggests that the child activates conceptual metaphors such as SELF IS OBJECT (*O EU É OBJETO*) and THE SELF IS EXTENDED THROUGH THE TOY (*O EU É ESTENDIDO POR MEIO DO BRINQUEDO*). In the first metaphor, SELF IS OBJECT, *SELF* functions as the *target domain*, the most abstract concept, while *OBJECT*, referring to the Barbie doll, serves as the *source domain*. In this context, it can be inferred that C2 identifies herself with the doll; she sees a reflection of herself in the toy. The self becomes an extension of the toy, reinforcing a *projection* of identity. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), *projection*, also referred to as “mapping”, is the cognitive mechanism by which structures from the *source domain* are systematically mapped onto the *target domain*. In this case, in this utterance, features associated

with the Barbie doll (OBJECT) are projected onto the child's sense of self (SELF), enabling the construction of identity through metaphorical correspondence (Lakoff, 1993).

The metaphor THE SELF IS EXTENDED THROUGH THE TOY highlights the role of the doll not simply as a plaything, but as a medium through which C2 constructs and projects aspects of her identity. In this sense, the doll, once again, becomes part of a *reframing process* (Bateson, 1972), shifting from an object of entertainment to a symbolic resource for self-representation and also projection of “*possible selves*”.

At this point, I perceive that such a shift emphasizes the role of *embodiment* as well. When C2 identifies with the soccer player Barbie, I interpret this as her mobilizing *embodied schemas* associated with *sport*, *play*, and *gender performance*. Through this identification, the act of play itself is transformed into a space for experimenting with identity, a space where, in my point of view, these “alternative selves” can be *rehearsed*, *negotiated*, and *lived*. Furthermore, I can clearly see that these metaphors resonate with Caillois's (1961) understanding of play, who, as cited by Heljakka (2013), reminds us that play is fundamentally anchored in the realm of *make-believe*, an idea that reinforces the notion of play as a *privileged space for imaginative identification and symbolic experimentation*.

Finally, Segment 1 also reveals the activation of another metaphor: SELF-DEFINITION IS PREFERENCE (AUTODEFINIÇÃO É PREFERÊNCIA). This emerges in the linguistic expression “*I only like soccer*” (“*Eu só gosto de futebol*”), where SELF-DEFINITION operates as the *target domain*, an abstract construct, while PREFERENCE provides the *source domain*, anchoring identity in expressed choices. In this context, C2's preference is not simply a matter of taste but a statement of selfhood. The emotional emphasis in the preceding utterance (“*This one is VERY BEAUTIFUL!*”) suggests the idea that her preference for soccer functions as a declaration of who she is, rather than merely what she enjoys. Since preferences are closely tied to affective and experiential domains, it can be argued that repeated and consistent choices such as this one contribute to shaping the child's self-concept. In this way, C2's discourse shows how preference operates as a marker of *personal values* and identification with a certain social *identity*, that of a *soccer player*.

I find it important to emphasize that the metaphor SELF-DEFINITION IS PREFERENCE also activates what Lakoff and Johnson (1999) call the *Invariance Principle*. In other words, the metaphor does not distort the original concept of identity, it preserves its core structure, for example, *uniqueness*, *consistency*, and *internal coherence*. In my interpretation, this means that when the child says “*This one really matches me*”, she is not merely expressing a passing taste but a statement that resonates with how she *perceives herself*. As Duffy and Feist (2023) note,

not every emotional preference defines identity, but those expressed with *emphasis* and *exclusivity*, as in this case, can.

Therefore, to conclude the analysis of Segment 1, I understand C2's utterances, especially, as a meaningful space where *play*, *metaphor*, and *feminist theory* intersect. Her statement operates within what Bateson (1972) described as the *frame of play*, that paradoxical zone where actions are simultaneously *real*, in their *performative* and *affective* force, and *unreal*, in their immediate consequences. From this perspective, identity can be negotiated and rehearsed. Thus, C2's choice of the soccer player doll, for instance, shows how she not only evaluates beauty but also *reframes it through athletic identity*, expanding what counts as admirable or "beautiful".

In this context, these aspects show that the doll functions as both *representation* and *symbolic extension of the self*, allowing the child to experiment with future roles and self-definitions in a safe, imaginative context. Thus, for this reason, I understand that these dynamics also resonate with what Charlier and Caubergs (2007) define as *Power Within*, since by affirming her passion for soccer and rejecting alternative play identities, C2 exercises autonomy and constructs her identity through choice, an essential marker of empowerment in childhood discourse as the authors have demonstrated. See Table 6.

At the same time, I interpret C2's discourse as resonating with feminist and decolonial perspectives. As discussed in Chapter 3, Curiel (2007, 2013), Lugones (2010), and Espinosa Miñoso (2017, 2021) remind us that feminism must confront its own colonial and Eurocentric frameworks in order to foreground the lived experiences and epistemic authority of subaltern women. From this standpoint, the authors argue that speaking of empowerment necessarily involves questioning *who* is allowed to speak, *from where*, and *under which historical conditions*.

Building on these considerations, when I return to C2's discourse, I can conclude that the metaphor BEAUTY IS VALUE points to how *aesthetic judgment* can be reframed as *symbolic capital*; THE SELF IS EXTENDED THROUGH THE TOY demonstrates how play enables the projection of identity and the exploration of alternative subjectivities; and SELF-DEFINITION IS PREFERENCE illustrates how consistent choices contribute to the formation of self-concept.

In synthesis, these metaphors illustrate how play with Barbie dolls becomes a space where empowerment is both *linguistically* and *cognitively negotiated*, a space of *power to* act and imagine new roles, *power within* to affirm self-worth, *power with* through shared frames of play, and even a re-signification of *power over* as the child resists hegemonic ideals of beauty. In this sense, C2's engagement with the soccer player Barbie goes beyond individual taste; it

participates in broader processes of reframing cultural narratives about *women*, *beauty*, and *professional aspiration*, situating children's play as a meaningful arena for empowerment and feminist critique.

Following the analysis of Segment 1 and the discussion of its main considerations, I now turn to Segment 2.

Segment 2 – Play-based activity (group 1)

Table 25: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 2

Segment 2
Brazilian Portuguese: C4: olha, gente, a de X! ((apontando)) C2: é carequinha! C1: [Risos] SOG: é CEGA! É CEGA! C3: é que cada uma é de cada tipo, gente! C2: é! C2: abre o teu, mulher. C4: ah, ela botando a mão na de rodar... ((em referência a boneca cadeirante do outro grupo)) C4: agora ela tá até triste ((em referência com a criança que recebeu a boneca careca)) C1: coitadinha C3: Nossa, gente! Só porque a boneca é careca? C2: Eu hein! C1: Não. Tô dizendo é que ela tá triste. C3: Não. Vocês tão dizendo que ela não gostou da boneca. C1: depois eu amei. C3: Toda boneca aqui é bonita. C3: aí a boneca não pode ser... C4: coitada da boneca.
English: C4: LOOK, guys, X's one! ((pointing)) C2: She's a little bald one! C1: [laughs] SOG: She's BLIND! She's BLIND! C3: It's just that each one is a different type, guys! C2: Yeah! C2: Open yours, girl. C4: Oh, she's putting her hand on the one with the wheels... ((referring to the wheelchair doll from the other group)) C4: Now she's even sad ((referring to the child who got the bald doll)) C1: Poor thing. C3: Wow, guys! Just because the doll is bald? C2: Seriously! C1: No. I'm saying she looks sad. C3: No. You're saying she didn't like the doll. C1: Well, I loved it. C3: Every doll here is beautiful. C3: So, the doll can't be... C4: Poor doll.

Transitivity System				
Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
C4: OLHA, meninas, a de X! C4: LOOK, girls, X's doll!	Behavioral	<i>Olha / look</i>	Senser: implied "you"	--
C2: Ela é carequinha! C2: She's a little bald one!	Relational (Attributive)	<i>is é</i>	Carrier: she (the doll) Attribute: bald	--
C2: [risos] C1: [laughs]	Behavioral (implied)	--	--	--
SOG: É CEGA! É CEGA! SOG: She's BLIND! She's BLIND!	Relational (Attributive)	<i>is é</i>	Carrier: she (the doll) Attribute: blind	
C3: É que cada uma é de cada tipo, gente! C3: Each one is a different kind, girls!	Relational (Identifying)	<i>is é</i>	Token: each one Value: a different kind	
C2: É! C2: Yeah!	--	--	--	--
C2: Abre o teu, mulher. C2: Open yours, woman.	Material (Imperative)	<i>Abre open</i>	Actor: you Goal: yours (the packaging/doll)	
C4: ah, ela botando a mão na de rodar... C4: She's putting her hand on the spinning one...	Material	<i>botando putting</i>	Actor: she Goal: her hand	Location: on the spinning one (wheelchair doll)
C4: agora ela tá até triste C4: Now she's even sad	Relational (Attributive)	<i>is é</i>	Carrier: she (child with bald doll) Attribute: sad	
C1: Coitadinha. C1: Poor thing.	Relational (elliptical)	<i>is é (implied)</i>	Carrier: she Attribute: "poor" (evaluative, empathetic)	--
C3: Só porque a boneca é careca? C3: Just because the doll is bald?	Relational (Attributive)	<i>is é (implied)</i>	Carrier: the doll Attribute: bald	--
C2: Seriously! C2: Eu hein!	--	--	--	--
C1: Ela tá triste. C1: she looks sad.	Relational (Attributive)	<i>tá looks</i>	Carrier: she Attribute: sad	--
C3: Vocês tão dizendo que ela não gostou da boneca. C3: You're saying [that] she didn't like the doll.	Verbal + Mental	<i>dizendo / não gostou saying / didn't like</i>	Sayer: you Verbiage: she didn't like the doll Senser: she Phenomenon: the doll	--
C1: depois eu amei. C1: Well, I loved it.	Mental	<i>amei loved</i>	Senser: I Phenomenon: it (the doll)	--
C3: Toda boneca aqui é bonita. C3: Every doll here is beautiful.	Relational (Attributive)	<i>is é</i>	Carrier: every doll Attribute: beautiful	--
C3: aí a boneca não pode ser... C3: So, the doll can't be...	Relational (elliptical)	<i>is é</i>	Carrier: the doll Attribute: (implied physical trait?)	--

C4: <i>coitada da boneca.</i> C4: <i>poor doll.</i>	Relational (elliptical)	<i>is</i> <i>é (implied)</i>	Carrier: the doll Attribute: poor	--
Appraisal System				
Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	
C4: <i>LOOK, girls, X's doll!</i> C4: <i>OLHA, meninas, a de X!</i>	--	--	Reaction+ (attention/interest)	
C2: <i>She's a little bald one!</i> C2: <i>Ela é carequinha.!</i>	--	Normality- (if doll personified as lacking hair)	Reaction- (negative physical attribute)	
SOG: <i>She's BLIND!</i> <i>She's BLIND!</i> SOG: <i>É CEGA! É CEGA!</i>	Unhappiness- (shock/sadness)	Normality- (if personified as disability)	Reaction- (negative physical attribute)	
C3: <i>É que cada uma é de cada tipo, gente!</i> C3: <i>Each one is a different kind, girls!</i>	--	--	Valuation+ (positive diversity/variety)	
C4: <i>ah, ela botando a mão na de rodar...</i> C4: <i>She's putting her hand on the spinning one...</i>	--	--	Reaction+ (positive action/engagement)	
C4: <i>agora ela tá até triste</i> C4: <i>Now she's even sad</i>	Unhappiness- (perceived sadness)	--	--	
C1: <i>Coitadinha.</i> C1: <i>Poor thing.</i>	Unhappiness- (compassion, pity)	--	--	
C3: <i>Só porque a boneca é careca?</i> C3: <i>Just because the doll is bald?</i>	--	Propriety+ (challenging evaluation) unfair	Reaction- (contesting the negative reaction)	
C1: <i>Não. Tô dizendo é que ela tá triste.</i> C1: <i>No. I'm saying she looks sad.</i>	Unhappiness-	--	--	
C3: <i>Vocês tão dizendo que ela não gostou da boneca.</i> C3: <i>You're saying [that] she didn't like the doll.</i>	--	Veracity- (disputing truth)	--	
C1: <i>apois eu amei.</i> C1: <i>Well, I loved it.</i>	Happiness+ (positive affection)	--	--	
C3: <i>Toda boneca aqui é bonita.</i> C3: <i>Every doll here is beautiful.</i>	--	--	Valuation+ (positive aesthetic valuation)	
C3: <i>ai a boneca não pode ser...</i> C3: <i>So, the doll can't be...</i>	--	Capacity- (implying limitation)	Valuation (existence evaluation)	
C4: <i>coitada da boneca.</i> C4: <i>poor doll.</i>	Unhappiness- (compassion)	--	--	

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

In Segment 2, the children's dialogue, when first examined through the lens of the *Transitivity System*, reveals a predominance of *relational* processes in relation to the dolls with which they are playing. This analysis provides evidence that the children's discourse constructs meanings about the dolls that go beyond mere description, positioning play as a space where *social values* and *identities* are enacted. It is important to emphasize, therefore, that two cultural contexts intersect here: Brazilian girls from a *quilombola* community engaging with dolls designed in the United States, yet created with the purpose of encompassing diverse representations of women. Therefore, in this segment, three types of Barbie dolls are particularly highlighted: the *bald* doll, the *blind* doll, and the doll in a *wheelchair*.

With regard to the prevalence of *relational attributive* processes ("*she's a bald one*"; "*she's blind*"; "*she looks sad*"; "*every doll is beautiful*") in the discourse of C1, C2, and C3, the analysis demonstrates that the dolls are primarily perceived through their *attributes*, which function as markers of difference and, at times, as triggers of exclusion or empathy. These attributes are further accentuated by the dolls' kinesthetic features, that is, their bodies embody physical traits that allow them to exist and move with such characteristics. This reinforces the idea that they represent real women: their bodies move, reveal human physical traits, and depart from the stereotypical image of the "perfect" woman. After all, what does it mean to be "perfect"? Does it mean not being human? Does it mean being a static doll (Caldas-Coulthard; van Leeuwen, 2002), devoid of any trace of humanity, perhaps like the first Barbie dolls? Devoid of what I might call features often perceived as "flaws", precisely because they diverge from what is socially understood as "perfection"?

The predominance of *relational attributive* processes reflects Halliday's notion of the *ideational* metafunction, in which relational clauses serve as a key resource for representing *experience* (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014). In this case, the dolls are not construed as *Actors* engaged in material action but rather as *Carriers* of qualities. The clause "*she looks sad*" also falls within this category, since *look* here does not denote the physical act of seeing but instead introduces an *attributive* relation equivalent to "*she seems*" / "*appears sad*". By foregrounding traits such as baldness, blindness, beauty, and sadness, I understand that the children not only *describe* the dolls but also *evaluate* them, transforming physical features into symbolic markers through which meanings of *identity* and *social value* are negotiated. That is why the categories of the *Appraisal System* (Martin; White, 2005) are necessary, as they allow us, researchers, to better understand the levels at which these children evaluate the dolls with which they are playing.

It is important to highlight once again that the children engaged in these discourses are students at a *quilombola* school in a community of João Pessoa, where the majority are Black. Bearing this in mind, the *relational processes* employed by the children serve a dual function: they operate descriptively, by assigning observable characteristics, and evaluatively, by positioning those characteristics within cultural frameworks of *normality*, *desirability*, and *difference*. This explains why such features can become triggers of empathy or exclusion, since the act of attributing an identity to the doll simultaneously enacts broader discourses about what is considered acceptable, valued, or marginal in social life. In parallel, the use of *relational identifying* processes (“*each one is a different kind*”) also suggests attempts to classify and categorize, which simultaneously reinforce *diversity* and highlight *difference*. In my reading, the children’s *relational processes* also revealed a high degree of surprise and perhaps estrangement toward the Barbies presented during play.

From the perspective of the *Appraisal System* (ibid, 2005), these evaluative stances are distributed across the three main subsystems: *Affect*, *Judgment*, and *Appreciation*. *Affect* is evident when children attribute emotions to the dolls (“*she looks sad*” / “*ela tá triste*” and “*coitadinha*” / “*poor thing*”), suggesting empathy and pity but also reinforcing alterity. *Judgment* appears when physical traits are foregrounded as markers of *identity* (“*She’s bald*” / “*Ela é careca*” and “*She’s blind*” / “*Ela é cega*”), highlighting perceived deviations from social norms and prompting negotiation about inclusion (“*Wow, guys! Just because the doll is bald?*” / “*Nossa, gente! Só porque a boneca é careca?*”). Finally, *Appreciation* emerges in explicit positive evaluations (“*well, I loved it*” / “*apois eu amei*” and *every doll here is beautiful*” / “*Toda boneca aqui é bonita*”), where difference is re-signified as *beauty* and *desirability*. Together, these evaluative moves illustrate how C1, C2, C3, C4 e SOG negotiate meanings of identity through play: they oscillate between *exclusion* and *inclusion*, *marginalization* and *empowerment*, thereby transforming physical attributes into symbolic markers of *social value*.

Nevertheless, moving further into the analysis, with regard to the use of *material processes* (“*open yours*”; “*she’s putting her hand on the spinning one*”), it is possible to see that these clauses contribute to situating the discourse within the physical and embodied context of play, where *gestures* and *actions* interact with *verbal language* to construct *meaning*. Such material enactments highlight that the children’s engagement with the dolls is not exclusively verbal but *multimodal*, as meanings are produced through the interplay of *speech*, *bodily movement*, and *manipulation* of objects. In parallel, *behavioral processes* ([*laughs*]) convey *affective* stances, indicating that *judgments* and *appreciations* are not neutral but emotionally charged.

In the specific case of C2's laughter in response to receiving the *bald* Barbie, the reaction can be interpreted as a form of *negative Judgment*. While laughter may initially appear as a mere affective response, in this context it functions *evaluatively*, signaling a perception of the doll's baldness as *unusual* and *less desirable*. Within the *Appraisal framework*, this reaction aligns with the subcategory of *non-normality*, as the absence of hair is marked as a deviation from what is expected or socially valorized. The negativity of this judgment becomes particularly evident when contrasted with C2's earlier enthusiastic evaluation of the soccer player Barbie as "VERY BEAUTIFUL". The juxtaposition highlights how different physical traits are not simply described but C2, but are subject to value-laden judgments, reflecting broader cultural discourses of beauty and normality. Thus, the laughter does not merely express surprise or amusement but also operates as a subtle act of *exclusion*, revealing how C2's discourse can reproduce dominant aesthetic norms even in playful contexts.

At the same time, however, such moments of exclusion also open possibilities for *re-signification* and *empowerment*. When other child, C3, contest or reframe³⁷ these negative judgments. For example, by asserting that *every doll here is beautiful*, she shifts the evaluative ground, challenging hegemonic ideals and expanding the scope of what is recognized as *valuable* or *acceptable*. This dynamic indicates that play is not a neutral activity but a discursive arena where cultural assumptions about bodies and identities are both reproduced and resisted. In this sense, the children's dialogue resonates with feminist debates on representation and *empowerment*, illustrating how early interactions with dolls as these can serve as a training ground for negotiating *diversity*, *inclusion*, and *belonging*.

Continuing with the processes analysis, it can be seen that although less frequent, *mental* processes ("I loved it" / "Eu ameï") reveal personal involvement, allowing children to articulate feelings of attachment or preference, while *verbal* processes ("you're saying she didn't like the doll" / "Vocês tão dizendo que ela não gostou da boneca") open up spaces of *negotiation*, *contestation*, and *peer alignment*. It is as if the children were engaged in a continuous negotiation, evaluating what counts as socially acceptable or unacceptable in relation to the female bodies represented by these Barbie dolls. These moments are critical, as they indicate that the discourse is not only descriptive but also dialogic, where meanings are co-constructed and challenged. When seen in combination, the configuration of processes suggests that while play in this specific case is anchored in *material* and *behavioral* actions, it is the *relational*

³⁷ I will return to this discussion when the analysis reaches the point of Cognitive Linguistics, drawing on Bateson (1972), who identifies *frames* (interpretive boundaries), *play*, and *fantasy* as fundamental dimensions of communication.

processes that dominate, shaping how children attribute value and meaning to *bodily features* and *identities*. In this way, it can be inferred that transitivity analysis demonstrates that children's discourse simultaneously reproduces and problematizes cultural perceptions of *normality*, *beauty*, and *diversity*, transforming the act of playing with dolls into a social practice of *evaluation*, *negotiation*, and *identity positioning*.

For this reason, I conclude from the analysis of these processes, which are part of the *ideational* metafunction, and the evaluative resources of the Appraisal System, that C3 assumes a pivotal role in reframing the discourse and countering the exclusionary evaluations voiced by her peers. When C2 and SOG highlight traits such as baldness and blindness in ways that risk positioning the dolls as undesirable, C3 intervenes by emphasizing *diversity* (“*each one is a different type*” / “*cada uma é de cada tipo*”) and by challenging *exclusion* (“*just because the doll is bald?*” / “*só porque a boneca é careca?*”). These utterances resist reducing the dolls to stigmatized attributes and instead promote an interpretive frame where difference is normalized rather than marginalized. Later, C3's evaluative move in asserting that “*every doll here is beautiful*” (“*toda boneca aqui é bonita*”) performs an explicit act of *empowerment*, transforming the interactional space from one of potential ridicule into one of *collective affirmation*. In systemic-functional terms, these *relational* processes shift the evaluative ground: rather than allowing attributes such as baldness or blindness to remain markers of *deficiency*, C3 re-signifies them as part of a *broader spectrum* of *beauty* and *value*. For me as a researcher, this was an emotional moment to witness, as it unfolded into a visible instance of children's growing awareness.

Thus, C3's discourse can be understood as an agent of *empowerment* and *inclusion*, interrupting negative judgments and expanding the children's evaluative repertoire. This intervention is not trivial; it demonstrates that, even in playful contexts, children actively negotiate cultural discourses of *normality*, *beauty*, and *diversity*, and that *empowerment* can emerge from peer-to-peer dialogue as an alternative to hegemonic norms. As Brougère (1998) makes clear, that play is a free and spontaneous practice where children are also learning and continually exchange social roles, interacting not only with peers and caregivers but also with the toys themselves.

Building on this analysis, I now turn to *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) to examine how children's *evaluations* and *negotiations* of difference are enacted also through the mapping of *conceptual metaphors* that shape their perception and construction of *experience*.

Thus, in Segment 2, the conceptual metaphors identified illustrate how children's discourse, even within a play-based activity, activates cognitive categories that attribute *physical* and *social* characteristics to the dolls' *bodies*. In this segment, it can be observed that metaphorical processes shape the ways in which the children *understand* and *experience* the world, allowing *concrete domains* (such as the body and disability) to be employed in the conceptualization of more *abstract domains* (such as identity, value, and inclusion).

The analysis of the utterances of C1, C2, C3, C4, and SOG reveals how evaluations, judgments, and discursive reformulations are organized through *cross-domain mappings* that reflect both individual perceptions and shared social values. The table below systematizes the main examples identified in the excerpt.

Table 26: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 2 – Group 1

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
“É carequinha!” / “É cega!” / “A de rodar” “She’s bald!” / “She’s blind!” / “The one with the wheels”	IDENTIDADE É ATRIBUTO FÍSICO IDENTITY IS PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTE
“Coitadinha” / “Ela tá até triste” “Poor thing” / “She even looks sad.”	DIFERENÇA FÍSICA É FALTA / PERDA PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE IS LACK / LOSS
“É que cada uma é de cada tipo” “It’s just that each one is a different type”	MULHERES SÃO BONECAS WOMEN ARE DOLLS ATORES SOCIAIS SÃO BRINQUEDOS SOCIAL ACTORS ARE TOYS
“Toda boneca aqui é bonita” “Every doll here is beautiful”	DIVERSIDADE É VALOR DIVERSITY IS VALUE INCLUSÃO É BELEZA INCLUSION IS BEAUTY
Risos + pena (C1, C4) vs. valorização (C3) Laughter + pity (C1, C4) vs. appreciation (C3)	NEGOCIAÇÃO SOCIAL É BRINCADEIRA SOCIAL NEGOTIATION IS PLAY

Source: research data

As is shown in Table 26, in Segment 2, the children's discourse reveals how *physical attributes* are mobilized as *identity* markers, also through the mapping of conceptual metaphors. Expressions such as “*she’s a bald one!*”, “*she’s blind!*”, and “*the one with wheels*” indicate that *physical difference* is used as a primary resource for *categorization*. In Portuguese³⁸, however, the phrase “she’s bald” was rendered in the diminutive form (*carequinha*), a linguistic choice that can both soften and mark difference. This evaluative nuance suggests that the children's discourse does not merely identify physical traits but also encodes *affective* stances toward

³⁸ In Portuguese, diminutives such as the suffix *-inha* often function beyond their literal meaning of “small.” They can convey affective nuances (endearment, tenderness), ironic tones, or even pejorative connotations, depending on the context (Silva, 2003; Almeida, 2012). Thus, the expression *carequinha* (literally “little bald one”) may signal affection or infantilization, but can also index derogatory undertones. The ambiguity of this diminutive form highlights the cultural and pragmatic complexity of Portuguese morphological resources.

them. For instance, the diminutive may function as a *softener*, conveying a tone of tenderness or affection, as if the child were expressing pity for the doll; as a form of *infantilization*, framing baldness as something “smaller” or “less serious”; or even as a subtle *ironic stance*, producing amusement when shared with peers. In this sense, *carequinha* illustrates how categorization operates not only at a cognitive level, through the conceptual metaphor IDENTITY IS PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTE (*IDENTIDADE É ATRIBUTO FÍSICO*), but also at an affective and relational level, reinforcing group belonging and shared evaluation, as confirmed by the systemic functional analysis of evaluative meanings.

Building on this, Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980, 1999) notion of *projection* sheds further light on the phenomenon. According to the authors, *projection* occurs when elements of a *source* domain are selectively transferred to a *target* domain, shaping how abstract concepts are understood. Thus, the use of the diminutive, in this case, reinforces what has been discussed so far: embodied and socially situated experiences permeate children’s discourse, with the dolls’ bodies functioning simultaneously as cognitive anchors and as sites for affective negotiations of identity and social value.

Expanding further, and from the perspective of *embodied cognition* as discussed in *The Body in the Mind* (Johnson, 1987) and *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason* (Johnson, 2017), this process underscores how children’s conceptualizations are grounded in bodily experience: attributes such as baldness, blindness, or limited mobility are not abstract categories but rather experiential realities that children *perceive, evaluate, and reframe* through play. The recurrence of such traits in their discourse demonstrates that the body functions at once as a cognitive foundation and as a cultural resource, providing the experiential grounding for metaphorical thought while also serving as a site where meanings of normality and difference are negotiated. In this way, *projection* and *embodiment* converge, reflecting a broader social pattern in which the body operates as an identity marker that condenses cultural meanings of normality and deviation.

Within this same framework, the children’s evaluations “*poor thing*” and “*she looks sad*” demonstrate how physical difference can be conceptualized in terms of *lack* or *loss*. Through the mapping PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE IS LACK (*DIFERENÇA FÍSICA É FALTA*), the *source domain* (absence of hair, vision, or mobility) is projected onto the *target domain* (the doll’s social value), framing it as deficit. This projection extends metaphorically to women with non-normative bodies, who are thus assigned a status of fragility. In my point of view, it is deeply concerning that these metaphorical processes demonstrate how children internalize

exclusionary social representations, perpetuating, in this case, the association between disability and incompleteness.

At the same time, however, I recognize that play, as discussed in the theoretical chapter of this thesis (Section 4.4.1.1), is what Bateson (1972) describes as a *paradoxical frame*. As I previously explained, in relation to the paradox of play, Bateson argues that play simultaneously affirms and suspends reality, enabling children not only to reproduce dominant discourses but also to reconfigure them. When I look at this segment, I also notice *evaluative meanings*, such as the statement “*every doll here is beautiful*”. In this case, I interpret this utterance as an example of how the child’s *embodied experiences* can be redirected toward alternative mappings that assign *value* and *dignity* to *diversity*.

In my view, these moments also connect to Charlier and Caubergs’ (2007) levels of *empowerment*. More specifically, I see a clear intersection with *power within*, as these examples show how children *reframe embodied differences* as sources of *value* and *legitimacy*. However, I find it important to highlight that this example also illustrates the *tension* between *reproduction* and *transformation*, while it reflects socially ingrained associations between *bodily difference* and *identity*. While it simultaneously opens a space for reimagining identity and social value through embodied and playful interaction.

Moreover, in relation to C3’s utterance (“*each one is of a different type*”), I observe that she establishes a metaphorical equivalence in which the dolls are conceived as representations of *real women*. After all, women, despite sharing the same gender, are different and have *different bodies*, just like Barbie, as the child perceptively noted. Through the mappings *WOMEN ARE DOLLS* (MULHERES SÃO BONECAS) and *SOCIAL ACTORS ARE TOYS* (ATORES SOCIAIS SÃO BRINQUEDOS), which emerge in C3’s discourse, the doll ceases to be merely a playful artifact and becomes a symbolic instance of social representation. In this sense, I understand *Barbie as a discursive mediator of gender categories*, offering children a space to *reflect on bodily diversity* and the *social roles attributed to women*. Once again, this is an equivalence structured through *projection*.

From my perspective, this process acquires even broader significance when C3 intervenes again, affirming that “*every doll here is beautiful*”. This evaluation reconfigures the previously exclusionary logic, *re-signifying difference as a positive value*. In this sense, the following axiological (social-value) metaphorical mappings, although not embodied, namely *DIVERSITY IS VALUE* (DIVERSIDADE É VALOR) and *INCLUSION IS BEAUTY* (INCLUSÃO É BELEZA), show how the hegemony of the standardized female body is gradually disrupted, shifting the notion of beauty toward *an inclusive framework* in which all representations *possess aesthetic and social*

dignity. In Johnson's (2017) terms, I perceive that such metaphorical reasoning is grounded in *embodied experience*, which, in fact, is a fundamental *aspect of play with Barbies*, since children continuously conceptualize categories such as *beauty* and *value* through *bodily schemas* (vision, form, balance) that they reframe during play. This discursive repositioning, therefore, indicates instances in which children both challenge the limits of hegemonic norms and reaffirm the legitimacy of diversity.

Finally, I notice that the oscillation between *laughter*, *pity*, and *appreciation* observed throughout the interaction illustrates how play functions as a discursive arena for negotiating meaning. The mapping *SOCIAL NEGOTIATION IS PLAY* (*NEGOCIAÇÃO SOCIAL É BRINCADEIRA*) shows that playful activity goes beyond entertainment, becoming *a symbolic space for negotiating categories such as normality, beauty, and difference*.

In this context, it is possible to observe that the children not only reproduce social values but also *reconfigure them*, transforming *embodied experiences of difference* into *opportunities for dialogue and reflection*. This resonates with *power with* and *power within* (Charlier; Caubergs, 2007), since play with Barbie, as observed here, promotes *collaborative meaning-making* and *nurtures the recognition of diversity as both a collective and individual resource*.

As I have shown so far, the children's discourse, as it emerges in the context of play, *reflects* and *redefines* broader cultural values, functioning as a *social practice of embodied meaning-making*. Therefore, to conclude this analysis, I turn to the *source* and *target domains* summarized in the following table.

Table 27: Source Domain and Target Domain – Segment 2 – Group 1

Source Domain	Target Domain
PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	IDENTITY
LACK / LOSS	PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE
DOLLS	WOMEN
TOY	SOCIAL ACTORS
VALUE	DIVERSITY
BEAUTY	INCLUSION
PLAY	SOCIAL NEGOTIATION

Source: research data

By looking closely at the *source* and *target domains* in the Table above, I can see that the children's discourse in Segment 2 does not unfold at random. Instead, it gradually takes shape through a series of cross-domain mappings that help seem to help the children make sense of their *own experiences* as they *interact* and *talk*. In my view, these mappings work as both *cognitive* and *emotional frames* that shape how the children *think*, *feel*, and *create* meaning through *play*.

For instance, the mapping LACK / LOSS → PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE (from *source* to *target* domain) shows how *absence* becomes metaphorically connected to *deficit*. In my interpretation, this connection suggests an *exclusionary logic* in which corresponds a way in which the children see the world that links *difference with limitation*.

However, throughout the segment, I also see that the children's discourse doesn't stay limited in this frame. As the interaction unfolds, it becomes more *reflective*. This shift happens when the children *project* the DOLLS/TOYS onto WOMEN and other SOCIAL ACTORS, and I begin to notice that play starts to acquire a symbolic dimension. In this process, Barbie stops being just a toy; in my interpretation, she turns into a kind of *mediator* through which *gender roles* and *social meanings* are *explored, questioned, and reimagined*.

In this sense, when C2 says that "every doll is beautiful", I take this utterance as more than just a comment, it seems to be like a small act of *meaning-making*. The mapping (VALUE → DIVERSITY / BEAUTY → INCLUSION) that emerges from her words, in my view, reshapes the very idea of beauty itself. Thus, I see that what was once tied to narrow standards, from this comment begins to open up, allowing *diversity* to appear as a new form of *value*. To me, this moment pushes back against hegemonic norms, transforming difference into something *legitimate, dignified, and worthy of celebration*.

Still, the meaning-making process doesn't stop there. I can also identify the mapping (PLAY → SOCIAL NEGOTIATION), which, to me, carries special weight in this segment. Through this mapping, play once again reinforces its *paradoxical nature* (Bateson, 1972). I observe that, within this symbolic space, children not only reproduce familiar discourses but also find gentle ways to *question* and *reshape* them. Through *imagination* and *dialogue*, play turns into a space where dominant discourses are softly reworked, where children open room for new ways of *seeing, thinking, and relating*.

Thus, what initially seemed to reflect an oppressive logic gradually shifts as the interaction unfolds. Through their *embodied engagement* with the dolls, I see the children moving toward more *inclusive* and *reflective interpretations*. Their discourse, in this segment, appears to align, perhaps intuitively, with *decolonial feminist* and *empowerment* perspectives that understand *diversity* and *identity* not as fixed traits but as living, evolving processes constantly renegotiated through play, talk, and shared experience (Lugones, 2008; 2010; 2020; Espinosa Miñoso, 2017).

Building on these considerations, the next section presents the analysis of Segment 3, also within Group 1.

Segment 3 – Play-based activity (group 1)

Table 28: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 3

Segment 3				
Brazilian Portuguese				
C1: ela é pesadinha! ((fazendo uma feição de estranhamento ao segurar a Barbie médica)) C1: gordinha... C3: gordinha... [Risos] C2: olha, como ela é bonita. C2: A minha é igual a eu, ó, magrinha... ((fazendo referência a Barbie lutadora enquanto levanta a sua própria camisa e mostra a sua barriga – não a da Barbie)) C2: Ohh!! [surpresa] C2: mesma cor, véi! Mesma cor! Ó, a mesma cor!!! ((colocando o braço da boneca ao lado do seu)) C1: a mesma cor, a mesma cor ((rindo, e apontando a Barbie médica negra para a coleguinha negra.))				
English:				
C1: She's kind of heavy! ((making a face of strangeness while holding the doctor Barbie)) C1: Chubby... C3: Chubby... [laughter] C2: Look how pretty she is. C2: Mine is just like me, look, skinny... ((referring to the fighter Barbie while lifting her own shirt and showing her belly – not the Barbie's)) C2: Ohh!! [surprised] C2: Same color, dude! Same color! Look, the same color!!! ((placing the doll's arm next to her own)) C1: The same color, the same color ((laughing, and pointing the Black doctor Barbie to her Black classmate.))				
Transitivity System				
Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
C1: “ela é pesadinha!” C1: “She’s kind of heavy!”	Relational attributive	é is	Carrier: she (the doll) Attribute: <i>pesadinha</i>	Manner (degree/intensity)
C1: “gordinha...” C1: “Chubby...”	Relational attributive (elliptical: “ela é...” / “she is...”)	é is	Carrier: she (the doll) Attribute: <i>gordinha</i>	--
C3: “gordinha...” C3: “Chubby...”	Relational attributive (repetition)	é is	Carrier: she (the doll) Attribute: <i>gordinha</i>	--
[Risos] [laughter]	Behavioral	--	Behavior: children laughing	--
C2: “look” C2: “olha”	Option A (Verbal): Verbal process: <i>olha</i> Option B (Behavioral):	<i>olha</i> <i>look</i>	Sayer: C2 Behavior: C2	--

	Behavioral process: <i>olha</i>			
C2: “ <i>como ela é bonita</i> ” C2: “ <i>how pretty she is</i> ”	Relational attributive	<i>é is</i>	Carrier: she (the doll) Attribute: bonita / pretty	
C2: “ <i>A minha é igual a eu, ó, magrinha...</i> ” C2: “ <i>Mine is just like me, look, skinny...</i> ”	Relational attributive	<i>é is</i>	Carrier: a minha (the doll) Attribute: igual a eu / magrinha	Accompaniment (gesture of lifting shirt and showing belly)
C2: “ <i>Ohh!!</i> ”	Behavioral (vocal reaction)	--	Behavior: C2	--
C2: “ <i>mesma cor, véi! Mesma cor! Ó, a mesma cor!!!</i> ” C2: “ <i>Same color, dude! Same color!</i> ”	Relational attributive (elliptical: “ <i>é da mesma cor</i> ” / “ <i>it is the same color</i> ”)	<i>é is</i>	Carrier: <i>doll / child</i> Attribute: <i>mesma cor</i>	Accompaniment (placing the doll’s arm next to her own)
C1: “ <i>a mesma cor, a mesma cor</i> ” C1: “ <i>the same color</i> ”	Relational attributive (elliptical: “ <i>é a mesma cor</i> ”)	<i>é is</i>	Carrier: <i>doll</i> Attribute: <i>mesma cor</i>	Accompaniment (pointing Black doctor Barbie to Black classmate)
Appraisal System				
Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	
C1: <i>ela é pesadinha!</i> C1: <i>She’s kind of heavy!</i>	Happiness- (implicit strangeness/surprise)	--	Composition- (physical evaluation)	
C1: <i>gordinha...</i> C1: <i>Chubby...</i>	--	--	Reaction- (aesthetic evaluation)	
C3: <i>gordinha...</i> C3: <i>Chubby...</i>			Reaction- (reinforcement of aesthetic appreciation)	
[Risos] [Laughter]	Happiness+ (positive humor)	--	--	
C2: “ <i>olha, como ela é bonita.</i> ” C2: “ <i>Look how pretty she is.</i> ”	Satisfaction+ (implicit admiration)	--	Reaction+ (positive aesthetic evaluation)	
C2: “ <i>a minha é igual a eu, ó, magrinha...</i> ” C2: “ <i>Mine is just like me, look, skinny...</i> ”	Satisfaction+ (pride, self-identification)	Normality+ (self-evaluation, thinness as value)	Reaction+ (comparative aesthetic evaluation)	
C2: “ <i>Ohh!!</i> ” [surpresa] C2: “ <i>Ohh!!</i> ” [surprised]	Happiness+ (positive surprise)	--	--	
C2: “ <i>mesma cor, véi! Mesma cor! Ó, a mesma cor!!!</i> ” C2: “ <i>Same color, dude! Same color! Look, the same color!!!</i> ”	Happiness+ (enthusiasm, joy of recognition)	Propriety+ (belonging, identity recognition)	Valuation+ (aesthetic/social appreciation)	

C1: “a mesma cor, a mesma cor”	Happiness+ (shared joy/enthusiasm)	Propriety+ (valuing peer’s identity)	Valuation+ (reinforcement of identity-based appreciation)
C1: “The same color, the same color”			

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

When looking at Segment 3 through the lens of the *Transitivity System* and the *Appraisal System*, I can see that the children’s narratives highlight a moment of intense discursive negotiation in which, as they interact with the dolls, they construct meanings that traverse *bodily*, *aesthetic*, and *identity* dimensions. The sequence of this segment begins with C1’s utterance “*She’s kind of heavy!*” (“*ela é pesadinha!*”) followed by “*chubby*” (“*gordinha...*”), which, through *attributive relational* processes, assigns to the Black doctor Barbie bodily qualities associated with *weight*.

It is possible to observe that such attributes are configured as aesthetic evaluations, marked by a *negative appreciation (Reaction-)*, since they evoke a sense of strangeness. The collective response of laughter from the girls in the group, while playing with these dolls, functions as a *behavioral process* that reinforces and socializes the implicit evaluation, momentarily sharing and validating the judgment. It is also worth noting that this particular doll diverges from the slim aesthetic standard: in material terms, she is indeed heavier than the other Barbies. This difference led the children to associate the additional weight with bodily fat, expressed through the diminutive form “*gordINHA*”. The use of the diminutive, already observed in previous segments, suggests, in my view, an attempt to soften the impact of the judgment, mitigating the force of the negative evaluation. At the same time, it functions as an evaluative marker that can either attenuate the reference, convey affection, or, conversely, underscore difference through a subtle form of infantilization or irony.

However, it is worth focusing attention on the next utterance, which, in contrast to this depreciative perspective, shows C2 immediately shifting the evaluative direction by affirming *how pretty she is*” (“*como ela é bonita*”), though this time referring to another doll: the boxer Barbie. This *attributive process* inaugurates a *positive aesthetic appreciation (Reaction+)*, repositioning the doll within a regime of valorization. Shortly thereafter, the same child, claiming ownership of the boxer doll since she had picked it up during play, declares: “*mine is just like me, look, skinny...*” (“*a minha é igual a eu, ó, magrinha...*”) while lifting her own shirt and showing her stomach. In this gesture, it can be inferred that the child’s body itself becomes the direct reference for identity construction, fusing self and doll. The Barbie, therefore, ceases

to be merely a toy and assumes the role of a symbolic extension of the child's body and self-image, revealing how play operates as a practice of recognition and self-affirmation.

In this case, however, it is the “*magrINHA*” doll, also expressed in the diminutive, that elicits the positive reaction. The use of the diminutive here, as in “*gordINHA*” earlier, can be understood not merely as a descriptor of body size, but as a pragmatic resource that softens or mitigates the impact of the evaluation, framing it in a more affectionate or less confrontational way. From a pragmatic perspective, for instance, such use of diminutives may be interpreted as a strategy of attenuation, aligning with politeness phenomena (Brown; Levinson, 1987) that reduce the potential face-threatening force of negative or sensitive evaluations.

In C2's statement, however, the culminating point of the segment can be understood to emerge when the child repeatedly emphasizes the expression “*same color*” (“*mesma cor*”) placing the doll's arm alongside her own skin. This utterance, structured in an *attributive relational* process, surpasses the merely aesthetic domain to establish a *value appreciation* (*Value+*), strongly linked to racial recognition. C2's verbal and bodily gesture suggest a movement of identification that transforms color into a sign of belonging, creating an experience of recognition that inscribes difference within a *positive* framework of shared identity. This meaning is immediately reinforced by C1, who, by pointing the Black doctor Barbie toward her Black classmate, performs a gesture of collective validation, intensifying the effect of symbolic legitimation.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize that such a movement is not free of ambiguities. I understand that the recognition indicated by C1 can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it constitutes a gesture of solidarity and positive reinforcement; on the other, it raises questions, since it was not the Black child herself who, at that moment, explicitly recognized herself in the doll, but rather her peer. Furthermore, C1 had previously judged the Black doctor Barbie in negative terms, laughing along with the group when calling the Black Barbie doll “*chubby*” (“*gordinha*”). This reintroduces interpretative tension: was C1 genuinely validating her peer, or was she projecting another kind of intention?

This ambiguity echoes what Axel Honneth (1996) calls the “*struggle for recognition*”, in which subjects seek to have their identities socially affirmed, though such recognition is not always symmetrical or authentic. Likewise, Frantz Fanon (1967) had already pointed out that the experience of racial recognition, particularly in colonial contexts, is often riddled with contradictions, capable of becoming either an affirmation of identity or a reaffirmation of difference as a mark of exoticization. Thus, as researchers, we must adopt a critical posture toward this interactional scene, recognizing that this particular act of recognition may

simultaneously represent a positive affirmation of identity and reveal the latent tensions of a process oscillating between *valorization* and *differentiation*.

In light of these ambiguities, what emerges from Segment 3 is the complexity of the children's evaluative practices. On the one hand, they reproduce social patterns of beauty marked by the valorization of thinness over more voluminous bodies; on the other, they generate movements of identity empowerment, particularly along the racial axis, where difference is re-signified as value and belonging. Thus, *relational processes*, in attributing qualities to the dolls, operate simultaneously as descriptive and evaluative acts, articulating body, aesthetics, and identity within the ludic space of interaction.

However, further inferences also emerge from this episode. The emphatic repetition of “*same color*” and the gesture of bringing arms together reveal how the body operates as a sign of *identity*, *multimodally* materializing a recognition process. Laughter, in turn, plays a strategic role, functioning as a buffer for potentially sanctioning evaluations and enabling bodily judgments to circulate without direct conflict. Moreover, C1's oscillating evaluation, initially devaluing the Black doctor Barbie and subsequently using her as a means of validating her peer, demonstrates the ambivalence of recognition practices, which may simultaneously *empower* and reinforce subtle *exoticizations*. This becomes even more complex considering that these data were drawn from children belonging to a *quilombola* community in a peripheral neighborhood of João Pessoa.

Therefore, in Segment 3 the children not only articulate body, aesthetics, and identity but also make visible the contradictions, ambivalences, and possibilities that permeate their interactions. It thus constitutes a field of symbolic struggle in which values are intensified, recirculated, and reconfigured, revealing how, from an early age, children participate in broader social processes of classification, legitimation, and resistance.

With this in mind, I now draw on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) to examine the conceptual mappings that shape how C1, C2 and C3 perceive and construct experience in this segment. Accordingly, the analysis of Segment 3 allowed me to infer the following cross-domain mappings, which are systematized in the table below and illustrate the main examples identified in the excerpt.

Table 29: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 3 – Group 1

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
“ela é pesadinha!”, “gordinha...” “She’s kind of heavy!”, “chubby...”	VALOR ESTÉTICO É PESO / CARGA AESTHETIC VALUE IS WEIGHT / LOAD
“como ela é bonita” / “a minha é igual a eu, magrinha...” “how pretty she is” / “mine is just like me, look, skinny...”	MAGREZA É BELEZA / VALOR THINNESS IS BEAUTY / VALUE
“mesma cor... mesma cor!” ((braços lado a lado)) “same color, dude! Same color!” ((arms side by side))	PERTENCIMENTO É SEMELHANÇA PERCEPTIVA BELONGING IS PERCEPTUAL SIMILARITY
((Exposing the belly; pairing arms)) ((expondo a barriga; colocando os braços lado a lado))	IDENTIDADE É UM ÍNDICE IDENTITY IS AN INDEX
“a minha é igual a eu” ((enunciado + gesto)) “mine is just like me” ((utterance + gesture))	O EU É ESTENDIDO NA BONECA THE SELF IS EXTENDED INTO THE DOLL
“Barbie médica negra”; “Barbie boxeadora”	PROFISSÃO É STATUS / IDENTIDADE PROFESSION IS STATUS / IDENTITY
Alternation between “chubby” ↔ “pretty” ↔ “same color”	NEGOCIAÇÃO SOCIAL É BRINCADEIRA SOCIAL NEGOTIATION IS PLAY

Source: research data

In light of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), I understand that the analyzed segment reveals a systematic set of mappings between domains that articulate *bodily perception*, *aesthetic valuation*, and *social belonging*.

As summarized in Table 29, the utterances produced by the children in Segment 3 mobilize a series of conceptual metaphors, such as: AESTHETIC VALUE IS WEIGHT / LOAD (*VALOR ESTÉTICO É PESO/CARGA*), associating the heavier body with aesthetic devaluation; THINNESS IS BEAUTY / VALUE (*MAGREZA É BELEZA/VALOR*), positioning thinness as a positive attribute; BELONGING IS PERCEPTUAL SIMILARITY (*PERTENCIMENTO É SEMELHANÇA PERCEPTIVA*), in which skin color functions as an index of racial identity; IDENTITY IS AN INDEX (*IDENTIDADE É UM ÍNDICE*), where bodily gestures represent the self; THE SELF IS EXTENDED INTO THE DOLL (*O EU É ESTENDIDO NA BONECA*), the toy serving as a projection of self-image; PROFESSION IS STATUS / IDENTITY (*PROFISSÃO É STATUS/IDENTIDADE*), occupation operating as a marker of agency and recognition; and finally, SOCIAL NEGOTIATION IS PLAY (*NEGOCIAÇÃO SOCIAL É BRINCADEIRA*), framing the ludic space as an arena in which norms of *body*, *race*, and *value* are contested. These mappings confirm that metaphor, far from being merely a stylistic resource within the rhetorical tradition (cf. Jakobson, 1956; Ullmann, 1962; Genette, 1972), functions as a fundamental cognitive mechanism, socially structuring the way children assign meaning to bodies, identities, and relations of belonging (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980, 1999).

Initially, in analyzing the qualification “*gordinha*” (“*pesadinha*”), uttered by C1, it can be observed that the expression projects the *source domain* (concrete) of weight/physical load onto the *target domain* (abstract) of aesthetic value, activating image schemas of force and balance. Here, the notion of projection, according to Lakoff’s (1999)³⁹, is central: it is not the entire concept of “weight” that is transferred into the field of aesthetic evaluation, but only selected aspects, namely *excess*, *gravity*, and *difficulty of handling*, which are culturally associated with the idea of “fatness” as a negative trait. In these same examples, we can also observe the use of the diminutive suffix (-*inha*), as previously indicated, which operates pragmatically as an attenuating strategy, mitigating the face-threat (cf. Brown; Levinson, 1987), without, however, neutralizing the *Reaction-* orientation within the axis of *Appreciation* in the Appraisal analysis.

In sequence, the utterances “*como ela é bonita / magrinha*”, with *magrinha* also expressed in the diminutive (-*inha*), activate a scalar gradient in which thinness is mapped as positivity. This mapping illustrates a case of *Scalarity* (cf. Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987), in which the authors explain that categories are organized in terms of more/less desirable, associating thin bodies with the positive pole of the aesthetic scale. Such an association is anchored in the *primary metaphor* GOOD IS UP (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), which projects positive values onto elements situated on the upward axis (thinness, lightness, elevation), thereby reinforcing hegemonic beauty norms widely disseminated within Western culture.

When C2 states “*mine is just like me*” (“*a minha é igual a eu*”) and, at the same time, exposes her own belly, I understand that a double cognitive movement takes place. On the one hand, there is a *metonymic process*, since the child takes one part of the body (the belly) as an index of the whole identity, that is, the entire body, and by extension, the self (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). This is a typical case of part-for-whole metonymy (PART FOR WHOLE), in which a localized feature is mobilized to represent the totality of bodily identity. On the other hand, a *metaphorical process* occurs insofar as the doll is conceived as an extension of the self: the toy object is projected as the child’s symbolic body, cognitively incorporating traits of her self-image. This mechanism demonstrates how, in playful interaction, the toy (the Barbie doll), ceases to be a mere material artifact and becomes a space of *identity projection*, articulating the physical body and the symbolic body.

³⁹ Considering that the author argues that projection occurs when elements of the source domain are selected and reinterpreted within the target domain, thereby shaping the evaluative logic of the metaphor, as we have observed throughout the analyses of these three segments.

Thus, I understand that in this excerpt, *aesthetic scalarity*, *bodily metonymy*, and the *metaphor* of the extension of the self-interact dynamically, showing that the process of children's meaning-making is not merely descriptive but also *evaluative* and *identity-related*. This movement reinforces: (i) the normative pressures of beauty culture, while at the same time revealing the children's agency in symbolically reinscribing themselves into the toy (Barbie doll); and (ii) the need for an analysis that articulates, in a complementary way, the frameworks of SFL and CL, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings constructed by children as they play with Barbie dolls within the ludic space of interaction.

Moreover, following the segment, I understand that the climax occurs with the repetition of "*same color*", accompanied by the pairing of arms. At this moment, perceptual similarity, the concrete source domain, is mapped onto belonging/racial identity, the abstract target domain, drawing on image schemas of proximity and correspondence (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). In this way, color is invested with a *Value+* status as a sign of community, in line with primary metaphors such as SIMILARITY IS PROXIMITY, which structure experience (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980). Consequently, C1's gesture, by pointing the Black doctor Barbie toward her Black peer, performs a public act of value attribution, constituting a practice of recognition (Honneth, 1996). However, as I have noted earlier, because of its hetero-directionality, that is, since it is not self-designation but attribution by another, this gesture can oscillate between identity *validation* and the *exoticization* of difference, a tension also discussed by Fanon (1967) in his analysis of the ambiguities of racial recognition in colonial contexts.

As for collective laughter, I understand that it functions as a marker of interactional affiliation and evaluative circulation, operating as a bodily index that signals alignment of stance within the group (Du Bois, 2007), and working metonymically (behavior → position). In this sense, laughter operates *metonymically*, since the sonic and bodily behavior comes to represent a social stance-taking (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). Moreover, throughout the segment, *professions* (doctor, boxer) serve as socially salient *frames* (Fillmore, 1982; Bateson, 1972) that map *status/agency* onto the *figures*, connecting the concrete (occupational role) to the abstract (value and possibility for action), and allowing children to project scenarios of possibility and future agency. Thus, *play* is configured as a space of *social negotiation*: within this ludic frame, metaphors and metonymies codify and reconfigure norms of body, race, and identity, enabling *Reaction-* and *Reaction+* evaluations to coexist and to be disputed in real time.

In summary, the identified mappings in Segment 3 show how immediately perceptible *physical attributes* (weight, color, body shape) are *projected* onto abstract domains (beauty,

belonging, social value), highlighting the *embodied* and *culturally situated* character of metaphorical/metonymic reasoning in children's interactions with the dolls.

Therefore, read through Charlier and Caubergs' (2007) lens, Segment 3 reveals two distinct dynamics: (i) the reproduction of hegemonic norms, when laughter and the qualifiers *pesadinha/gordinha* circulate thinness as the positive pole of aesthetic value; and (ii) emancipatory shifts, where recognition and belonging are actively constructed by the children.

In my reading, the emancipatory dimension, resonates with Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking insight that the "woman's body" is never a mere biological given but rather a socially produced and contested site. In *The Second Sex* (1949), Beauvoir reminds us that women are not simply "born" but are continually "made" through cultural norms, expectations, and prescriptions. Seen in this light, C2's utterance "*mine is just like me, skinny*" is not, in my view, an innocent description of resemblance, but rather a moment in which the body itself is drawn into the machinery of social meaning. Thinness, framed here as beauty and value, reveals how early children learn to reproduce the hierarchies that make some bodies desirable and others deviant. In Beauvoir's terms, the girl is already negotiating her place in a world where femininity is both imposed and contested, where the body is lived as destiny but also as construction.

From a decolonial vantage, however, the interpretive field shifts. As highlighted in Chapter 3, scholars such as Ochy Curiel and Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso emphasize that feminist meanings cannot be grounded in Eurocentric universals but must instead emerge from the lived experiences of racialized women and girls. Among them, María Lugones goes further, showing that the very category of "gender" was historically reconfigured under colonial rule, becoming a tool for racial and sexual hierarchies that erased Indigenous and Afro-diasporic ways of knowing and living the body. With this in mind, C2's emphatic repetition of "*same color*", as she places her arm alongside the doll's, can be read as a counter-hegemonic gesture: a refusal to see Blackness as lack, and instead an affirmation of it as value, belonging, and humanity. Here, she does not simply recognize similarity; she contests the colonial legacy that has historically devalued non-white bodies.

Thus, taking these considerations together, Beauvoir's insights help us see how femininity is socially inscribed onto the body, while decolonial feminism prompts us to ask: whose bodies, and whose voices, are allowed to define those scripts? What may seem, at first glance, like nothing more than ordinary play reveals itself as a deeply political moment – one in which children rehearse both the weight of normative aesthetics and the possibility of transforming difference into dignity.

I leave this reflection to be further expanded in the general discussions and conclusions, after the analysis of the subsequent segments. For now, it is important to highlight once again that the first three segments of Group 1 already reveal central tensions in the children's play: the reproduction of normative beauty standards, the ambivalent circulation of laughter and diminutives as evaluative resources, and, at the same time, moments of resistance and empowerment, particularly when racial belonging is re-signified as value and dignity. These dynamics suggest that play with dolls is never a neutral or trivial activity, but rather a symbolic arena where aesthetic, bodily, and social meanings are constantly negotiated.

Having concluded this stage, I now shift the focus to the next subtopic, which examines the discourse of children in *Group 2*. In this group, the dolls were assigned specific physical impairments, opening another layer of analysis in which issues of disability, diversity, and inclusion emerge in the children's narratives. By turning to this new set of interactions, I seek to explore how the presence of bodily difference, materialized in the dolls' design, reshapes the dynamics of evaluation, recognition, and identity construction in play, offering fresh insights into how children negotiate social values and reframe otherness.

6.2 Analysis of Group 2: children playing with Barbie Fashionists

In this subsection, I analyze the discourses produced by children in *Group 2* during the play-based activity with Barbie Fashionist dolls that represent some specific physical impairments and bodily diversities. These included, for example, the *bald Barbie* (designed to represent women undergoing cancer treatment), the *Barbie with Down syndrome*, the *wheelchair-using Black Barbie with Afro-textured hair*, and the *Black doctor Barbie*.

To examine how the children interacted with these dolls, I approached the analysis through the same three complementary linguistic perspectives that guide this thesis: (i) *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL), (ii) the *Appraisal System*, and (iii) *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (CMT), in addition to Bateson's (1972) *systemic view of communication and ecology of mind*.

With regard to the particularities of Group 2, the image below portrays the moment of engagement among the children during the play-based activity. As in the previous group, I intentionally blurred the photograph to ensure the participants' privacy and integrity, preserving their presence without compromising their identities. And, for clarity in the analysis, I employ the following labels to identify the children's utterances in the excerpts discussed: C5 (Child 5), C6 (Child 6), C7 (Child 7), and C8 (Child 8), in the order in which they appear in the transcript. See the image below:

Figure 25: Children engaged in the play-based activity session with Barbie Fashionist dolls



Source: photograph by the author (2025)

Before moving to the analysis itself, I would like to clarify some of the procedures I adopted to protect the participants' identities and to ensure transparency in the analytical process. Whenever a child's name appeared in the excerpts, I replaced it with the consonant X, so that their privacy would be fully preserved. In addition, since a few children from the previous group also took part in this session, I chose to identify them as SOG1 (Student from Other Group – 1), corresponding to C1 from the previously analyzed group, and as SOG2, SOG3, and SOG4 for the others.

I made this decision for the reason that I felt it was important to clearly distinguish the children's voices while maintaining a coherent and ethical organization of the data. This distinction helps trace the exchanges that occurred between members of different groups, while also reaffirming my responsibility to protect each participant's identity. My intention throughout this process was to maintain a careful balance between analytical precision and ethical sensitivity, preserving, in this way, the authenticity of the children's voices while safeguarding their anonymity.

Furthermore, I find it important to note that the group of children playing with the dolls presented here was the group that remained comparatively more silent throughout the recording session. As shown in the transcription in Appendix E, the interaction comprises 219 lines of dialogue, notwithstanding some moments of audio inconsistency. By contrast, the transcription of the previous group – children playing with *Barbie Careers* dolls, presented in Appendix D – contains 361 lines of dialogue, characterized by longer and more discursive exchanges, despite both sessions having the same duration. This quantitative difference does not imply reduced engagement; rather, it points to distinct interactional dynamics and communicative patterns emerging across the two play contexts.

Having established these details, I now turn to the analysis of the following segments, beginning with Segment 4, which marks the starting point of the analyses involving Group 2.

Segment 4 – Play-based activity (group 2)

Table 30: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 4

Segment 4				
Brazilian Portuguese				
SOG: Que nota vocês dão para as bonecas de vocês? C5: Vai... C6: a minha é curiosa. SOG: O brinco é maior que a cabeça da boneca. ((para a boneca sem cabelo de C5)) SOG2: Ei, X. Ei, a de X é muito cacheadinho. Bonitona, né? SOG3: Porque tu também não tá com a tua, X? ((para C6)) C6: É porque a gente tá fazendo uma passarela. A minha já passou. SOG3: Deixa eu ver a tua? SOG1: A passarela... só gordura e sem canela. C6: Nossa.				
English:				
SOG: What grade do you give to your dolls? C5: Go on... C6: Mine is curious. SOG: The earring is bigger than the doll's head. ((to C5's bald doll)) SOG2: Hey, X. Hey, X's is really curly. Gorgeous, right? SOG3: Why don't you have yours, X? ((to C6)) C6: It's because we're doing a runway. Mine already went. SOG3: Let me see yours? SOG1: The runway... only fat and no chin. C6: Wow.				
Transitivity System				
Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
SOG: “Que nota vocês dão para as bonecas de vocês?” SOG: “What grade do you give your dolls?”	Material	dão give	Actor: vocês / you; Goal: nota / grade; Beneficiary: bonecas de vocês / your dolls	--
SOG: “O brinco é maior que a cabeça da boneca.” SOG: “The earring is bigger than the doll's head.”	Relational attributive (comparative)	é is	Carrier: o brinco / the earring; Attribute: maior que a cabeça da boneca / bigger than the doll's head	--
SOG2: “a de X é muito cacheadinho. Bonitona, né?” SOG2: “X's is really curly. Gorgeous, right?”	Relational attributive	é is	Carrier: a de X / X's doll; Attribute: muito cacheadinho / bonita / very curly / gorgeous	Circumstance: intensification (muito / very)
SOG3: “Porque tu também não tá com a tua, X?” SOG3: “Why don't you have yours, X?”	Relational attributive (possessive)	tá com have	Carrier: tu / you; Attribute: com a tua / with yours	Negation

C6: "É porque a gente tá fazendo uma passarela. A minha já passou." C6: "Because we are making a runway. Mine has already walked."	Material	tá fazendo are making; passou walked	Actor: a gente / we; Goal: passarela / runway; Actor: a minha / mine; Goal: passarela (implicit)	Circumstance: temporal (já / already)
SOG3: "Deixa eu ver a tua?" SOG3: "Let me see yours?"	Mental	ver see	Senser: eu / I; Phenomenon: a tua / yours	--
SOG1: "A passarela... só gordura e sem canela." SOG1: "The runway... only fat and no shin."	Relational attributive (elliptical)	é is (implicit)	Carrier: a passarela / the runway; Attribute: só gordura, sem canela / only fat, no shin	Circumstance: exclusion (sem / without)
C6: "Nossa." C6: "Wow."	Mental (exclamative)	--	Senser: implícito / implicit "T"; Phenomenon: reaction	--
Appraisal System				
Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	
SOG: "Que nota vocês dão para as bonecas de vocês?" SOG: "What grade do you give your dolls?"	--	Normality (enhancing normative evaluation)	--	
SOG: "O brinco é maior que a cabeça da boneca." SOG: "The earring is bigger than the doll's head."	--	--	--	Composition- (disproportion, negative design feature)
SOG2: "a de X é muito cacheadinho. Bonitona, né?" SOG2: "X's is really curly. Gorgeous, right?"	--	--	--	Reaction+ (positive aesthetic: beauty, intensified by really)
SOG3: "Porque tu também não tá com a tua, X?" SOG3: "Why don't you have yours, X?"	--	Normality- (questioning conduct: absence of doll)	--	
C6: "É porque a gente tá fazendo uma passarela. A minha já passou." C6: "Because we are making a runway. Mine has already walked."	Satisfaction+ (playful pride, involvement in activity)	--	--	Valuation+ (creative activity: runway performance)
SOG3: "Deixa eu ver a tua?" SOG3: "Let me see yours?"	Satisfaction+ (positive curiosity/interest)	--	--	--
SOG1: "A passarela... só gordura e sem canela." SOG1: "The runway... only fat and no shin."	--	Propriety- / Capacity- (mockery, ironic critique of body)	--	Reaction- (negative aesthetic evaluation)
C6: "Nossa." C6: "Wow."	Happiness- (negative surprise/disapproval)	--	--	--

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

When looking at Table 30 through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics and the Appraisal System, the first thing that stands out to me is the opening move of the sequence: SOG's question, "*What grade do you give your dolls?*" I can see that this utterance is realized through a *material process*, expressed by the verb *give*. At first glance, this structure may seem to represent a simple material action, an invitation for the children, as *Actors*, to perform the act of *giving* a grade, where the "grade" functions as the *Goal* and the dolls as the *Beneficiaries*.

However, I believe that this initial impression does not fully capture the utterance's potential for meaning. Beyond its *ideational metafunction*, which describes an action and its participants, it can be observed that the clause also performs an *interpersonal function*. By asking the children to assign a grade, I interpret that SOG is not merely requesting them to carry out an action; she is actually inviting them to *express evaluation* and *position themselves* in relation to the dolls. In other words, the process *give*, in this case, operates simultaneously as an act of doing and as a means of *negotiating values* and *identities* within the group.

I remember that, when I was a child, my peers at school, and also in other contexts outside school, used to *give* grades to their dolls based on physical appearance. The prettiest one would be the one who would get the prince's attention to get married. I cannot say that this is necessarily the case in the children's interpretation above, but it is clear that they are assigning *physical values* to the dolls.

With this in mind, returning to the analysis, from the perspective of the Appraisal framework, I see that this utterance draws on *Judgment* resources, particularly within the category of *Normality*, since SOG's question invites the children to make a *normative evaluation* of their dolls, an evaluative *cue*. It is worth noting that the dolls in this group are those with *physical disability traits*. Therefore, what might initially seem like a simple, objective act, *giving a grade*, actually becomes much more than that. It turns into an *evaluative practice*, one that discursively positions both the dolls and, indirectly, the children who own them within broader systems of *social worth* and *cultural value*. It also carries subtle evaluative undertones that shape *negotiations of identity* and *belonging*.

This displacement, in my view, is meaningful. It suggests that the *hesitation* or *silence* shown by Group 2, particularly by C7 and C8, who found it difficult to express their thoughts, may have created room for an *external voice* to step in. Seen through the lens of the Appraisal framework, this moment of reticence can be read as an *absence of Affect*, a pause in emotional or attitudinal expression. In contrast, the more active engagement of C5 and C6 reveals how evaluative resources were unevenly distributed across the group. To me, this unevenness points

to something deeper, perhaps a feeling of *discomfort*, *dissatisfaction*, or even *disidentification* with the dolls they were asked to interact with.

In this sense, the analysis of SOG's intervention reveals a simultaneous operation of meaning at multiple levels, such as: *structural*, *interpersonal*, and *evaluative*. Structurally, it exemplifies a *material process*, with a clear Actor–Goal–Beneficiary configuration. Functionally, however, it is reconfigured as a *judgmental cue*, redirecting the flow of *interaction* by eliciting evaluative positioning where silence had previously prevailed. To me, this bridging of the *ideational* and *interpersonal* metafunctions underscores the critical role of discourse in both reflecting and shaping social meanings: what begins as a question about “*grades*” becomes, in practice, a mechanism for negotiating the symbolic value of bodies and identities represented in the dolls. In doing so, it exposes the tensions that underlie processes of recognition and normality, resonating with Butler's (2006) discussion of cultural intelligibility, that is, the normative frameworks through which certain identities become socially recognizable as human, while others are rendered invisible or unintelligible.

Building on this premise, the subsequent utterances further illustrate how such processes of recognition are linguistically enacted and negotiated. They consolidate this evaluative dynamic, showing that the interaction is not limited to neutral descriptions but instead mobilizes linguistic resources that structure regimes of value. For instance, SOG's comment “*The earring is bigger than the doll's head*” (“*O brinco é maior que a cabeça da boneca*”) activates a *relational attributive comparative process*, in which the earring functions as *Carrier* and the doll's head as the parameter of the *Attribute*. From the perspective of appraisal, I understand that this formulation constitutes a *negative appreciation of composition*, insofar as it emphasizes disproportionality as a depreciative aesthetic trait. What emerges, therefore, is a shift in focus: the doll ceases to be represented merely as the bearer of abstract qualities and comes to be *evaluated* through the *materiality of its form*. This discursive change reveals how physical and symbolic dimensions intertwine in the construction of meaning, where the *doll's body* is examined as an *aesthetic object* subject to *critique*.

This evaluative logic, however, is not perceived as being restricted to negative judgments throughout the segment; it also manifests itself in positive formulations that reconfigure the aesthetic perception of the dolls. SOG2's utterance “*X's is really curly. Pretty one, right?*” (“*a de X é muito cacheadinho. Bonitona, né?*”) once again mobilizes a *relational attributive process*, associating the *Carrier* (*X's doll*) with the attributes *curly* and *pretty*. Here, the Appraisal system registers a *positive reaction appreciation*, intensified by the adverb

“*muito*” (*really*), which functions as a *Graduation resource*, raising the intensity of the evaluation.

By articulating these different evaluations, at times depreciative, at others celebratory, I realize how their discourses both *reproduce* and *renegotiate* social standards of *beauty* and *femininity*. On one hand, the critique of the earring’s disproportionality brings to life a perceived *inadequacy of form*; on the other, the appreciation of *curly hair* reaffirms an *identity marker* that seems to gain symbolic strength within the interaction. To me, this discursive movement shows that, through language, the children are not simply describing what they see, they are *ordering* and *valuing* it. In doing so, I note that they *legitimize* certain traits as desirable while subtly pushing others into the domain of *excess* or *defect*. This is quite sad.

In light of these facts, I must highlight that academia urgently needs to engage more deeply in discussions about women and seek ways to help society, starting with children, gradually rethink how *women* and *their bodies* are *seen* and *valued*. Although we know this is a process that faces resistance and requires both study and political will, research by scholars such as Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), Rolim (2020), Sarinho Júnior (2023), Prochner (2024), and Brougère (2010, 2014, 2018), as well as my own work, has shown over the past decades that toys are far from “innocent”; they are cultural artifacts that shape how children think and see themselves.

This resistance, especially toward studying dolls like Barbie, reflects deeper cultural and historical struggles to accept bodily diversity among women, a legacy that thinkers such as bell hooks have exposed:

“the arena that most clearly reveals the differentiation between the status of male slaves and female slaves in the work arena. The black male slave was primarily exploited as a laborer in the fields; the black female was exploited as a laborer in the fields, a worker, in the domestic household, a breeder, and as an object of white man sexual assault” (hooks, 1986, p. 22)

hooks’s words echo in my mind when I read the children’s discourses, particularly at the beginning of their play with the Black female doll. Her reflections expose the long history of women’s dehumanization, especially that of Black women, who endured not only exhausting labor but also the violation of their bodies.

It is in remembering this history that I am reminded why this research matters. As a woman studying children’s play with Barbie dolls, I have often faced prejudice and dismissive comments about my topic, from peers and even professors. Yet, I believe that bringing Barbie into academic discussions and play sessions can make a real difference. *Representation* and

empowerment through dolls that reflect children's own identities can nurture *self-esteem*, *confidence*, and *resilience*, what I see as the very foundations not only of living with *dignity* and *inclusion*, but also of one day recognizing the signs of an abusive relationship and finding the strength to protect themselves, perhaps even saving their own lives.

By observing the children's talk during play, I can see how they gradually begin to reflect on *bodily diversity* and realize that *every body* deserves *respect*, *value*, and *love*. As the interaction goes on, their conversation moves beyond appearances and touches on *moral* and *behavioral* meanings. This becomes evident when SOG3 asks, "*Why don't you have yours, X?*". I interpret this as a *relational attributive process* of possession, marked by *negation*, where the absence of the doll, rather than any abstract quality, takes on central meaning. From an Appraisal perspective, the question may be read as a *negative Judgment of normality*, since it questions behavior that seems to deviate from what is expected in that shared play context. In this way, Transitivity draws attention to the missing doll, while Appraisal adds a fine layer of social critique, showing how the children *negotiate norms* and *expectations* as they play.

From this exchange, I understand that SOG3 took X's reaction as a sign of *dissatisfaction* with her doll, considering her earlier reluctance in the session. This moment then moves into the domain of *Judgment*, where subtle *evaluations of behavior* appear, framing X's attitude as a departure from the *expected excitement* of play. Still, I see it not simply as hesitation, but as a small act of *negotiation*, a moment in which social expectations, like showing enthusiasm while playing, are gently questioned. Perhaps SOG3 was just implying that X did not like the doll.

At that point, however, the tone of the activity changes when C6 happily says, "*We are making a runway. Mine has already walked*". The *material processes* ("*are making*", "*walked*"), in this case, underline the children's *active* and *imaginative* involvement, linking their play to social worlds of *fashion* and *performance*. From an Appraisal viewpoint, I interpret these utterances as expressing *positive Affect*, satisfaction and pride, along with *positive Appreciation*, since the runway is presented as a *valued* and *meaningful* element within their collective play.

Beyond linguistic realization, I can observe that this positioning also carries ideological implications, that is, both the bald doll and the wheelchair-using doll are cast as models who, despite their disabilities or illness, are represented as capable of pursuing a professional path historically constrained by hegemonic aesthetic norms. In this way, the discourse not only celebrates inclusion within play but also symbolically reclaims spaces of visibility and agency for bodies that have long been marginalized within the fashion imaginary. It is worth noting

that this utterance was produced by C6, the child with the darkest skin tone in the group, who also communicated the most during the activity. By chance, she was the one who received the Black wheelchair-using Barbie. It should also be emphasized that the dolls were distributed randomly.

Thus, this reframing of play, therefore, transcends the immediate context of entertainment and becomes a discursive space where social meanings are negotiated and re-signified. By situating the bald doll and the wheelchair-using doll as active participants in a glamorous and empowering scenario, the discourse of C5 and, more specifically, C6 challenges long-standing cultural hierarchies that associate beauty, femininity, and worth with normative bodies. Through the semiotic resources of play, they momentarily suspend the logic of exclusion embedded in the fashion world and rearticulate it within an inclusive narrative of visibility and agency.

From a gendered perspective, this episode also disrupts the conventional expectation that girls' play should reproduce submissive or ornamental roles. Instead, the act of making a *runway* becomes a performative gesture of *empowerment*, where fashion, often criticized for reinforcing stereotypes, serves as a site of re-signification. Here, aesthetic pleasure and social critique coexist: beauty is not denied, but rather reimagined through bodies that defy hegemonic norms.

Following this symbolic reframing of *inclusion* and *empowerment*, the interaction, then, extends beyond ideological and aesthetic meanings, moving into the affective and relational sphere. At this stage, other utterances reinforce the subjective dimension of the experience. That is, SOG3's request, "*Let me see yours?*" ("*Deixa eu ver a tua?*"), mobilizes a *mental process* (*see*) in which the *Senser* (I) directs attention toward the *Phenomenon* (yours). From the perspective of Appraisal, this utterance conveys *positive satisfaction*, marked by curiosity and interest, revealing how mental transitivity creates space for affective engagement within the discourse. In other words, the child who had been playing with dolls without disabilities shows genuine interest in learning about the dolls from this particular group of fashionist Barbies with physical comorbidities, thereby adopting an affective stance as the children in Group 2 elevate them to the status of models despite their disabilities.

However, this apparently harmonious dynamic soon gives way to tension. Not all evaluations of these dolls were positive. SOG1's remark, for example, "*The runway... only fat and no chin*" ("*A passarela... só gordura e sem canela*"), constitutes an elliptical *relational attributive process* that assigns to the runway, that is, to the dolls that were parading, the attributes *only fat* and *no chin*. This phrase alludes to a video that gained popularity on TikTok,

concerning a child who deviated from the stereotypical thin and standardized aesthetic ideal of beauty in order to become a model. Here, the Appraisal framework points to a double movement: on the one hand, a negative judgment of *impropriety/incapacity*, through the mocking of corporealities; on the other, a *negative reaction appreciation*, which articulates a pejorative aesthetic critique. Nevertheless, C6's immediate response, "wow" ("nossa"), functions as an exclamative mental process, expressing a *negative happiness affect*, suggesting both surprise and disapproval in the face of the depreciative comment.

This interactional shift invites broader reading. When connected to Van Leeuwen's (2008) theory of social actor representation⁴⁰, it becomes evident that certain voices are emphasized, while others are marginalized or erased. For example, the comments of SOG1 and SOG3 highlight specific physical attributes or behaviors, reinforcing standards of beauty and norms of conduct, while simultaneously silencing the children's own agency in creating new meanings for play. Although C6 regains a degree of agency by recounting the runway activity, inscribing herself as *Actor* of a *material process* and as bearer of pride at the level of affect, her final reaction "Wow" ("Nossa") should not be read as mere negative surprise (*Happiness-*), but rather as an *affect* of dissatisfaction and disapproval. At that moment, the child explicitly expresses her disagreement with SOG1's depreciative comment, performing a discursive gesture of resistance. In this sense, the utterance functions as a critical counterpoint to adult-centered irony, revealing that, even in playful contexts, language can both reproduce exclusions and erasures and open space for the contestation and repositioning of children's identities.

Therefore, this episode can be read in light of classic feminist critiques, such as Beauvoir (1949), who described how the female body was constantly reduced to an object of judgment, inscribed within normative standards that constrain it. SOG1's comment clearly echoes this very logic of objectification. In contrast, C6's response aligns with bell hooks' (1986) call for the centrality of marginalized voices, since, by rejecting the mockery, the child asserts her subjectivity as a space of contestation. Moreover, the performativity of the runway narrated by C6 resonates with Butler's (2006) notion that identities are discursively constituted and only become inhabitable when they resist regimes of exclusion. In this sense, by reinscribing herself as an agent and resisting disqualification, C6 produces a rupture in the hegemonic discourse, opening up space for new possibilities of identity within play.

⁴⁰ In *Discourse and Practice*, van Leeuwen (2008) develops his framework for the representation of social actors, showing how discourse can include or exclude participants, assign them roles, and control visibility and agency in social meaning-making.

Finally, I understand that the episode narrated in Segment 4, despite moments of exclusion, also resonates with the proposal of *empowerment* outlined by Charlier and Caubergs (2007). For instance, the valorization of the runway points to a movement of *power within*, expressed through self-affirmation and pride; a gesture of *power with*, by fostering collective play and solidarity among peers; and an exercise of *power to*, as the child's disapproval of the adult-centered remark demonstrates her capacity to act discursively in contesting unjust standards. By articulating Transitivity, Appraisal, and critical feminist theory, it becomes evident, as observed throughout the analysis, that even in playful interactions, children not only reproduce social norms but also *question them*, thereby creating discursive conditions for the recognition and habitability of historically precarious identities.

Thus, building on these insights, which have revealed how meaning is linguistically and interpersonally constructed, I now move toward the cognitive dimension of meaning. In this stage, the analysis is guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), as explored throughout this chapter.

In light of the themes that emerged throughout the children's discourse in Segment 4, particularly the *negotiation of aesthetic values*, the *questioning of difference*, and the *construction of agency and belonging* – this theoretical perspective enables the identification of the conceptual mappings that structure and lend coherence to their utterances, making it possible to trace how embodied experience and linguistic expression intertwine to shape and reconfigure *social values*, *identities*, and *aesthetic hierarchies* within the context of their play.

Accordingly, the table below summarizes the *cross-domain mappings* inferred from the data, systematizing the main examples identified in this segment.

Table 31: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 4 – Group 2

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
SOG: “O brinco é maior que a cabeça da boneca” SOG: “The earring is bigger than the doll's head”	APARENCIA É ESCALA / MEDIDA APPEARANCE IS SCALE / MEASUREMENT
SOG2: “a de X é muito cacheadinho. Bonitona, né?” SOG2: “X's is really curly. Gorgeous, right?”	BELEZA É CABELO BEAUTY IS HAIR
SOG1: “A passarela... só gordura e sem canela” SOG1: “The runway... only fat and no chin”	GORDURA É FALTA DE VALOR FATNESS IS LACK OF VALUE

Source: research data

In analyzing Segment 4, I identified three *conceptual metaphors*, summarized in Table 31, that illustrate how the children activate fundamental cognitive mechanisms to construct

meaning through their interaction with the dolls in Group 2. Among these, the utterance “*The earring is bigger than the doll’s head*” (“*O brinco é maior que a cabeça da boneca*”) stands out as a particularly revealing example. This expression materializes the metaphor APPEARANCE IS SCALE / MEASUREMENT (*APARÊNCIA É ESCALA / MEDIDA*), in which physical proportion becomes a cognitive framework for aesthetic and social evaluation. To my understanding, this mapping reveals how the child’s spontaneous remark weaves together *perception*, *emotion*, and *ideology* within this specific playful context.

In this utterance, the *source domain* of SCALE / MEASUREMENT (notions of size and scale) is projected onto the *target domain* of APPEARANCE, where the exaggeration of the earring’s dimension is interpreted not as a mere observation but as a negative aesthetic marker that deviates from an implicit ideal of harmony and beauty. This metaphorical relationship exemplifies how the child’s perceptual experience becomes a foundation for *social judgment*, demonstrating that *physical disproportion* is cognitively associated with *aesthetic inadequacy*. Such instances confirm that metaphors are not ornamental but functional, they organize and sustain *cognitive schemas of valorization and depreciation* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980, 1999).

Furthermore, as Lakoff (1993) explains through the *Invariance Principle*, not every element of the source domain is transferred to the target; only features that remain conceptually coherent are preserved. In this case, the notion of *disproportion* is selectively *projected*, functioning as an *evaluative sign* rather than a neutral reference to size. This selectivity illustrates, then, how metaphor in this context operates as a filtering mechanism, transforming *perceptual experience* into *systems of shared cultural meaning*. Through this process, what initially appears as a simple sensory perception of form acquires symbolic weight and becomes a shared cultural value. In this sense, the utterance exposes how linguistic expression contributes to the reproduction, and, to some extent, the naturalization, of normative beauty standards within the discourse produced by SOG from Group 1.

The table below illustrates the organization of these metaphors in terms of their *source* and *target domains*. See below:

Table 32: Source Domain and Target Domain – Segment 4 – Group 2

Source Domain	Target Domain
SCALE / MEASUREMENT	APPEARANCE
HAIR	BEAUTY
FATNESS	LACK OF VALUE

Source: research data

Within these domains, I observe that SOG2's remark, "*X's is really curly. Pretty one, right?*" ("*a de X é muito cacheadinho. Bonitona, né?*"), evokes the *conceptual metaphor* BEAUTY IS HAIR (*BELEZA É CABELO*). In this utterance, I interpret that the reference to hair transcends mere physical description: it functions *metonymically* to represent the body as a whole, while simultaneously acquiring a metaphorical dimension. Through this cognitive interplay, hair becomes a symbolic locus of beauty, a feature through which social value and admiration are constructed and negotiated.

This logic illustrates how, as Kövecses (2010) argues, *conceptual metaphor* functions not merely as a linguistic device but as a *systematic cognitive mechanism* that organizes social experience, internalizing hegemonic aesthetic standards that link *hair* to *identity* and *attractiveness*. At the same time, the relation *hair* → *body* supports Barcelona's (2003) claim that *metaphor* and *metonymy* work interdependently: while *metaphor* connects distinct conceptual domains (*hair* = *beauty*), *metonymy* enables a part to evoke the whole (*hair* = *body*). Together, these cognitive operations grant symbolic centrality to the construction of *identity*.

This dynamic becomes even more revealing when viewed through feminist and decolonial perspectives. As Espinosa Miñoso (2014, 2017) reminds us, Eurocentric beauty ideals, particularly the privileging of straight hair over curly hair, operate as forms of symbolic oppression, delimiting which bodies are legitimized as beautiful and desirable. Perhaps for this very reason, I was not surprised that SOG2's lexical choice "*really curly*" drew my attention: the expression did not sound entirely spontaneous, but rather echoed a discourse already internalized and naturalized within social interaction.

From the perspective of the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), it could be seen that this linguistic construction activates a *relational attributive process* associated with an *Appreciation of composition*, since it evaluates hair texture as a distinctive feature. The intensifier *really* operates within the subsystem of *graduation*, amplifying the emphasis on the physical attribute. However, this intensification is not neutral. In my view, by reinforcing the marker "*curly*", SOG2 reinscribes a normative regime that transforms hair into a criterion of social value.

In turn, from a Cognitive Linguistics framework, this formulation can be read both as *metonymy*, where a part evokes the *body* and, by extension, *identity*; and as *metaphor*, structuring the association *hair* = *beauty*. Thus, rather than mere repetition, this interplay exemplifies the *principle of embodiment* (Johnson, 1987; 2017), demonstrating how concrete sensori-motor perceptions, such as hair texture, can trigger complex social judgments and sustain ideologies of beauty.

In summary, these analytical perspectives converge to demonstrate that the child's utterance does more than merely describe; it actively reconstitutes meaning within broader cultural frameworks. From a systemic-functional perspective, what emerges is the activation of intensified evaluative resources that attribute heightened significance to the doll's physical features. From a cognitive perspective, the utterance illustrates the *projection* of bodily attributes, such as hair texture, onto abstract social values, thereby transforming a concrete physical characteristic into a socially charged marker. Seen in conjunction, these perspectives reveal that the comment participates in the reproduction of an exclusionary aesthetic regime, in which hair texture functions as a criterion of belonging or exclusion. In this sense, it can be observed that the utterance not only reflects but also reinforces racialized and gendered hierarchies that regulate which bodies are recognized as beautiful and legitimate.

This same logic extends to the metaphor *FATNESS IS LACK OF VALUE* (*GORDURA É FALTA DE VALOR*), manifested not only in the utterance “*The runway... only fat and no chin*” (“*A passarela... só gordura e sem canela*”), but also as part of a broader process of discursive objectification. Here, the body is fragmented into physical traits – “*gordura*”, “*canela*” / “*fat*”, “*chin*” – which exemplify the *metonymic* mechanism by which parts stand for the whole. This reduction transforms isolated features into *criteria of value*, diverting attention from the integrated subject. The utterance thus suggests the performance of a *judgmental act*, as the selected terms carry a distinctly *pejorative* load and convey semantic nuances of disdain and inadequacy. Ultimately, such linguistic choices reinforce aesthetic hierarchies and legitimize exclusion through discourse.

Within this metaphorical schema, the *source domain* of *FATNESS*, including *higher body weight*, *proportions* and *limbs*, maps onto the *target domain* of *LACK OF VALUE*, where categories such as *beauty*, *adequacy*, and *acceptability* are not constructed in this case. The body is therefore not described neutrally but becomes a symbolic measure through which recognition or stigmatization is assigned. This dynamic reflects the *principle of embodiment* (Johnson, 1987), according to which aesthetic evaluation arises from concrete sensory experience *projected* onto abstract conceptual domains. As Gibbs (2006) notes, metaphors and judgments are grounded in embodied experience: terms like “*gordura*” (fat) and “*canela*” (chin) operate, then, as perceptual triggers that activate broader social schemas of value and difference.

Moreover, this mapping also reflects Lakoff's (1993) *Invariance Principle*, according to which only certain features of the *source domain* are carried over to the *target*, in this case, those linked to excess and disproportion. These traits are reinterpreted as symbolic signs of aesthetic inadequacy, while more neutral or positive bodily features are left out of the mapping.

SOG1's utterance, then, shows how metaphorical projection filters lived experience in a selective way, privileging what aligns with hegemonic norms and leaving aside what might question them.

From a critical standpoint, I understand this metaphor as sustaining a logic of exclusion which, as Beauvoir (1949) already observed, subjugates the female body to a normative gaze. It turns the body into something to be inspected, controlled, and compared. When SOG1 makes this remark, I do not see it as a neutral description. To me, it repeats a familiar cultural pattern, one that defines *whose bodies are considered acceptable* and *whose are not*. In that moment, language stops describing and starts judging. I see the metaphor *FATNESS IS LACK OF VALUE* as deeply *political*, since it supports subtle forms of control and exclusion over women's bodies that still circulate in dominant norms.

This act of judging, in my interpretation, goes beyond what is said; it shows up in how the children play. Being looked at seems to matter as much as playing itself. The idea of the "runway" (*passarela*) strengthens that impression. Following *Conceptual Blending Theory* (Fauconnier; Turner, 2002), I understand it as the meeting of two spaces, for instance: *their imaginative play* and *the social world of fashion*. In this *blend*, I see that the dolls are no longer just toys, they become figures performing the same *visibility* and *judgment* that exist outside the playroom. As Grady *et al.* (1999) suggest, blending doesn't simply combine ideas; it generates something new.

To me, these processes reveal a *tension* that it is often notice between *repetition* and *resistance*. In other words, the children echo beauty ideals, but through imagination they also open small, meaningful cracks where other possibilities appear. Their discourse in play, then, weaves *metaphor*, *metonymy*, *embodiment*, and *blending*, showing how their *bodily experience* shapes how identity is understood. I can observe that even when dominant ideals persist in their discourse, their imagination gives them room to rethink difference.

In Segment 4, this becomes clearer. The metaphors *APPEARANCE IS SCALE / MEASUREMENT*, *BEAUTY IS HAIR* and *FATNESS IS LACK OF VALUE* reflect how appearance turns into a measure of *belonging* or *exclusion*. From a feminist and decolonial view, these ideas recall Beauvoir's (1949) reflections on the constructed female body and Espinosa Miñoso's (2014, 2017) critique of Eurocentric beauty ideals that urge us to embrace bodily and epistemic diversity.

Within this dynamic, I can observe that the levels of empowerment proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007) intersect. *Power over* begins to give way to *power to* and *power with*, as seen when C6 proudly says her doll "*had already walked the runway*", and the group responds

with joy and cooperation. These moments remind me that empowerment is lived through play itself, when imagination redrafts boundaries and gives children a sense of voice and worth. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1998) notion of play as a creative developmental space and with Heljakka's (2013) idea of playful agency as a way of building meaning. Here, *power within* emerges as confidence, curiosity, and belonging, the emotional ground of empowerment in action.

Thus, Segment 4 encapsulates the ambivalence of children's discourse: while it reproduces exclusionary logics, it simultaneously creates openings for negotiation and agency. Play, in this sense, becomes a paradoxical space, where empowerment is at once imagined and constrained, fragile yet transformative.

Segment 5 – Play-based activity (group 2)

Table 33: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 5

Segment 5				
Brazilian Portuguese				
C5: Bota a boneca aqui. Bota a boneca aqui. ((pedido para C6 colocar a boneca sem cabelo na cadeira de rodas)) C5: Eu acho que ela tá colada. C6: Ela senta. ((mostrando a boneca cadeirante)) C6: Tá vendo, olha. Pega na cintura. C6: Vou ajudar ela. ((brincando com a boneca cadeirante)) C6: Pega a tua aqui. ((pedindo a de C5)) C6: Ah não, a tua não vai. C6: Vai ajudar ela. ((usando a boneca sem cabelo para empurrar a boneca cadeirante))				
English:				
C5: Put the doll here. Put the doll here. ((asking for C6 to place the bald doll in the wheelchair)) C5: I think she's stuck. C6: She sits. ((showing the doll in the wheelchair)) C6: See, look. It clips onto the waist. C6: I'll help her. ((playing with the doll in the wheelchair)) C6: Grab yours here. ((asking for C5's doll)) C6: Oh no, yours won't work. C6: It's going to help her. ((using the bald doll to push the doll in the wheelchair))				
Transitivity System				
Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
C5: "Bota a boneca aqui. Bota a boneca aqui." C5: "Put the doll here. Put the doll here"	Material (directive/action)	bota / put	Actor: C5 Goal: a boneca / the doll	Circ: localização "aqui / here"

C5: “Eu acho que ela tá colada” C5: “I think she is stuck”	Mental (cognitive) + Relational (attributive)	acho / think; tá / is	Senser: eu / I; Phenomenon: ela tá colada / she is stuck Carrier: ela / she Attribute: colada / stuck	--
C6: “Ela senta.” C6: “She sits”	Material (action)	senta / sits	Actor: ela / she (the doll)	--
C6: “Pega na cintura” C6: “It clips onto the waist”	Material (descritivo, não diretivo)	Pega / clips	Ator: o suporte plástico (implícito) Meta: cintura da boneca	Circ: localização “na cintura”
C6: “Vou ajudar ela” C6: “I will help her”	Material (action)	ajudar / help	Actor: eu / I Goal: ela / her (the doll)	--
C6: “Pega a tua aqui” C6: “Take yours here”	Material (directive)	pega / take	Actor: tu (implícito) / you (implicit); Goal: a tua / yours	Circ: localização “aqui / here”
C6: “Ah não, a tua não vai” C6: “Oh no, yours won’t go”	Relational (attributive, ability/possibility)	vai / goes (modal)	Carrier: a tua / yours (the doll) Attribute: não vai / cannot go	--
C6: “Vai ajudar ela” C6: “Go help her”	Material (action)	ajudar / help	Actor: a tua / yours (the doll) Goal: ela / her (the wheelchair doll)	--
Appraisal System				
Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	
C5: “Bota a boneca aqui. Bota a boneca aqui” C5: “Put the doll here. Put the doll here”	Inclination + (playful engagement: expectation)	--	Valuation + (caring action toward the hairless doll)	
C5: “Eu acho que ela tá colada” C5: “I think she is stuck”	Security- (uncertainty: doubt whether the doll is stuck)	--	Composition- (negative physical evaluation: “stuck”)	
C6: “Ela senta” C6: “She sits”	Happiness+ (satisfaction with the doll’s functionality)	--	Valuation + (recognition of possibility of action)	
C6: “Vou ajudar ela” C6: “I will help her”	Satisfaction+ (affective involvement: caring for the doll)	Propriety+ (acting in solidarity)	Valuation + (help as a meaningful act)	
C6: “Ah não, a tua não vai” C6: “Oh no, yours won’t go”	--	Capacity- (denial of ability attributed to the peer’s doll)	--	
C6: “Vai ajudar ela” C6: “Go help her”	Satisfaction+ (joy in cooperating)	Propriety+ (solidary, fair action)	Valuation + (inclusive and collaborative action)	

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

Firstly, from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), when looking at the analysis of Table 33, I observe a predominance of *material* and

relational processes, which structure C5 and C6's play experience as both *performative* and *evaluative*. This becomes evident from the very beginning, when C5 repeatedly insists: "Put the doll here. Put the doll here" ("Bota a boneca aqui. Bota a boneca aqui"). In this case, the verb *bota* (*put*) realizes a *material directive process*, where the peer functions as an implicit Actor and the doll as the Goal. Through transitivity, the utterance organizes the play scene as a concrete and observable action within the shared space of interaction.

When I reflect on this moment, I realize that the *material side* of the process goes further than description alone. Looking at C5's words through the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), what stands out to me is an *affect of positive satisfaction*. The child's tone, the insistence in repeating the request, it all carries *excitement*, a *sense of anticipation*, and *playful energy*. In my interpretation, C5's insistence makes the utterance emotionally charged; it turns what could be a simple directive into something more relational. I see in it an act of *care*, even *inclusion*, since C5's call to C6, the one holding the wheelchair doll, invites her to join in, to share the moment.

Right after that, when C6 says, "*She sits*" and "*I will help her*", I observe that something more happens there. The actions, even when simple, carry a *depth of meaning*. In that brief exchange, C6 becomes the one who *acts*, and the doll, the one in the wheelchair, receives the gesture. What unfolds between suggests an instinctive *act of care*. Through the Appraisal lens, that moment can be read as a *moral stance*, that is, doing what feels right (*Propriety+*), infused with genuine warmth (*Satisfaction+*). Here, *empathy* and *inclusion* seem to emerge naturally; no one names them, they simply happen. In this play situation, I see that C5 and C6 are not merely imitating adult behavior, they are *creating* something of their own, *transforming the dolls into agents* in a shared practice of *care*. This is very deep.

It reminds me of my time at GPSM, during Professor Danielle Almeida's supervision. We once had a student who used a wheelchair, the first in our group. At that time, "inclusion" was not a word we used much. We had to learn it slowly, *in practice*, through being together. Watching these children now, I recognize that same kind of learning unfolding again. Inclusion here is not really declared, pronounced; it is lived, quietly, through play.

In this regard, when I turn my attention back to this segment, I see that when C6 says, "*Go help her*", inviting the hairless doll to push the one in the wheelchair, the scene seems to expand this sense of inclusion. The act of pushing becomes visible to me: C6 *sets the dolls in motion*, making them cease to be mere objects and begin to act, in my interpretation, as *participants/agents* in a small world of their own, one grounded in *care*, *cooperation*, and *shared engagement*. Through the lens of the Appraisal System, I observe a subtle movement

from *Affect* (the emotional dimension) to *Judgment* (the ethical one). “Helping”, as uttered by C6, is not just an action; it becomes a *moral gesture*. The two dolls, one hairless and the other in a wheelchair, thus, in my interpretation, come to represent *solidarity* and *empathy*, made tangible through a *collective act of play* (Heljakka, 2013).

Soon after, I notice that this moment continues to unfold as other processes begin to emerge. For instance, when C5 says, “*I think she is stuck*”, I can identify a *mental process* (*I think*) linked to a *relational* one (*is stuck*). In my view, this combination suggests both an observational and an evaluative unfolding. C5 seems to be thinking aloud, noticing the doll’s limitations, perhaps even its flaws. At this point, I can trace elements of *Security-* (uncertainty) and *Composition-* (a negative evaluation of form). For a brief moment, play turns into reflection. I used to think out loud like that when I played with my twin sister as a child. Yet, it is important to highlight that, although it may sound like mere self-talk, C5 makes a *conscious cognitive decision* to voice her thought to the other children. From that moment, she begins to look at the doll differently, not only as a toy but as an object with its own constraints, how it works and what it can or cannot do. In doing so, she *shares this reflection with her peers*, transforming a personal realization into a collective one.

Then, it becomes clear that C5’s thought does not last long, since C6 shifts the meaning once again. She softly says, “*She sits*”. I notice that it is a short, almost imperceptible line, but, in my interpretation, it changes the entire scene of this dialogue for a single reason: the doll is no longer stuck, she becomes capable of sitting. Through C5’s speech, I can see that she now recognizes a sense of agency in the doll’s body, *movement* and *possibility*. This can be perceived even without watching the video, because of what C6 brings into her words: tone, curiosity, and a desire to make sense of things. In Appraisal terms, I understand this moment as carrying *Happiness+* (the joy of discovering ability) and *Valuation+* (the recognition of worth). Following this line of thought, a moment later, C6 adds, “*See? Look. It clips onto the waist*”. Here, she blends *perception* (*see*) with a *material process* (*clips*), directing attention not to herself but to the small mechanism that enables movement. To me, this sentence does not sound like a command at all; it expresses a discovery being shared, a spontaneous explanation, a child teaching by showing what she has just understood. In that gesture, *play becomes exploration*, a moment of understanding built together, step by step, through curiosity and wonder.

Still, I can observe that, as in other parts of the data, there are cracks in this harmony. For instance, when C6 exclaims, “*Oh no, yours won’t go*”, I understand that she introduces a note of *tension* into the experience. This occurs because the sentence carries a *relational attributive process* marked by *negative modalization*, a way of assigning inability. From an

Appraisal perspective, this comment registers as *Capacity*–, subtly reminding us that exclusion can still emerge even in contexts where inclusion is being learned. However, I notice that this *negative modalization* does not last long, since almost immediately she corrects herself, saying, “*Yours will help her*”. At that moment, the hairless doll, previously excluded, becomes the *Actor* again, this time within a *cooperative process*. I can see that the *evaluation*, then, shifts back to *Satisfaction*+, *Propriety*+, and *Valuation*+. Thus, what could have remained a moment of denial turns into *repair*, a small act of discursive balance that restores solidarity and reinforces connection.

Based on this analysis, I see how Transitivity and Appraisal intertwine in such a way that, through their analytical categories, they reveal patterns within a *complex network of meaning*. The children’s language, even when it appears simple or “innocent,” as mentioned earlier, both mirrors and resists the social hierarchies around them. I notice that throughout this segment, there are moments when negative Judgments of *Capacity*– echo familiar cultural patterns of exclusion and stigma. Yet, within the same flow of reasoning, even before the child finishes her utterance, their words shift, and positive Judgments of *Propriety*+ and *Valuation*+ emerge. I observe how these nuances transform the dolls into figures of inclusion and empathy. In this back-and-forth movement, I come to understand that play, in fact, becomes a space where discourse itself performs the work of empowerment. There is no doubt. Following Charlier and Caubergs (2007), I can recognize in this segment traces of *power within*, a sense of pride and affirmation; *power with*, solidarity built through interaction; and *power to*, the discursive ability to act against limitation and exclusion.

Therefore, what this analysis demonstrates to me is that, even in play, language is never neutral, for the analyses have shown that *play* shapes *experience*, *assigns value*, and allows children to *imagine identities*. I can also observe that through the ways the children speak about the wheelchair doll and the hairless doll, as figures of *care*, *help*, and *performance*, they both reproduce certain social attitudes and transform them through *critical reflection*, even within play. In doing so, they make room for what Butler (2006) calls the *habitability of precarious identities*, that is, a way for vulnerability itself to find space within discourse. This, in turn, echoes bell hooks’ (1986) concern with the *visibility of marginalized voices*. By turning their dolls into visible, cared-for, and active participants, C5 and C6 open cracks in dominant narratives of beauty and belonging. Through these small gestures, they *create new possibilities for recognition*, not only for their dolls, but symbolically for themselves and for women more broadly.

Thus, after tracing these meanings through Transitivity and Appraisal, I move now to the same segment from a different angle, that of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999).

On this ground, I identified a set of cross-domain mappings that show how the children project *concrete, sensory experiences* into *abstract* categories of *value* and *identity*. The table below gathers these mappings as a way of visualizing how their play organizes meaning, *cognitively, affectively, and socially*.

Table 34: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 5 – Group 2

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
C5: <i>Eu acho que ela tá colada.</i> C5: <i>I think she is stuck.</i>	LIMITAÇÃO É IMOBILIDADE LIMITATION IS IMMOBILITY
C6: <i>Ela senta.</i> C6: <i>She sits.</i>	FUNCIONALIDADE É MOBILIDADE / AÇÃO FUNCTIONALITY IS MOBILITY / ACTION
C6: <i>Vou ajudar ela.</i> C6: <i>I will help her.</i>	AJUDAR É APOIAR HELPING IS SUPPORTING
C6: <i>Vai ajudar ela.</i> C6: <i>Go help her.</i>	AJUDAR É AVANÇAR JUNTOS HELPING IS MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Source: research data

Table 34 concerns the conceptual metaphors inferred through *cross-domain mapping* in Segment 5. When we look at it, it is possible to observe that only C5 and C6 take part in the dialogue, and that what happens between them goes far beyond play. That is, as they move the dolls and speak through them, I notice that they are not merely performing actions but *shaping meaning in the moment*, a phenomenon already identified through the analyses based on Transitivity and the Appraisal System. However, it is worth noting that C5's remark that the doll is "*glued*" ("*colada*"), C6's insistence that "*she sits*" ("*ela senta*"), and their offers of help also suggest, in my view, how both girls attribute *value, agency, and care* to the dolls. To me, this dynamic process through which the children make sense of the world together can be identified not only through the evaluation of their emotions but also through the *mapping of conceptual metaphors*. Let us look at this more closely below.

From my point of view, these brief exchanges trigger an entire chain of cognitive activity, namely, *metaphor, metonymy, and even conceptual blending*, all operating simultaneously. Their dialogue reveals how figurative thinking emerges from bodily experience, that is, how *perception, touch, and speech* combine to organize understanding. Through these movements, I can observe that the children are not merely commenting on limitation; they are *re-imagining it*. Thus, what begins as the observation of a restriction becomes a way of *exploring empathy* and the *possibility of empowerment*.

As an example, I begin with C5's line, "*I think she is glued*" ("*Eu acho que ela tá colada*"). To me, this small observation activates the conceptual metaphor LIMITATION IS IMMOBILITY (*LIMITAÇÃO É IMOBILIDADE*). C5's sense that something will not move, that feeling of being fixed, becomes, in my interpretation, a *mental model of incapacity*. Seen through Johnson's (1987) *embodiment principle*, I understand that C5's perception is *bodily before it is linguistic* as she experiences the doll's resistance and translates it into meaning. Still, as Lakoff (1993) reminds us in the *Invariance Principle*, the mapping is selective. And what do I mean by that? I mean that what matters to C5 here is not the glue itself, not permanence or stickiness, but the *sense of being held still, of restricted motion*. That is what gets carried over. When C5 filters her perception in this way, she transforms a simple physical impression into a *social statement*. The doll's immobility thus becomes a *metaphor for limitation*, a small but significant *re-telling of what it means to move, to act, and to be seen as capable*.

In the case of C6's example, "*She sits*" ("*Ela senta*"), I notice that the child activates the conceptual metaphor FUNCTIONALITY IS MOBILITY / ACTION (*FUNCIONALIDADE É MOBILIDADE / AÇÃO*), by reinterpreting this very basic bodily gesture as a sign of ability. Drawing on Johnson's (1987; 2017) notion of *embodiment*, I read this act of sitting as grounded in the sensory experience of *balance and stability*. Here, that concrete experience is projected onto a more abstract domain, that is, the very idea of *agency* itself. Sitting becomes proof of capacity, a small yet powerful sign of *being able to*.

Thus, I can observe that, even while being a wheelchair user, she demonstrates *kinesthetic movement* in her body, movements so strongly advocated as essential by Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002). I find it important to emphasize this *articulation in the doll's body*. This is, indeed, a Barbie doll with a salient *intersectional representation*, as she can only sit in the wheelchair because her body contains the *articulations*, the means, that make this possible. This makes this Barbie a highly meaningful object, one that, I would argue, not only sustains but even goes beyond what the authors (ibid.) discussed. She represents not only women in motion, but what kind of motion, I ask? The motion of *being able to sit*, and, in doing so, to represent a *woman who uses a wheelchair*.

Moreover, I perceive that within the metaphor FUNCTIONALITY IS MOBILITY / ACTION, there is also a *metonymic layer* at work. As Barcelona (2003) argues, a single motor act can represent the function of the entire body. In this case, *sitting* stands not merely for a posture but for an *integrated body*, a body that walks the runway. Through this substitution, the action extends beyond the moment itself, symbolically expanding the doll's functionality. Lakoff's (1993) *Invariance Principle* helps explain the selectivity of this mapping. According to this principle,

only certain features of the source domain are carried over, in this case, *balance*, *control*, and *physical presence*, while others, such as comfort, intention, or effort, are left behind. However, what remains is enough to shift meaning. The doll's sitting posture ceases to be a mere movement and becomes a *marker of agency*, even of *legitimacy*. To me, this is the heart of what happens here: with one simple line, "*She sits*", C6 turns an embodied act into a *sign of empowerment*. The physical gesture becomes discourse; it speaks of *capability*, *worth*, and *recognition*. In that moment, the doll's body is affirmed as *functional*, *whole*, and *worthy of being seen*.

Following this line of reasoning, when C6 says, "*I will help her*" ("*Vou ajudar ela*"), the tone of the scene changes. I notice that the focus shifts away from limitation and functionality toward something warmer, *solidarity* and *care*, as previously evidenced in the functional analysis. Beneath those few words, I was able to map the metaphor HELPING IS SUPPORTING (AJUDAR É APOIAR). This is because the act of helping, simple and physical, carries an *embodied sense of strength*. It emerges from lived, sensorimotor experience, from the everyday feeling of holding, lifting, or supporting someone. Through this embodied base, *empowerment begins to appear as an act of care itself*.

I can also observe a *metonymic layer* at work here. For instance, the small gesture of helping the doll move seems to stand for a quiet transformation from *limitation to participation*. In my interpretation, what appears to be a simple act of assistance becomes, at another level, an act of *inclusion*. The children are not merely moving the wheelchair Barbie forward; they are allowing her to take part, granting her presence in the act of *parading*, a body performing visibility. According to Barcelona (2003), this occurs because *metaphor* and *metonymy* often move side by side, feeding into each other. Thus, the word *help* holds that tension perfectly: it names the immediate gesture, *a hand extended*, *a push*, and at the same time carries a broader sense of *belonging* and *shared agency*.

Therefore, this moment, though emerging from a simple phrase and gesture, becomes particularly rich in its simplicity, since within it, it is also possible to find *traces of conceptual blending* (Fauconnier; Turner, 2002). This is because I observe two mental spaces overlapping here, the imaginative world of dolls and the social world of caregiving. When they merge, a new layer of meaning emerges: the doll ceases to be a passive object and becomes a symbol of *solidarity* and *shared responsibility*.

With this in mind, I notice that later, when C6 says, "*Go help her*" ("*Vai ajudar ela*"), that same idea expands. What began as a single act turns into a *collective one*. In this utterance, I can identify the metaphor HELPING IS MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER (AJUDAR É AVANÇAR JUNTOS).

Empowerment here is no longer individual, but it is *built between participants, co-created through interaction*. Thus, I see that another *blend* takes form in the mind, that is, *play* and *cooperation* merge into a *single frame*, one where the dolls are not acted upon but *act together*.

I see, then, that beneath all these aspects lies *embodiment*. The physical rhythm of *helping together*, two hands moving, small bodies coordinating, gives life to the notion of *solidarity*. Through C6's words and actions, it becomes possible to observe how *metaphor*, *metonymy*, and *blending* converge, transforming play into a space where exclusion quietly dissolves into connection, where *empathy* and *cooperation* take shape, becoming the very way the children imagine what it means *to act* and *to care*.

As I reach the end of this analysis, what stands out to me in Segment 5 is the way the dialogue carries both *repetition* and *renewal*. I can observe that the children's words mirror social limits while, at the same time, opening small windows through which *empowerment* can appear. From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, I interpret that the metaphors LIMITATION IS IMMOBILITY, FUNCTIONALITY IS MOBILITY / ACTION, HELPING IS SUPPORTING, and HELPING IS MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER indicate how the bodily sensations of *restriction*, *movement*, and *solidarity* are projected onto the dolls. Through these projections, play can be *witnessed as a space where meanings are negotiated, felt, and tested*.

Yet, when I turn back to the feminist perspectives guiding this study, the picture becomes more complex. Through the contributions of Beauvoir (1949), I realize that, in this specific segment, considering the developments of this analysis, the female body, that has long been defined through *limitation*, *shaped*, *contained*, and *disciplined*, a logic that echoes faintly in C5's image of immobility, in this play context, the children transform it into an object where this body could be contemplated through practices built on *care*, *mutuality*, and *recognition*. Something that I can see taking form in C6's repeated invitations to help.

Thus, considering these dynamics, I conclude that, in this segment, the conditions for empowerment proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007) emerge in *uneven* and *partial* ways. While *power over* manifests as a residual structure of domination, evident in the reproduction of bodily limitation, forms of *power to* and *power with* arise more constructively, through the attribution of agency and the collaborative practice of helping. *Power within*, however, appears only incipiently, as gestures of self-affirmation remain constrained by hegemonic ideals of beauty and ability.

In this regard, these nuances demonstrate that *empowerment* here is not absent, but *developing within tension* as it takes shape in the interplay between *normative constraint* and

the *imaginative re-signification* that enables children to envision alternative forms of *inclusion* and *recognition*.

Segment 6 – Play-based activity (group 2)

Table 35: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 6

Segment 6				
Brazilian Portuguese				
C5: Ela já nasceu com o cabelo assim. C6: Esse é o meu cabelo quando eu acordo. ((mexendo no cabelo da boneca cadeirante)) C5: [risos] C6: Esse é meu cabelo quando eu... C6: Esse é meu cabelo quando eu molho. ((para C7 com a boneca Síndrome de Down)) C6: Esse é meu cabelo quando seca. ((para a boneca cadeirante)) C7: Por que tu não vem com o cabelo solto? C6: Porque não dá tempo... porque toda vez que eu acordo tá desajeitado. C6: Olha... C5: Mas tu sempre tá primeiro que eu. C6: Ahn? C5: Sempre tá aqui primeiro que eu.				
English:				
C5: She was already born with hair like this. C6: This is my hair when I wake up. ((touching the hair of the wheelchair doll)) C5: [laughs] C6: This is my hair when I... C6: This is my hair when I wet it. ((to C7 with the Down syndrome doll)) C6: This is my hair when it dries. ((to the wheelchair doll)) C7: Why don't you wear your hair down? C6: Because there's no time... because every time I wake up it's messy. C6: Look... C5: But you're always here before me. C6: Huh? C5: You're always here before me.				
Transitivity System				
Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
C5: “Ela já nasceu com o cabelo assim.” C5: “She was already born with hair like this”	Material (existential/biological)	<i>nasceu / was born</i>	Actor: ela / she (the doll) Goal: cabelo / hair	Circ: já / already; assim / like this
C6: “Esse é o meu cabelo quando eu acordo” C6: “This is my hair when I wake up”	Relational attributive (identification) + Material (habitual)	<i>é / is acordo / wake up</i>	Carrier: esse / this (doll's hair) Attribute: meu cabelo / my hair	Circ: quando eu acordo / when I wake up
C5: [risos] C5: [laughs]	C5: [risos]	--	Behaver: C5	--
C6: “Esse é meu cabelo quando eu molho.”	Relational attributive + Material (action)	<i>é / is molho / wet</i>	Carrier: esse / this (doll's hair)	Circ: quando eu molho / when I wet it

C6: "This is my hair when I wet it"			Attribute: meu cabelo / my hair	
C6: "Esse é meu cabelo quando seca." C6: "This is my hair when it dries"	Relational attributive + Material (process of state)	é / is seca / dries	Carrier: esse / this (doll's hair) Attribute: meu cabelo / my hair	Circ: quando seca / when it dries
C7: "Por que tu não vem com o cabelo solto?" C7: "Why don't you wear your hair down?"	Material (action)	vem / wear	Actor: tu / you (C6) Goal: cabelo solto / hair down	Circ: por quê / why
C6: "Porque não dá tempo..." C6: "Because there's no time..."	Relational attributive (circumstantial)	dá / there is (time)	Carrier: tempo / time	Attribute: não dá / there isn't enough
C6: "porque toda vez que eu acordo tá desajeitado" C6: "because every time I wake up it's messy"	Relational attributive (state) + Material	tá / is acordo / wake up	Carrier: cabelo / hair (implicit) Attribute: desajeitado / messy	Circ: toda vez que eu acordo / every time I wake up
C5: "Mas tu sempre tá primeiro que eu." C5: "But you're always here before me"	Relational attributive (comparative)	tá / are	Carrier: tu / you	Attribute: primeiro que eu / earlier than me

Appraisal System

Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation
C5: "Ela já nasceu com o cabelo assim." C5: "She was already born with hair like this"	--	Normality+ (acknowledges natural condition)	Valuation+ (validation of hair type)
C6: "Esse é o meu cabelo quando eu acordo." C6: "This is my hair when I wake up"	Happiness- / Satisfaction- (ironic self-deprecation)	Normality- (implies disorder in her own appearance)	Composition- (hair as messy upon waking)
C5: [risos] C5: [laughs]	Happiness+ (amusement at peer's irony)	--	--
C6: "Esse é meu cabelo quando eu molho." C6: "This is my hair when I wet it"	Happiness- / Satisfaction- (ironic tone continues)	--	Composition (evaluating hair under change; neutral-to-negative)
C6: "Esse é meu cabelo quando seca." C6: "This is my hair when it dries"	Happiness- / Satisfaction- (sarcasm persists: dryness = disorder)	--	Composition- (negative evaluation of hair's appearance when dry)
C7: "Por que tu não vem com o cabelo solto?" C7: "Why don't you wear your hair down?"	--	Normality- (critique of peer's usual choice: deviation from expected feminine appearance)	--
C6: "Porque não dá tempo..." C6: "Because there's no time..."	--	Capacity- (limitation: inability to prepare hair)	--

C6: “porque toda vez que eu acordo tá desajeitado” C6: “because every time I wake up it’s messy”	--	--	Composition- (negative aesthetic judgment: messy hair)
C5: “Mas tu sempre tá primeiro que eu.” C5: “But you’re always here before me”	--	Normality+ (acknowledges punctuality/constancy of peer)	--

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

When I look at the utterances in Table 35 and begin examining them through the Transitivity framework (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), I notice that Segment 6 stands out for its extensive use of *relational attributive processes*, sometimes blending with *material ones*. What I find compelling here is how this pattern seems to *mirror* the children’s effort, especially C6’s, to project pieces of their own lived experience onto the dolls. I interpret that, in this dialogue, the dolls act as *small mirrors* through which the children’s *identity* and *expression* take shape.

If we look at C5’s line, for instance, “*She was already born with hair like this*” (“*Ela já nasceu com o cabelo assim*”), it is possible to notice that, even though it appears to be an “innocent” remark, the clause encodes a *material–existential process* (*nasceu* / *was born*) that subtly makes the doll’s hair condition appear *innate*, *natural*, and *unquestionable*. Thus, through the Appraisal lens, I read this utterance as carrying a *very strong affirmation*, that is, both a positive Judgment of normality and a *positive Appreciation of value*. I see that C5’s utterance neither praises nor criticizes the hair; she *accepts it*. In that acceptance, I understand that the doll’s appearance is *validated as natural*, as something that needs no correction. To me, C5 is saying, in her own way, *this already belongs to her*. Thus, the statement *resists any notion of defect or lack*, transforming *difference* into *belonging*. I understand this as a *small but powerful move*, meaning an *act of care* that grants the doll, and perhaps by reflection the child herself, a *sense of inherent worth*.

Moving further into the dialogue, I see that C6 changes her discourse. Her speech turns inward, becoming more *self-referential*. It is possible to observe that she begins comparing herself to the dolls, noticing similarities between *her body* and *theirs*. When she says, “*This is my hair when I wake up*” (“*Esse é o meu cabelo quando eu acordo*”), she uses a *relational attributive process* (*é* / *is*), mixed with a habitual *material one* (*acordo* / *wake up*). Thus, I understand that this utterance, which might seem like a simple identification, carries more weight than that. To me, this line has an *ironic undertone*, that is, a kind of “playful self-deprecation”. Within the Appraisal System, I read traces of *Happiness– / Satisfaction–*,

Normality—, and *Composition*—. Hence, I see that *irony* runs through her discourse. In my interpretation, the irony works in two directions: she laughs at herself while also acknowledging what she perceives. In doing so, I see that C6 *frames* her hair as *messy*, *unaligned*, maybe even “*wrong*” by certain social standards, I mean, of ‘straight’ or ‘neat’ hair. I pause on the word *neat* because, in my own experience, people often use it to describe *straight hair*, hair that has been *brushed*, *ironed*, or *TAMED*. The implication I see here is clear: only some textures are seen as “organized,” while others fall outside that norm.

That is why I find this moment so meaningful. C6’s utterance carries more than humor; her words *call for an act of awareness*. By projecting her own image onto the doll, she turns play into *self-commentary*, an *ironic mirror* of the beauty standards she already seems to recognize. The doll, then, in my interpretation, becomes a *surface where she can test* and even *soften those pressures*. In this small exchange, the *Barbie doll stops being just a doll* and becomes a *symbolic stage* where C6 *performs*, *negotiates*, and *questions* the distance between *who she is* and *what she is told she should be*.

At this point, however, I interpret that the scene takes on a more complicated dimension. It is C6, a Black girl with curly hair, who utters the depreciative comments about her own condition. This fact reveals how the dynamics of play are never entirely free from the weight of hegemonic discourses: they reproduce the hierarchies and exclusions that circulate in the wider cultural system. The child’s ironic or playful stance cannot entirely shield her from the symbolic violence of a cultural system that privileges whiteness and straight hair as markers of beauty and normality.

Such an observation compels a critical question: “*where does this belief come from?*”. I doubt that such judgments about one’s own body appear out of nowhere. They are *learned*, over time, through constant exposure to messages that tie worth and belonging to Eurocentric ideas of beauty. These messages, then, come from everywhere, in which children accumulate until they sound like common sense. Seen from this angle, C6’s comment cannot be read just a personal reflection. I understand that it carries the weight of a larger cultural script, one that has settled into her speech and, perhaps, into how she sees herself. That is what makes this moment so striking. The echo of that logic, the one that tells children what counts as “*beautiful*” or “*acceptable*”, is already present in play. And it reminds me how fragile *empowerment* can be at this stage of life, since the same space that nurtures creativity and resistance can also reproduce the inequalities it tries to escape.

It is worth emphasizing, once again, that these children belong to a *quilombola* (*Afro-Brazilian maroon-descendant*) community. To me, this fact adds another layer of complexity,

as if they already perceive themselves in such a way, and if practices of derogatory treatment and bullying are present within their own school community, one must ask – what might happen in predominantly white school contexts?

With this in mind, I now turn to C5's reaction to C6's ironic comment, expressed through laughter. That laughter, in my opinion, changes the mood of the exchange. On paper it looks simply, but within the interaction I see it is far from neutral. At the level of Appraisal, it still *carries positive affect (Happiness+)*, yet it does more than express amusement. To me, the laughter sounds layered. It is as if C5 is amused but also taken aback, a mix of *surprise* and *disbelief*, something close to what I would say "Wait, you really said that?". In that sense, I consider that, in this scenario, the laughter holds two voices at once. It plays along with C6's humor, acknowledging the joke, but it also adds a trace of distance, a way of not fully agreeing.

This small moment shows how laughter can be polyphonic. It doesn't simply echo what was said; it responds, shifts, repositions. Affective reactions in conversation rarely stay on one note. They negotiate, between solidarity and doubt, between complicity and soft challenge. I read C5's laughter as just that: a playful disagreement, a questioning wrapped in amusement. It's her way of keeping the connection alive while still hinting that she sees things differently.

In this regard, it is possible to observe that C6 then prolongs this ironic frame through subsequent utterances: "*This is my hair when I wet it... when it dries*". Here, I can observe that *relational attributive processes* once again structure the comparison between the doll's hair and her own, while the Appraisal system reveals a continuity of *negative aesthetic* evaluations (*Composition-*). By reproducing multiple scenarios, *wet, dry (molho, seca)*, C6 underlines the inescapability of the problem: regardless of condition, the hair fails to conform to the normative expectations of smoothness or neatness that underpin dominant ideals of femininity. Here, it is possible to observe that, in her discourse, she materializes what was previously discussed, that is, the notion that straight hair represents the socially accepted standard of '*alignment*' and even '*tameness*'.

Yet, I find it important to point out that, in my interpretation, the *ironic tone* in these sentences also works as a way to *soften* such *negative evaluation*. That is, when C6 expresses dissatisfaction through humor, I observe that she seems to turn what might otherwise sound like a stigmatized self-assessment into a lighthearted performance. In my view, this choice allows her to express discontent indirectly, inviting her peers' recognition without placing herself in a victimized position. In this sense, irony can be interpreted as C6's conscious choice to use language to achieve a *social* or *emotional effect* on the other children. Thus, she not only acknowledges the weight of normative beauty expectations but also subtly resists them, refusing

to speak from a purely serious or submissive stance. Here, I interpret that the playful exaggeration and repetition in her words show how language, in this specific context, became, in C6's speech, a tool to dramatize the lived experience of having non-conforming hair.

Through this exchange, C6's remarks, supported by C5's affiliative laughter, bring the physical reality of hair into the center of interaction. Hair, then, becomes not a marker of difference but a *shared, discursive space* for *humor* and *critique*. In doing so, the children transform what could have been a source of stigma into a *collective moment of play* and *meaning-making*.

Later, however, I understand that C7's comment, "*Why don't you wear your hair down?*", signals a shift from self-directed humor to an *externalized critique*. From a Transitivity perspective, it is possible to observe that this clause represents a *material process* (*wear*⁴¹), positioning C6 as the *Actor* whose non-conformity calls for justification. Within the Appraisal framework, the clause functions as a *negative judgment of normality* (*Normality-*), contrasting C6's hairstyle with dominant ideals of femininity, that is, those privileging *long, loose*, and "well-kept" hair. By framing the comment as a "why not" question, I interpret that C7 does more than simply inquire; she reinforces what counts as expected behavior, embedding social norms within the play interaction.

Throughout this part of the dialogue, I can observe that C6 shifts the focus away from the body itself by saying, "*Because there's no time... because every time I wake up it's messy*" ("*porque toda vez que eu acordo tá desajeitado*"). On this occasion, I see that the "lack of time" expressed by C6 indicates a certain type of *tension*, a way of explaining that her hair "takes work", suggesting that, unlike her classmates' hair, hers would require "more time" to become aesthetically "acceptable", "pretty", or "good" enough to go to school. That is why she explains that she wears it tied up: there isn't enough time. The tension, in my view, revolves precisely around *conformity to beauty ideals*. I can note that the clauses above, uttered by C6, are structured through *relational attributive processes*, in which "time" and "messy hair" are constructed as attributes of her lived reality.

I understand here that C6 uses the Barbie dolls to express her personal discomfort, that she feels this way, showing courage in responding to C7's question. In the video, it is possible to observe that C7 has straight hair, which aligns with hegemonic beauty standards. Thus, I find it important to highlight that, in Brazil, particularly in the Northeast, from my own experience witnessing cases like this, many girls with kinky hair are often teased and nicknamed for having

⁴¹ I opted to translate "vem" (*come*) as "wear", since it rendered the sentence more natural in English. However, what the child actually meant was: "*Why don't you come to school wearing your hair down?*"

what people call “cabelo de bucha”. Translating this expression into English, it would be something like calling someone “scouring pad hair”, a nickname that carries a clear tone of bullying and exclusion. Or, I would say, even more than that, since such behavior in adulthood would constitute a *crime of prejudice*.

Therefore, I believe that C6’s utterances, while ironic, reveal a significant internal tension regarding her hair and are extremely meaningful in this context. Through the Black wheelchair Barbie doll, the other children were also able to develop a more critical understanding of C6’s lived experience, fostering respect for all types of hair.

In this context, regarding the analysis of C6’s utterance, “*Because there’s no time... because every time I wake up it’s messy*”, within the Appraisal framework, I interpret that her response conveys both *Capacity*– (a sense of inability to “fix” the hair within the available time) and *Composition*– (an aesthetic judgment of the hair as “messy”), while humor serves to soften the critical tone. Building upon this ironic stance, the exchange as a whole indicates how the children negotiate identity in nuanced and often playful ways.

Thus, through Transitivity and Appraisal resources, it is possible to observe how: (i) C5 *naturalizes bodily traits* (“*she was born with hair like this*”); (ii) C6 *uses irony to question embodied realities*; and (iii) C7 *echoes the social weight of normative expectations*. In this way, throughout the flow of this dialogue, their voices indicate the subtle dynamics of *conformity*, *resistance*, and *shared understanding* that unfold through play with these Barbie dolls.

The dolls here, then, act as *symbolic mediators* of these negotiations. As the children project fragments of their own experiences onto them, they give shape to *tensions* between i) *affirmation* and *devaluation*, ii) *belonging* and *exclusion*, and iii) *self-acceptance* and *conformity*. What emerges, I see, is not simply a repetition of dominant norms but a *layered conversation* in which *irony*, *critique*, and *resistance* intertwine, creating small yet meaningful spaces for alternative ways of imagining femininity and selfhood.

These broader discursive movements become visible in the children’s own utterances, where personal experience meets *social ideology* in subtle and revealing moments. In this segment, I am strongly reminded of Beauvoir’s (1949) reflections on how women’s bodies are often turned into objects of aesthetic judgment, since C7’s remark echoes this same logic of evaluation. However, it is possible to see that C6’s ironic self-commentary adds another dimension. I would even say that she can be considered the *agent of empowerment* in this segment. Even though her words still carry a *negative evaluation* (*Composition*–), as she describes her hair as “messy” and “unmanageable”, this gesture simultaneously opens space for the other children to reconsider their social understandings. Yet, by uttering these affirmations,

she also transforms criticism into play. In this light, I understand that, by wrapping dissatisfaction in humor, C6 resists full submission to stigma and preserves a small space of *self-recognition* and *agency* within the interaction.

Thus, I can see that this dynamic broadens through other expressive signs, such as *laughter*, *tone*, and *gesture*, which deepen the meaning-making process. For instance, C5's laughter, in my interpretation, heightens this sense of ambivalence since it conveys *amusement* (*Happiness+*) but also *disbelief*, as if she momentarily questions the way C6 describes herself.

This moment brings to mind hooks' (1986) reminder that marginalized voices deserve to be heard, and, I would add, even when they emerge through *irony* or *self-deprecation*. Viewed through the lens of *empowerment* (Charlier; Caubergs, 2007), I observe that these interactions indicate different dimensions of power, namely: *power over*, emerging in C7's normative demand; *power within*, surfacing in C6's ironic awareness, through which she asserts her voice even while acknowledging constraint; and *power with*, appearing in C5's laughter, which, despite its ambiguity, fosters a moment of shared recognition.

In light of these considerations, these scenes demonstrates that play becomes a setting where social hierarchies are *replayed*, *challenged*, and *reimagined*, opening children's fragile yet meaningful consciousness toward alternative understandings of *identity* and *belonging*. Thus, this first reading of Segment 6 suggests, to me, that the dolls, including those used here, act as mediating artifacts through which the children *project*, *question*, and *reshape* cultural norms. In that process, play acquires *discursive force*, transforming into a site where *empowerment* and *resistance* are not only performed but also made thinkable.

After examining the children's *processes* within the ideational metafunction and their *evaluations* through the Appraisal System, I now return to Segment 6, however, to explore how their utterances reflect principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) through the *mapping of conceptual metaphors* across their discourse.

Thus, the main conceptual metaphors identified in this excerpt are summarized in Table 36 below.

Table 36: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 6 – Group 2

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
C5: "Ela já nasceu com o cabelo assim." C5: "She was already born with hair like this."	TRAÇOS FÍSICOS SÃO INERENTES PHYSICAL TRAITS ARE INHERENT
C6: "Esse é meu cabelo quando eu acordo / molho / seca." C6: "This is my hair when I wake up / when I wet it / when it dries."	IDENTIDADE PRÓPRIA É CABELO SELF-IDENTITY IS HAIR

C7: “Por que tu não vem com o cabelo solto?” C7: “Why don’t you wear your hair down?”	EXPECTATIVA SOCIAL É CABELO SOCIAL EXPECTATION IS HAIR
C6: “Porque não dá tempo...” C6: “Because there’s no time...”	MUDANÇA TEMPORAL É MUDANÇA CAPILAR TEMPORAL CHANGE IS HAIR CHANGE
C5: “Mas tu sempre tá primeiro que eu.” C5: “But you’re always here before me.”	APARÊNCIA É COMPETIÇÃO APPEARANCE IS COMPETITION

Source: research data

By examining the conceptual metaphors identified in the table above, I observe that the children’s discourse in this scene goes beyond a mere description of appearances. The metaphoric mappings reveal again *embodied* ways of thinking through which the participants make sense of *difference*, *beauty*, and *belonging*.

For instance, in PHYSICAL TRAITS ARE INHERENT (*TRAÇOS FÍSICOS SÃO INERENTES*), I interpret C5’s utterance, “*She was already born with hair like this*” (“*Ela já nasceu com o cabelo assim*”), not as an expression of admiration, but of irony. By highlighting the doll’s lack of hair (physical trait) as a “*natural*” condition, C5 mobilizes a discourse of normality that turns difference into deficiency. Through this utterance, C5 projects the *source domain* of *INHERENT* onto the *target domain* of *PHYSICAL TRAITS*, establishing a cognitive link through which what is “*natural*” becomes equated with what is *complete* or *desirable*. In accordance with the *Invariance Principle* (Lakoff, 1993), the metaphor preserves the inferential structure of the *source domain*, where *INHERENT* entails *harmony*, *wholeness*, and *authenticity*, while mapping it onto a social field that values certain bodies over others. The absence of hair, in turn, is conceptualized as an *absence of beauty*. In this sense, the metaphor operates ideologically: it does not merely describe the doll’s features but reaffirms the cultural logic that associates *femininity* with *aesthetic wholeness*. Through this cognitive operation, C5’s remark shows how early evaluations of difference are already shaped by embodied metaphors that define what counts as “*normal*”, “*beautiful*”, or “*acceptable*” within the visual economy of gender.

Subsequently, the same interpretative logic reappears in C6’s discourse, who repeatedly associates the dolls’ hair with her own, as in “*This is my hair when I wake up / when I wet it / when it dries*” (“*Esse é o meu cabelo quando eu acordo / molho / seco*”). These utterances activate the metaphors SELF-IDENTITY IS HAIR (*IDENTIDADE PRÓPRIA É CABELO*) and TEMPORAL CHANGE IS HAIR CHANGE (*MUDANÇA TEMPORAL É MUDANÇA CAPILAR*). Here, the everyday routine of *waking up*, *washing*, and *drying hair* can be understood as a *frame* (Bateson, 1972), organizing play as a space for identity comparison. At the same time, *metonymy* becomes salient, since hair operates as the part that stands for the whole body and self (HAIR → SELF).

I note that this mapping holds a problematic dimension, that is, by letting hair stand metonymically for the self (HAIR → SELF), C6 naturalizes a reductive logic in which bodily parts come to define the whole person. Socially, this signals how hegemonic aesthetics infiltrate early subjectivities, positioning appearance as the primary gateway to identity. The risk here is that difference, such as baldness or non-normative hair, may become stigmatized, reinforcing exclusionary norms of beauty and normality. In this sense, C6 herself participates in this logic of exclusion, as she simultaneously distances herself from and ironizes her own hair, and, by extension, her *identity*.

Still, I find it important to stress that even from a cognitive point of view, every act of exclusion also carries within it a small space for resistance. By placing *hair* within everyday routines, such as, *sleeping, bathing, drying*, C6 detaches it from mere aesthetic value and reconnects it to *lived, ordinary experience*. In doing so, she softens its role as a fixed marker of identity and turns it into part of a *shared, embodied reality*.

This shift shows how meaning can be reorganized through *metaphor* and *metonymy*, since the same conceptual processes that sustain social hierarchies also make small acts of re-signification possible. For instance, when C6 grounds hair in the body's daily routines rather than in beauty ideals, her discourse begins to question the very stability of those norms. At this point, while language mirrors and reinforces social pressures surrounding appearance, it also opens small cracks through which *identity* can be *re-imagined*. What I see here is within play, the children are far from passive; they take part in both *reproducing* and *transforming* the norms that shape them. Through this movement, *play* offers children a space where *meaning is not only learned* but also *felt, embodied*, and continually *re-created*.

To me, this reflection on identity becomes even clearer in the following exchange. When C7 asks, “*Why don’t you come with your hair down?*” (“*Por que tu não vem com o cabelo solto?*”), I interpret that she activates the metaphor SOCIAL EXPECTATION IS HAIR (*EXPECTATIVA SOCIAL É CABELO*), which exposes the normative side of discourse, as seen in the previous analysis, namely: loose hair appears as a sign of adequacy and conformity. Here, I cannot help recalling my own childhood. My mother never let me go to school with my hair down, afraid I might catch lice, and, as she was raising twins, there was never enough time to style both of our hair. She would simply tie it up before we left home. That alone was enough for me to endure years of bullying. Because of that, I feel personally connected to the way C6 talks about her hair, as it echoes something deeply familiar within me.

Reading C6’s words, then, “*Because there isn’t time... because every time I wake up it’s messy*” (“*Porque não dá tempo... porque toda vez que eu acordo tá desajeitado*”), I perceive a

familiar note of frustration. This, because, in this context, “time” takes on an *aesthetic quality*. Through the metaphor TEMPORAL CHANGE IS HAIR CHANGE (MUDANÇA TEMPORAL É MUDANÇA CAPILAR), the pressure of daily routines appears intertwined with how the body is presented, indicating that, in play, even appearance is governed by temporal demands.

This moment holds, then, a social point of view. That is, C6’s irritation makes visible how time and self-presentation are bound together. When she infers that there is no time and her hair is always messy, she isn’t just describing her morning routine, she is reframing a *temporal limitation* into an aesthetic consequence. Managing hair becomes a way of managing time itself. To me, this suggests that children already begin to internalize social expectations that tie beauty and acceptability to productivity since childhood. I see here that it is not only about looking good but also about having the time to make oneself appear proper.

In addition, I understand that C6’s statement also points to the naturalization of *aesthetic labor*, the effort to “fix” one’s hair before being seen, as part of everyday life. Such labor reflects, to me, broader cultural expectations that *bodies* and *parts of the body*, especially female ones, must remain *orderly, controlled*, and, to use the word once more, *tamed*. Thus, frustration she expresses indicates how exhausting this demand can feel to her; in this case, I see that “time” becomes less a space for play and more a tool for compliance with *norms of tidiness and beauty*.

Still, I notice a small rupture at this point. When C6 voices her frustration with this daily routine, she ends up questioning the rule itself, as if asking, “*why must hair always be neat and controlled to be accepted?*”. Through this statement, her words seem to carry both *obedience* and *defiance*, since she reproduces the social norm even as she exposes its weight. What is inferred here, to me, is a *negotiation of values*, in which C6 simultaneously mirrors and challenges the logic that ties identity, worth, and appearance together.

Turning to C5’s comment, “*But you’re always here before me*” (“*Mas tu sempre tá primeiro que eu*”), I can identify another metaphor that emerges in C5’s discourse: APPEARANCE IS COMPETITION (APARÊNCIA É COMPETIÇÃO). Here, in my interpretation, “time” becomes a symbol of *social comparison* and *the search for recognition*. Being “before” or “after” is no longer merely about physical arrival; it signals, to me, levels of *readiness, visibility*, and, *ultimately*, value. In this sense, I observe that “beauty” and “presentation” cease to be merely personal matters and instead become part of a broader social, I would say, “game”, one that places some “ahead” and leaves others “behind”.

For me, these exchanges show that, even in play, children re-enact and reshape the cultural ideas that connect *time, appearance, and social value*. On one hand, I can see that they

reflect how dominant norms discipline the body through everyday routines of care and comparison. On the other, the very act of complaining, “*there isn’t time*”, or noticing hierarchy, “*you’re always here before me*”, already signals a kind of awareness. It shows to me that children are not passive in this process; they are *learning, questioning*, and, at times, I can observe that they are also *resisting* the cultural scripts that tie beauty to worth.

From a feminist perspective, I observe that the children’s discourses in this segment shed light on how *social regulation* takes shape through the *body* (Beauvoir, 1949), while also hinting at the possibilities of *embodiment* as a space for *critique* and *re-signification*. Within this frame, the *body* becomes a kind of text where *difference* is both *marked* and *controlled*, and hair stands among its most visible signs. When C5 says that one is “born with hair”, she echoes this same logic, reframing social expectations into what seems like *biological destiny*.

C6’s voice, however, moves in another direction, opposing this discourse of oppression. I interpret her frustration over the “lack of time” to “fix” her hair as resonating with the call in hooks’s *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981; 1986; 1990) for marginalized experiences to be heard. In her complaint, I can hear both the weight of *aesthetic labor* and *assertion of agency*. Inside this ambivalence, beauty appears at once as a social demand and a form of self-expression. In this context, Butler’s (2006) *notion of performativity* helps make this tension visible, for instance, when C5 remarks, “*you’re always here before me*”, *appearance becomes a form of competition*, a performance through which gender norms are repeated yet also gently displaced.

In this light, and considering the analyses developed up to this point, I reaffirm the children’s playful discourses as far from neutral, since they already engage feminist struggles surrounding the *body, time, and visibility*. Through play, they reproduce traces of social regulation even as they imagine ways of moving beyond them, revealing *empowerment* not as opposition or hierarchy, but as a *continuum of possibilities*, relational, situated, and deeply embodied.

6.3 Analysis of the *focus group*: children’s reflections on the play-based activity

This subsection presents the analysis of the final set of data within the corpus, which is composed of three recorded videos. Specifically, the last of these recordings corresponds to the *focus group* sessions titled *Children’s Reflections on the Play-Based Activity*, in which the participating children, together with the facilitator, discuss and reflect upon the play experience conducted in the previous stages of the research.

Given the interpretive depth of these discussions, the analytical approach adopted here follows the same multi-layered perspective applied in the previous groups. The children's discourses are examined through an integrated lens that brings together (i) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), (ii) the Appraisal System, and (iii) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), a sequence that reflects the specific objectives of this thesis and sustains methodological coherence across the corpus. In continuity with this framework, Bateson's (1972) systemic view of communication and *ecology of mind* is also drawn upon in this analysis, as it was in the analyses of *Groups 1* and *2*, to expand the interpretive scope and allow for a broader understanding of how meaning takes shape within interconnected cultural and relational systems.

Within this final stage of data collection, the interactional space of play, reconstituted through the *focus group*, was transformed into a discursive space of reflection, where the facilitator assumed only the role of guiding the child participants toward a collective reflection on their play experience. Through dialogue, the children were invited to revisit the play-based activity previously performed with the Barbie dolls, this time speaking *about* play rather than simply engaging *in* it. This shift from *embodied participation* to *verbal interpretation* opened space for the articulation of *memories*, *evaluations*, and *meanings* that had remained implicit during the act of play itself. As they re-narrated their experiences, the children not only reconstructed what had happened but also were able to *reinterpret* it, weaving new layers of understanding around *beauty*, *gender*, and *relational* dynamics.

In light of these considerations, the image below illustrates the children's participation in the *focus group* session conducted with the facilitator. To guide the reading of the subsequent analytical segments, the following labels are used to identify the children's utterances throughout the transcription: C1 (Child 1), C2 (Child 2), C3 (Child 3), C4 (Child 4), C5 (Child 5), C6 (Child 6), C7 (Child 7), C8 (Child 8), and F (Facilitator).

Figure 26: Children participating in the focus group session with the facilitator



Source: photograph by the author (2025)

The analysis developed at this final stage of the thesis is guided by my broader aspiration to understand the multiple *social* and *cognitive* constructions of meaning that the children elaborated about women through their play with Barbie. It also seeks, through the children's collective reflections in the *focus group*, to access meanings that were not fully visible in gestures and spontaneous interactions but were later verbalized and re-elaborated.

The forthcoming discussion thus explores how the participants *interpret, justify, and re-evaluate* their earlier experiences, allowing notions of *beauty, gender, and belonging*, in relation to both Barbie and women, to re-emerge within new contexts of negotiation and construction of meaning. I anticipate that this transition from *embodied action* to *verbal reflection* will shed light on how through linguistic choices the children construct positions of *agency, critique, and self-awareness*, extending the analytical patterns previously observed in the analyses of Groups 1 and 2. From this perspective, the analysis moves beyond the observation of play behaviors to examine the discursive representations of *power, empowerment, diversity, and inclusion* that surface when the children speak about women.

Finally, it is important to note that during the sessions, the facilitator (myself) occasionally reformulated some of the original questions into simpler forms to ensure accessibility and engagement, while remaining aligned with the initial research objectives.

Having clarified these considerations, I now turn to the analysis of the interview: the *Focus Group*.

Segment 7 – Focus Group

Table 37: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 7

Segment 7
Brazilian Portuguese
F: Tá, então a primeira pergunta que eu queria saber é se vocês já conheciam a Barbie, né? F: As bonecas Barbies, antes de brincar hoje? C1/C2/C3/C4/C5/C6/C8: Sim. ((C7 permaneceu calada)) F: Então todas já conheciam, né? C1/C2/C3/C4/C5/C6/C8: Sim, sim. ((C7 permaneceu calada)) C3: Eu acho que sim. F: Mas só que essas daí, vocês disseram pra mim logo no início que elas eram um pouquinho diferentes. F: E como... como foi que vocês se sentiram ao brincar com elas? C3: A gente sentiu muito legal e diferente. C2: É. Muito bonita... eu nunca ganhei uma boneca assim. C1: Sim. C3: Eu também não. F: Nunca o quê? C2: Nunca ganhei uma boneca assim antes. F: Nunca ganhou?

C3: Pra brincar.
 C8: Uhum
 F: Boneca assim?
 C2: Só boneca mais bebê.
 F: Bebê?
 C3: Boneca normal que não se mexe muito assim.
 C2: É...

English:

F: Had you seen Barbie dolls before today's play?
 C1/C2/C3/C4/C5/C6/C8: Yes. ((C7 remained silent))
 F: So, you all already knew them, right?
 C1/C2/C3/C4/C5/C6/C8: Yes, yes. ((C7 remained silent))
 C3: I think so.
 F: But these ones, you told me at the very beginning that they were a little different.
 F: And how... how did you feel playing with them?
 C3: We felt it was really nice and different.
 C2: Yeah. Very pretty... I've never gotten a doll like this.
 C1: Yes.
 C3: Me neither.
 F: Never what?
 C2: Never gotten a doll before.
 F: Never gotten one?
 C3: To play with.
 C8: Uhum.
 F: A doll like this?
 C2: Only more baby-like dolls.
 F: Baby dolls?
 C3: A normal doll that doesn't move much like this one.
 C2: Yeah...

Transitivity System

Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
F: <i>"Tá, então a primeira pergunta que eu queria saber é se vocês já conheciam a Barbie, né?"</i> F: <i>"The first question I wanted to know is if you already knew Barbie, didn't you"</i>	Mental (cognitive)	<i>saber, conhecer know</i>	Sensor: I (wanted to know) / eu (queria saber) Sensor: you (already knew) / vocês (já conheciam) Phenomenon: Barbie	--
C1/C2/C3/C4/C5/C6/C8: <i>"Sim."</i> C1/C2/C3/C4/C5/C6/C8: <i>"Yes."</i>	Relational (elliptical) → not Existential	<i>be (implicit)</i>	Carrier: (implied) the knowledge / o conhecimento Attribute: (affirmative confirmation)	--
C3: <i>"Eu acho que sim."</i> C3: <i>"I think so."</i>	Mental (cognitive)	<i>think / achar</i>	Sensor: I / eu Phenomenon: that yes / que sim	--
F: <i>"Mas só que essas daí, vocês disseram pra mim logo no início que elas</i>	Verbal + Relational	<i>disseram / eram said / were</i>	Sayer: you / vocês	Circ: <i>logo no início / at the very beginning</i>

eram um pouquinho diferentes.” F: “ <i>But these ones, you told me at the very beginning that they were a little different.</i> ”	(attributive, projected)		Receiver: me / eu Verbiage: that they were a little different / que eram um pouquinho diferentes Carrier: they / elas Attribute: a little different / um pouquinho diferentes	
F: “E como... como foi que vocês se sentiram ao brincar com elas?” F: “ <i>And how did you feel when playing with them?</i> ”	Mental (affective)	sentir feel	Sensor: vocês / you	Circ: ao brincar com elas / when playing with them
C3: “A gente sentiu muito legal e diferente.” C3: “ <i>We felt it was really nice and different.</i> ”	Mental (affective) + Relational (attributive, projected)	sentir feel	Sensor: a gente / we Phenomenon: muito legal e diferente / very nice and different	--
C2: “É. Muito bonita... eu nunca ganhei uma boneca assim.” C2: “ <i>Yeah. Very pretty... I’ve never gotten a doll like this.</i> ”	Relational (attributive) + Material	ser (implícito) / ganhar be (implicit) / get	Carrier: doll / boneca Attribute: beautiful / bonita Actor: I / eu Goal: a doll like that / uma boneca assim	Circ: nunca / never
C3: “Eu também não.” C3: “ <i>Me neither.</i> ”	Material (elliptical)	ganhar get	Actor: I / eu Goal: (doll) / (boneca)	Circ: também não / me neither
F: “Nunca o quê?” F: “ <i>Never what?</i> ”	Verbal (interrogative)	dizer (implícito) say (implicit)	Sayer: F Verbiage: never what / nunca o quê	--
C2: “Nunca ganhei uma boneca assim antes.” C2: “ <i>I’ve never gotten a doll like this before.</i> ”	Material	ganhar get	Actor: I / eu Goal: a doll / uma boneca	Circunstância: nunca / never antes / before
C3: “Pra brincar.” C3: “ <i>To play with.</i> ”	Circumstantial (elíptico)	--	--	--
F: “Boneca assim?” F: “ <i>A doll like this?</i> ”	Relational (identifying, elliptical)	ser (implícito) be (implicit)	Identified: doll / boneca Identifier: like this / assim	--
C2: “Só boneca mais bebê.” C2: “ <i>Only baby-like dolls.</i> ”	Relational (atributivo)	ser (implícito) be (implicit)	Carrier: doll / boneca Attribute: more baby-like / mais bebê	--
F: Bebê? F: Baby?	Relational (elliptical echo)	ser (implícito) be (implicit)	Carrier: doll / boneca Attribute: baby / bebê	--

C3: <i>"Boneca normal que não se mexe muito assim."</i> C3: <i>"A normal doll that doesn't move much."</i>	Relational (attributive) + Material (embedded)	<i>ser (implicito) / mexer-se</i> <i>be (implicit) / move</i>	Carrier: <i>doll / boneca</i> Attribute: <i>normal / normal</i> Actor: <i>doll / boneca</i>	Circ: <i>doesn't move much like that / não se mexe muito assim</i>
Appraisal System				
Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	
C3: <i>"Eu acho que sim."</i> C3: <i>"I think so."</i>	Insecurity- (uncertainty about knowledge, hesitation)	Capacity- (hesitant stance toward knowing)	--	
F: <i>"...elas eram um pouquinho diferentes."</i> F: <i>"...they were a little different."</i>	--	--	Composition+ (recognition of difference, nuance of novelty)	
C3: <i>"A gente sentiu muito legal e diferente."</i> C3: <i>"We felt it was really nice and different."</i>	Happiness+ / Satisfaction+ (pleasure, sense of novelty)	--	Valuation+ (positive appraisal of play experience)	
C2: <i>"Muito bonita..."</i> C2: <i>"Very pretty..."</i>	--	--	Reaction+ (positive aesthetic evaluation of the doll)	
C2: <i>"Nunca ganhei uma boneca assim antes."</i> C2: <i>"I've never gotten a doll like this before."</i>	Security- (insecurity/privation, lack of access to this type of doll)	--	--	
C1: <i>"É..."</i> C1: <i>"Yeah"</i>	--	--	--	
C3: <i>"Eu também não."</i> C3: <i>"Me neither."</i>	Security- (reinforces privation, shared lack of access)	--	--	
C2: <i>"Nunca ganhei uma boneca antes."</i> C2: <i>"Never gotten a doll before."</i>	Security- (absence of previous experience, deprivation)	--	--	
C3: <i>"Pra brincar."</i> C3: <i>"To play with."</i>	Happiness+ (desire and enjoyment in play)	--	Valuation+ (assigns positive social/play function to the doll)	
C2: <i>"Só boneca mais bebê."</i> C2: <i>"Only baby-like dolls."</i>	--	--	Composition- (negative comparison, baby dolls seen as simpler/less valuable)	
C3: <i>"Boneca normal que não se mexe muito assim."</i> C3: <i>"A normal doll that doesn't move much."</i>	--	--	Composition- (negative evaluation, limitation in movement)	
C2: <i>"É..."</i> C2: <i>"Yeah..."</i>	--	--	--	

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

In the initial moments of Segment 7 in Table 37, which marks the beginning of the focus group, that is, the reflective moment following the play-based activity with the Barbie dolls, I observe that the children's utterances reveal a multiplicity of meaning-making processes emerging through their interaction with the facilitator as they *reconstructed* and *re-signified* their experience of play. This initial segment thus inaugurates a discursive space for *collective reflection* and *interpretation*, encompassing both the group that engaged with the *Barbie Careers dolls* and the one that interacted with the *Barbie Fashionists*, whose representations embody attributes associated with physical comorbidities or visible disabilities.

Among the processes that mark the system of Transitivity, I first turn my attention to those classified as *mental processes*, which encode perceptions, cognitions, and affects. When analyzing the utterance "*I think so*" ("*eu acho que sim*"), produced by participant C3, I observe that this child mobilizes a *cognitive mental process* in which the *Sensor* (the child) expresses hesitation in response to the mediator's question, thus revealing a moment of uncertainty regarding her prior familiarity with the doll. In my interpretation, such a construction suggests that C3 seeks to legitimize her answer before the group, oscillating between *doubt* and *affirmation*. Within the scope of the Appraisal System, this instance also activates resources of *Affect: Insecurity- and Judgment: Capacity-*, as the child evaluates herself as not fully competent to affirm her knowledge. In other words, since she is unsure whether everyone had, in fact, already interacted with a Barbie doll, she demonstrates discursive awareness by choosing to say she "*thinks*" rather than simply replying "*yes*", thereby signaling both *reflexivity* and *maturity*, while also revealing a subtle positioning of insecurity in the presence of her peers.

With regard to C3's utterance, when she says, "*we felt it was really nice and different*" ("*a gente sentiu muito legal e diferente*"), I observe that, through an *affective mental process* in which she functions as the *Sensor* of the clause, she expresses a *positive emotional reaction* linked to the pleasure of having participated in the play-based activity with the Barbie dolls selected for this study. Looking more deeply, it is also possible to observe that C3 frames the *Sensor* as "*we*" ("*a gente*"), thus extending her statement to include all the girls. In my interpretation, this linguistic choice can invite multiple interpretations, depending on the analyst's perspective. One possibility, as mentioned above, is that she uses "*we*" to include the group's collective voice. On the other hand, this same choice could become somewhat problematic if repeated frequently, as it may, to some extent, take over the turns of other children, *silencing* their individual voices and foregrounding her own. Nevertheless, I read this prominence in a *positive* light. From the perspective of the Appraisal framework, the utterance

conveys *Affect* (*Happiness+* / *Satisfaction+*) and *Appreciation* (*Valuation+*), as the child communicates *enthusiasm*, *joy*, and *genuine engagement* in the play experience with Barbie dolls that embody different forms of womanhood.

In light of these considerations, I find it necessary to emphasize here that, throughout the analysis of this segment, C3 revealed herself to be the child with the most, I would say, “refined critical thinking”, guiding the others to reconsider comments imbued with hegemonic and exclusionary practices. For this reason, I interpret that, for C3, playing with Barbie is a *lived* and *felt* experience, carrying, in its essence, strong positive emotional value.

Thus, continuing the analysis, when it comes to *relational processes*, I observe that these appear frequently in the children’s discourse, serving to assign *qualities* to the dolls and, in doing so, to construct *aesthetic*, *functional*, and *comparative evaluations*. Let us consider the expression “*very pretty*” (“*muito linda*”), produced by C2. This expression indicates an *attributive relational clause*, as it links the doll to the *attribute of beauty*, producing an explicit *aesthetic valuation*. Viewed through the Appraisal System, this instance can be interpreted as *Appreciation* (*Reaction+*), since the doll is positively evaluated in aesthetic terms. It is worth noting that, however, that throughout her participation in Corpus 1, during the play session with the Barbie Career Dolls, C2 consistently used *attributive relational clauses* to *describe* and *assess* the dolls. Likewise, expressions such as “*only more like a baby doll*”, also uttered by C2, and “*a normal doll that doesn’t move much like that*”, by C3, exemplify *relational clauses* with a *negative evaluative orientation*, highlighting the *simplicity* or *limited functionality* of other dolls available to them in contrast to the Barbie presented. In these cases, I can see that the utterances can be classified as *Appreciation* (*Composition–* / *Valuation–*), since the dolls are judged *negatively* by these children in terms of *structure*, *design*, and *function*.

However, what draws my attention in this frequent use of *relational clauses* is that they show the children’s speech does more than describe the toys, *it constructs value judgments*, establishing symbolic distinctions between what is seen as *more sophisticated* and *desirable* and what is considered *ordinary* or *less valuable*. From a feminist standpoint, however, I understand that this evaluative pattern raises questions, as it reveals how these children’s discourses *mirror hierarchies of beauty*, *class*, and *desirability* historically projected onto the female body. Thus, I see that what might seem like an “innocent aesthetic preference” can also be read as part of *broader ideological patterns* that sustain *hegemonic femininity* and *marginalize* alternative forms of *embodiment* and *identity*.

Looking more closely at this same set of data, I also find *material processes* that point to the children’s experience of *possession*, or, more precisely, its *absence*. Sentences such as “*I*

have never received a doll before” (“*Nunca ganhei uma boneca assim antes*”) and “*me neither*” (“*eu também não*”) repeat the marker of negation (*never*), linguistically encoding, in my point of view, a sense of *deprivation* in access to this kind of toy. Here, the *material process* of “*receiving*” is defined not by its occurrence but by its *absence*, bringing to the surface the *social and economic conditions* that shape childhood experience. From an Appraisal perspective, these utterances can be read as *Affect (Security–)*, since they express feelings of *insecurity, lack, and deprivation*. At the same time, they may evoke *Judgment (Tenacity+)*, as the tone suggests *resilience* and a *degree of acceptance of scarcity*. Seen this way, these examples indicate that, for these children, Barbie functions as an unfulfilled object of desire, reflecting the *inequalities of consumption* that pervade both school and family life. This interpretation aligns with the children’s sociocultural context where many come from peripheral neighborhoods of João Pessoa, where Barbie is viewed as an expensive and aspirational toy, often beyond the financial reach of their families.

Having established these considerations, with regard to the *verbal processes* identified in this segment, I note that these occur predominantly in the facilitator’s interventions, as in the utterance “*you told me right at the beginning that they were a little different*” (“*vocês disseram pra mim logo no início que elas eram um pouquinho diferentes*”). In this case, the *verbal process* assigns the role of *Sayers* (those who speak) to the children, the role of *Receiver* to the researcher, and the *Verbiage* (“*they were different*”) to the content of what is said. Such a configuration highlights the dialogic function of mediation, as it retrieves the children’s voices and legitimizes their contributions, reinforcing the centrality of their speech within the interactional dynamics.

Beyond a mere methodological choice, I consider this positioning deeply meaningful from a feminist perspective as it offers these girls a legitimate space to articulate their experiences with Barbie dolls. Thus, the researcher actively resists the historical silencing of women’s voices, as discussed by feminist theorists such as Beauvoir (1949), hooks (1982), and Crenshaw (1989). Furthermore, considering that these girls belong to a *quilombola* community in João Pessoa, in Northeast Brazil, a region marked by socioeconomic vulnerability and systemic marginalization, the act of granting them voice seems to acquire an additional layer of *political and epistemic significance*. In my interpretation, it not only fosters the recognition of their subjectivities but also contributes to the broader struggle for *female empowerment*, affirming that even within contexts of poverty and racialized exclusion, girls’ narratives are worthy of attention, legitimacy, and respect. In this sense, it can be observed that the facilitator’s

mediation transcends dialogical engagement, becoming an emancipatory practice aligned with feminist struggles for *representation*, *inclusion*, and *empowerment*.

Finally, with regard to the processes of the *ideational metafunction*, and more specifically to the *relational* (rather than existential) *processes*, such as the children's simple "yes" when confirming prior knowledge about Barbie, I observe that, despite their brevity, these responses fulfill a crucial interpersonal function within the conversational dynamic, serving as markers of *consensus* and *collective alignment* around the object under discussion. There is a shared sense of attunement within the group, as the children express not only convergent understandings but also mutual validation of each other's contributions. This can be understood not merely as agreement concerning the referential content of what is discussed but as an alignment with the voice of a female peer, since they attribute legitimacy and value to the facilitator words. Through these brief yet meaningful exchanges, the girls co-construct shared meanings, acknowledge one another, and sustain a respectful circulation of voices within the group.

From a feminist perspective, I consider that this moment holds particular significance. In a historical context in which women's voices have been systematically silenced, the act of girls collectively affirming and echoing each other's speech represents a micro-practice of *empowerment*. Through these acts of *reflection* and *interaction*, they are not only *being empowered* but also *empowering themselves* and *one another*, extending this act of recognition beyond the immediate context of the group and into the interpretive space of this doctoral research itself. Such dynamics reveal that empowerment is not merely described or reported, but enacted within the very instance of interaction, as these girls jointly construct a discursive space in which their voices acquire *visibility*, *legitimacy*, and *epistemic value*.

In summary, the analysis of Transitivity patterns in Segment 7 of the focus group shows that the children's language does not merely describe the doll but indicates a complex network of meanings encompassing *affective*, *evaluative*, and *social dimensions*. *Mental processes* bring to the surface perceptions and emotions which, in Appraisal terms, map onto *Affect* (*Happiness+*, *Satisfaction+*, *Insecurity-*) and *Judgment* (*Capacity-*). *Relational processes* construct aesthetic and comparative evaluations, corresponding to *Appreciation* (*Reaction+*, *Composition-*, *Valuation-/+*). *Material processes* expose inequalities in access to consumption, interpreted, in my perspective, through *Affect: Security-*, thus foregrounding experiences of deprivation. *Verbal* and *relational* (rather than "existential") *processes* sustain interaction and the negotiation of meanings within the group and, although not always explicitly evaluative, play a crucial role in establishing consensus and fostering practices of *empowerment*.

In light of the analyses presented across the segments, I identify that the discourses produced by the girls during and after play with Barbie instantiate, through their linguistic configurations, the four levels of power proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007). The patterns of Transitivity and Appraisal reveal that language operates simultaneously as *a mirror of social hierarchies* and a *tool of transformation*. It means that, while certain *relational processes* reproduce dominant ideals of *beauty, class, and consumption*, thus resonating with *power over*, other configurations, particularly those involving *mental* and *verbal processes*, articulate *reflection, solidarity, and awareness*, aligning with *power to, power with, power over* and *power within*.

In this sense, I observe that the girls' discourse in this segment, which corresponds to the beginning of the focus group, not only reproduces certain social inequalities but also resists and re-signifies them. In this space, play can be understood as a *discursive arena* where their voices are *legitimized, identities are negotiated, and solidarities are built in collective*. I also interpret that the feminist struggle, therefore, reemerges in miniature through language, in every *"I think so", "we felt", and "yes"*. To me, through the use of these utterances lies an act of claiming space, recognizing oneself and others, and constructing meaning. Through these *micro-practices of discourse, empowerment* ceases to be an abstract construct and becomes a *lived, spoken, and collectively enacted experience*, demonstrating that linguistic interaction itself is a site where *power, resistance, and belonging* are continuously *negotiated*.

To further understand how such meanings are conceptually structured, I now move from a discursive to a cognitive-semantic perspective, drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) to explore how these children, through reflection, map their play experiences with the Barbie dolls in dialogue with the facilitator across both groups:

From this stage of analysis, I inferred a set of *cross-domain mappings*, systematized in the table below, which synthesize the main examples identified in the excerpt.

Table 38: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 7 – Focus Group

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
F: “ <i>Elas eram um pouquinho diferentes</i> ” F: “ <i>They were a little different</i> ”	DIFERENÇA É IDENTIDADE SOCIAL DIFFERENCE IS SOCIAL IDENTITY
C2: “ <i>Muito bonita</i> ” C2: “ <i>Very pretty</i> ”	BELEZA É VALOR BEAUTY IS VALUE
C2: “ <i>Nunca ganhei uma boneca assim</i> ” C2: “ <i>I’ve never gotten a doll like this</i> ”	TER É PERTENCER HAVING IS BELONGING
C2: “ <i>Só boneca mais bebê</i> ” C2: “ <i>Only more baby-like dolls</i> ”	PAPEL SOCIAL É BRINQUEDO SOCIAL ROLE IS TOY
C3: “ <i>Boneca normal que não se mexe muito</i> ” C3: “ <i>A normal doll that doesn’t move much</i> ”	AGÊNCIA É MOBILIDADE AGENCY IS MOBILITY

Source: research data

By look at the Table above, it is possible to see that the *focal group* unfolds as an intricate network of conceptual meanings emerging from the linguistic expressions of both the *children* and the *facilitator*, giving shape to metaphors that, I would say, pulse through their discourse. From my perspective, such utterances do more than convey ideas; they breathe life into the ways these children *see, feel*, and *evaluate* the world, allowing embodied experience to take linguistic form and meanings.

It becomes evident here, even more clearly than before, that the metaphors inferred above echo those previously identified in *Groups 1* and *2*, suggesting not mere repetition but continuity; in my own words, a *rhythm* in the children’s ways of making sense of themselves and of others through play.

Through these conceptual mappings, I notice that the children intuitively engage in *metaphoric*, *metonymic*, and *conceptual blending* operations to articulate their lived experiences with the dolls. These are not merely decorative linguistic choices but *cognitive mechanisms* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) that structure meanings related to *body*, *identity*, and *belonging*. In this sense, the *principle of embodiment* (Johnson, 1987) becomes central, as immediate bodily perceptions, such as *weight*, *movement*, *appearance*, and *possession*, provide the experiential ground from which *social*, *affective*, and *evaluative meanings* are *projected*.

For a clearer understanding, let me consider the first utterance presented in the table above: “*elas eram um pouquinho diferentes*” (“*they were a little different*”), which refers to the facilitator’s call to awareness in alignment with the dialogue established by the children, who had noticed that these Barbie dolls were “different”: “*vocês disseram pra mim logo no início que elas eram um pouquinho diferentes*” (“*you told me at the very beginning that they were a little different*”). From my perspective, this utterance illustrates how *perceptual difference* (concrete source domain) is *projected* onto the domain of *social identity* (abstract target domain), configuring, in this way, the metaphor DIFFERENCE IS SOCIAL IDENTITY (*DIFERENÇA É*

IDENTIDADE SOCIAL). In this process, I can observe that perceptual traits such as *skin color*, *body shape*, or other visible features operate *metonymically*, functioning as markers of broader *identity* categories. However, the initial observation of physical characteristics does not remain confined to the sensory level; through *metaphorical projection*, *corporeal perception* is reinterpreted as an *identity marker* imbued with *social* and *cultural* significance.

Recalling the *Invariance Principle* (Lakoff, 1993; 1999), and considering that it is not the entire concept of difference that is transferred, but only those aspects that coherently map onto the target domain, in the case of this specific metaphor DIFFERENCE IS SOCIAL IDENTITY these perceptual elements, in my interpretation, are reconfigured as culturally marked indices of *belonging*. To me, this selective process highlights the culturally situated nature of *metaphors* and *metonymies*, since perception is never neutral but oriented by the *social values* and *classificatory systems* that structure relationships.

At the same time, I see that this utterance also signals the emergence of a *blending* process⁴² (Fauconnier; Turner, 2002). In this *hybrid* space, I understand that the physical difference is no longer merely a perceptual characteristic nor solely a social category, but a fusion of both dimensions: a *body* that “displays” its *identity*. In this way, the metaphor does not simply organize experience in a unidirectional manner; it also participates in the creation of *new social realities*, where *corporeality* and *identity* become inseparable dimensions of meaning.

I interpret this movement as particularly significant within the children’s discourse about the dolls, as the observation of small physical differences acquires a deeper resonance, that of recognizing *identity plurality*. In this sense, it can be inferred that if she is different, she *embodies* an identity that does not belong to the group of “equals”, or, at least, to what is socially expected, since sensory perception (“*the act of looking at the doll*”) is transformed into a discursive practice that negotiates *belonging*, *equality*, and *difference* within the group. Thus, the metaphor analyzed here transcends aesthetic description and becomes a mechanism for the production of social meanings.

This dynamic interplay between *perception* and *social value* is also manifested in the utterance “*muito bonita*” (“very pretty”), voiced by C2, which activates the metaphor BEAUTY IS VALUE (*BELEZA É VALOR*). In this case, *aesthetics*, originally situated at the sensory level, is metaphorically reconfigured as social capital. Here again, *appearance* functions *metonymically*: the doll’s visible beauty stands for social worth. As Bourdieu (1986) observes,

⁴² See Table 20.

beauty can operate as a form of *symbolic capital*, capable of generating *recognition*, *prestige*, and *social advantage*. Thus, following the *Invariance Principle* (Lakoff, 1993; 1999), the *projection* does not encompass all aspects of the economic domain of value, but only those culturally compatible with the experience of beauty. In this sense, technical concepts such as *inflation*, *interest rates*, or *exchange* are not transferred; instead, dimensions such as *wealth*, *capital*, *scarcity*, *investment*, *merit*, or the *possibility of social gain* are interpreted as symbolic effects of aesthetic appearance. This selectivity allows beauty to be conceived as a precious resource, such as *accumulable*, *investable*, and also subject to *loss*. In this case, reinforcing its dimension as *symbolic capital* within *social relations*.

The same logic of metaphor as a mechanism of social legitimation can be also observed in the formulation “*nunca ganhei uma boneca assim*” (“*I never got a doll like this*”), which activates the metaphor HAVING IS BELONGING (*TER É PERTENCER*). Material possession (concrete source domain) is *projected* onto social belonging (abstract target domain). That is, to possess the doll does not merely mean to accumulate an object, but to *inscribe* oneself within a network of *symbolic recognition*. Conversely, *not having* it is interpreted as *exclusion*, reinforcing inequalities of access. Here, I understand that the doll itself operates *metonymically* as a “password” to *belonging*, since access to it ensures the child’s insertion into a group of peers. In the *hybrid space of blending*, “*having*” and “*belonging*” merge, making consumption inseparable from social identity. This underscores the critique of Barbie and consumerism so strongly emphasized by Almeida (2006), among other scholars of Barbie.

Continuing with the segment, another moment that stands out is when C2, in stating “*só boneca mais bebê*” (“*only more baby-like dolls*”), activates the metaphor SOCIAL ROLE IS TOY (*PAPEL SOCIAL É BRINQUEDO*). In this case, the *source domain* (the toy/doll as a concrete object) is projected onto the *target domain* of social roles, as the child categorizes the doll not merely as an object but as the *embodiment* of a stage or role associated with human life (that of a baby). The selective projection privileges representational features, including *age*, *clothing*, and *accessories*, that allow the doll to be associated with specific *social categories*. Here, I see that the attribute “*baby*” functions *metonymically*, standing for the broader social role of motherhood. In the *blending process* (Fauconnier; Turner, 2002), the emergent space integrates “*doll*” and “*baby*”, so that the doll does not only allude to a small child but is taken as such, naturalizing the links between *toy* and *social role*.

However, the tone of indignation in C2’s remark suggests discomfort with receiving only this type of doll, which may be interpreted as an *implicit critique* of the historical reductionism that confined girls to the role of future mothers. This dissatisfaction resonates with

feminist analyses by Beauvoir (1949), who problematized the construction of woman tied to motherhood; by Friedan (1963), who denounced women's domestic entrapment; and by Millett (1970), who exposed how cultural representations reinforce female subordination. Thus, C2's statement is inscribed within a long tradition of resistance to patriarchal impositions on the possible destinies of women.

That said, I now turn to the last part of the segment in which C3 emphasizes that she used to receive "*boneca normal que não se mexe muito* (*"a normal doll that doesn't move much"*), which highlights the metaphor AGENCY IS MOBILITY (*AGÊNCIA É MOBILIDADE*). In this case, the perceptual movement (source domain) is *projected* onto the domain of agency (target domain), so that the doll's mobility is reinterpreted as an indicator of its capacity to act in the world. Following the *Invariance Principle* (Lakoff, 1993; 1999), I understand that, regarding the dolls this child used to receive, not the entire semantic field of movement is transferred, but only those aspects relevant to the notion of agency, such as *displacement*, *initiative*, and *action* upon the environment.

In the *blending*, for instance, the physical gesture and social agency merge, so that moving, or not moving, can be interpreted as the *presence* or *absence* of *power to act*. Thus, I consider by saying that the doll "*doesn't move much*", the child is not merely describing the materiality of those specific dolls but *defining* them as endowed with *limited agency*, attributing to the toy the status of a social actor with *lesser capacity to act*, in contrast to the Barbie dolls she played with on that day.

This finding resonates with the analysis of Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), who observed that toys designed for boys emphasized movement and action (motorized cars, articulated figures, characters with weapons and fighting devices), whereas dolls designed for girls were largely static, fixed in postures of care or adornment. In their studies, the authors argued at that time that such multimodal distinctions in toy design materialized *gender ideologies*, in which *boys* are granted a repertoire of *agency*, *dynamism*, and *conquest*, while *girls* are left with *passivity*, *care*, and *restraint*. However, C3's statement reveals a shift. Her remark is not merely a technical observation about the doll she received but can be interpreted as evidence of how material design both reflects and reworks symbolic *gender boundaries* in play. Within C3's interactional space, the very limitations described by Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen in the early 2000s seemed to loosen, as the dolls' *bodies* and *attributes* in which she played with invited new possibilities of movement and expression, allowing the girls to momentarily inhabit *gestures of agency* that reconfigured the logic of stillness traditionally imposed on them (girls/women).

In summary, based on the analyses presented so far, it is possible to observe that the reflections on the children's linguistic and conceptual movements in this segment, particularly their remarks during the play-based activity with the Barbie Dolls, reveal clear resonances with broader feminist struggles for *recognition* and *empowerment*. From my interpretive standpoint, I find three theorists particularly relevant to this discussion, as their contributions provide the theoretical foundation for the struggles expressed by the children regarding the Barbie doll's *body*, its *capacity for movement*, and its *relation to agency*. Among them, I highlight Beauvoir (1949), who in *The Second Sex* argues that women have long been relegated to *positions of passivity*, their *bodies and movements* constrained by *social expectations*; Butler (1990; 2006), who in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* shows how gender norms *regulate and restrict* bodily performance, *limiting*, in this way, *women's agency*; and hooks (1982; 1986; 1990), who in *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* reminds us that *genuine empowerment* requires *dismantling* these constraints and reclaiming the *capacity to act fully in the world*.

Seen through this theoretical lens, the children's discourse gains depth and complexity. I believe that the reflections presented above find resonance in the metaphors mapped in their speech, particularly when they voiced *dissatisfaction* with the dolls they received outside the school context, perhaps echoing, through play, a deeper *desire to question* imposed roles and *imagine other possibilities of being*.

Within this framework, the children's discourse in this focus group segment appears to do more than describe a toy; it symbolically reflects the *unequal distribution of agency* between *genders*. From this perspective, the *attribution or denial of movement* to the doll functions as a metaphorical representation of *granting or restricting women's power to act in society*, situating the children's narrative within feminist claims for *autonomy, mobility, and full participation* in the social sphere.

Thus, I infer that what emerges from this analysis, then, is a subtle yet *powerful form of resistance*. In other words, through play, the children *reinterpret and negotiate* the meanings inscribed in the dolls' *bodies*, momentarily subverting the logic of stillness and dependency historically imposed on femininity. *In their hands*, the dolls cease to be static objects of care and *become agents* through which new possibilities of *action*, and of *being*, are *imagined*.

Segment 8 – Focus Group

Table 39: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 8

Segment 8
Brazilian Portuguese F: Ah, ok. As Barbies de vocês, ela tem alguma coisa especial nelas? F: Bem diferente, assim, algo bem especial... que vocês nunca tinham visto em outras Barbies. C2: Sim, eu acho. C8: Sim. F: Sim? O que? C8: É... C8: O cabelo dela. F: O cabelo!!! Por que o cabelo dela? C8: Porque a cor do cabelo dela é... C8: ... diferente da minha outra Barbie. F: Como essa outra Barbie? C8: Ela é... Ela tem o cabelo liso, dessa cor... F: Que cor é essa? C8: Loiro. C8: Ela é loiro escuro. F: Hum... a outra, a sua Barbie é loira, né? C8: É. C8: E qual a cor dessa aí que você me falou? F: Que cor é essa, mais ou menos? C8: Essa cor é... C7: Marrom claro. F: Marrom claro, ok. F: Tem mais alguma outra Barbie que difere da cor do cabelo? E é diferente assim? C3: Loira C3: Sim. C3: Loira. F: Tem uma que é... C2: Tem uma Barbie loira. F: Ela disse que a “original” dela... era loira. E essas outras, hein? ((apontando pra C8)) F: Essas outras aí, como é que são? C3: A que eu achei mais “da hora” foi... C3: ... aquela ali, ó. Cadeirante. C3: ... por causa que o cabelo dela é muito diferente. C2: É muito bonito. F: Como é o cabelo dela? C3: Crespo. C2: Crespo. C3: E grande. F: Vocês acham que ela se apresenta a muitas pessoas C3: Sim. F: ...aqui no Valentina, na escola? C3: E no <i>Quilombo</i> também. F: No <i>Quilombo</i>? F: Você falou em <i>Quilombo</i>. O que é o <i>Quilombo</i>? C3: <i>Quilombo</i> é um lugar onde tem várias pessoas, quilombolas... que fazem brincadeiras, capoeira, essas coisas... F: E como são as pessoas que você falou que parecem com aquela boneca? C1: Eu moro lá. F: Mora lá? C1: É. F: Que legal.

C1: Tem um *Quilombo* aqui perto da escola, é ir reto, ali na curva. Aí você encontra um Quilombo lá. *Quilombo* de Paratibe, eu acho.
 C1: É, tem um quatro zero zero.
 C1: Um quatro zero zero.
 F: Aí lá tem muitas pessoas com cabelo crespo?
 C1: Tem.
 F: Tem? Também? Que legal.
 F: Então essa escola aqui é *quilombola*, né?
 C1/C3: É.
 C1: É. *Quilombola*.
 F: Top!

English:

F: Ah, ok. Your Barbies, do they have something special about them?
 F: Something really different, like, something very special... that you had never seen in other Barbies?
 C2: Yes, I think so.
 C8: Yes.
 F: Yes? What?
 C8: It's...
 C8: Her hair.
 F: The hair!!! Why her hair?
 C8: Because her hair color is...
 C8: ... different from my other Barbie.
 F: How's that other Barbie?
 C8: She is... She has straight hair, this color...
 F: What color is that?
 C8: Blonde.
 C8: She is dark blonde.
 F: Hmm... the other one, your Barbie is blonde, right?
 C8: Yes.
 F: And what's the color of this one you told me about?
 F: What color is it, more or less?
 C8: This color is...
 C7: Light brown.
 F: Light brown, ok.
 F: Are there any other Barbies that differ in hair color? That are different like that?
 C3: Blonde.
 C3: Yes.
 C3: Blonde.
 F: There's one that is...
 C2: There's a blonde Barbie.
 F: She said her "original" one... was blonde. And these others, huh? ((pointing to C8))
 F: What about those others, how are they?
 C3: The one I thought was the "coolest" was...
 C3: ... that one over there, look. The one in a wheelchair.
 C3: ... because her hair is really different.
 C2: It's very beautiful.
 F: What's her hair like?
 C3: Kinky.
 C2: Kinky.
 C3: And long.
 F: Do you think she represents a lot of people...
 C3: Yes.
 F: ... here in Valentina, at school?
 C3: And in the *Quilombo* too.
 F: In the *Quilombo*?
 F: You mentioned *Quilombo*. What is a *Quilombo*?
 C3: *Quilombo* is a place where there are lots of people, *quilombolas*... who play games, do

capoeira, those things...

F: And what about the people you said look like that doll?

C1: I live there.

F: You live there?

C1: Yes.

F: That's nice.

C1: There's a *Quilombo* near the school, you just go straight, around the curve. Then you find a *Quilombo* there. *Quilombo* of Paratibe, I think.

C1: Yeah, there's one four zero zero.

C1: One four zero zero.

F: And there, are there many people with kinky hair?

C1: Yes.

F: Yes? Too? That's great.

F: So this school here is *quilombola*, right?

C1/C3: Yes.

C1: Yes. *Quilombola*.

F: Cool!

Transitivity System

Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
F: " <i>As Barbies de vocês, elas têm alguma coisa especial nelas?</i> " F: " <i>Do your Barbies have something special about them?</i> "	Relational (possessive)	<i>têm</i> <i>has</i>	Carrier/Possessor: "as Barbies de vocês" "your Barbies" Attribute: something special	Circ: "nelas" "about them"
C8: " <i>Porque a cor do cabelo dela é.... diferente da minha outra Barbie.</i> " C8: " <i>Because the color of her hair is different from my other Barbie.</i> "	Relational (attributive)	<i>é</i> <i>is</i>	Carrier: the color of her hair Attribute: different	Circ: "da minha outra Barbie" "from my other Barbie"
F: " <i>Como é essa outra Barbie?</i> " F: " <i>What is that other Barbie like?</i> "	Relational (attributive)	<i>é</i> <i>is</i>	Carrier: that other Barbie Attribute: (quality asked)	
C8: " <i>Ela tem o cabelo liso.</i> " C8: " <i>She has straight hair.</i> "	Relational (possessive)	<i>tem</i> <i>has</i>	Carrier: she Attribute: straight hair	
C8: " <i>Ela é loiro escuro.</i> " C8: " <i>She is dark blonde.</i> "	Relational (attributive)	<i>é</i> <i>is</i>	Carrier: she Attribute: dark blonde	
C7: " <i>Essa cor é marrom claro.</i> " C7: " <i>This color is light brown.</i> "	Relational (attributive)	<i>é</i> <i>is</i>	Carrier: this color Attribute: light brown	
C3: " <i>A que eu achei mais 'da hora' foi aquela ali, cadeirante.</i> " C3: " <i>The one I thought was the coolest was that one, in a wheelchair.</i> "	Mental (affective) + Relational	<i>achei / foi</i> <i>thought / was</i>	Senser: I Phenomenon: the coolest Token: the one Value: that one, in wheelchair	
C3: " <i>O cabelo dela é muito diferente.</i> " C3: " <i>Her hair is very different.</i> "	Relational (attributive)	<i>é</i> <i>is</i>	Carrier: her hair Attribute: very different	

C3: “Crespo.” C3: “Kinky.”	Relational (attributive)	é is	Carrier: her hair Attribute: curly	
C2: “Crespo” C2: “Kinky”	Relational (attributive)	é is	Carrier: her hair Attribute: curly	
C3: “E grande.” C3: “And long.”	Relational (attributive, elliptical)	é is	Carrier: her hair Attribute: long	
F: “Vocês acham que elas representam a muitas pessoas... ...aqui no Valentina, na escola?” F: “Do you think they represent many people here in Valentina, at school?”	Mental (cognitive) + Material (projected clause)	acham representam think represent	Senser: you Phenomenon: “they represent many people...” Actor: they Goal: many people	Circ: “aqui no Valentina, na escola” “here in Valentina, at school”
C3: “E no Quilombo também.” C3: “And in the Quilombo too.”	Material (elliptical)	represent representam	Actor: they Goal: many people	Circ: “no Quilombo também” “in the Quilombo too”
Appraisal System				
Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	
F: “As Barbies de vocês, elas têm alguma coisa especial nelas?” F: “Do your Barbies have something special about them?”	--	--	Valuation+ (“special” implies positive social or functional value, not only aesthetic)	
C8: “O cabelo dela.” C8: “Her hair.”	--	--	Reaction+ (focus on salient aesthetic feature)	
F: “O cabelo!!! Por que o cabelo dela?” F: “The hair!!! Why her hair?”	--	--	Reaction+ (emphatic / engagement)	
C8: “Porque a cor do cabelo dela é.... diferente da minha outra Barbie.” C8: “Because the color of her hair is different from my other Barbie.”	--	--	Composition+ (difference valued as variation / novelty)	
C8: “Ela é loiro escuro.” C8: “She is dark blonde.”	--	--	Composition (neutral descriptive)	
C7: “é marrom claro.” C7: “light brown.”	--	--	Composition (neutral descriptive)	
C3: “A que eu achei mais “da hora” foi aquela ali, cadeirante.” C3: “The one I thought was the coolest was that one, in a wheelchair.”	Satisfaction+ / Happiness+ (liking, admiration)	--	Reaction+ (positive social evaluation) Valuation+ (positive aesthetic evaluation)	
C2: “É muito bonito.” C2: “It is very beautiful.”	--	--	Reaction+ (aesthetic)	

C3: <i>Crespo. / E grande.</i> C3: <i>Kinky. / And long.</i>	--	--	Composition (descriptive physical attribute)
F: “ <i>Que legal.</i> ” F: “ <i>That’s nice.</i> ”	Happiness+ (enthusiasm / encouragement)	--	--
C3: “ <i>Quilombo é um lugar onde tem várias pessoas, quilombolas...</i> ” C3: “ <i>A Quilombo is a place where there are many people, quilombolas...</i> ”	--	Normality+ (positive recognition of cultural belonging)	--
C1: “ <i>Eu moro lá.</i> ” C1: “ <i>I live there.</i> ”	--	Normality+ (affirmation of identity)	--
F: “ <i>Então essa escola aqui é quilombola, né?</i> ” F: <i>So this school here is quilombola, right?</i>	--	Normality+ (recognition of group identity)	--
F: “ <i>Top!</i> ” F: “ <i>Cool!</i> ”	Happiness+ (positive affect, excitement)	--	--

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

Analyzing segment 2 through the lens of *Systemic Functional Linguistics* and the *Transitivity System*, it is possible to see that the dialogue between the facilitator named F and the children C1, C2, C3, C7, C8 is characterized by a predominance of *relational processes* (attributive and possessive).

For instance, when C8 says “*her hair is very different*” (“*o cabelo dela é muito diferente*”) and “*she has straight hair*” (“*ela tem o cabelo liso*”), these utterances exemplify *attributive relational processes* through which the doll is constructed as a bearer of specific qualities. It is worth noting here that C8’s remarks were made immediately after the facilitator asked, “*Do your Barbies have something special about them?*” (“*As Barbies de vocês, elas têm alguma coisa especial nelas?*”), a question that itself instantiates a *possessive relational process* and foregrounds the notion of *ownership* or *belonging*.

I find this chain particularly significant since, although the researcher had framed the question through a *possessive* structure (whether the doll *has* something special), the child responded by assigning qualities to the doll, as if the “*special*” were not something possessed but something *intrinsic to her identity*. This indicates that, for the child, the doll’s distinctive *value* lies not in what she carries or owns, but in her *constitutive attributes of body and appearance*. Thus, it is possible to see that the facilitator’s possessive process created space for the children to negotiate meanings through attributive processes, shifting the focus from possession to *identity construction*. Within the Appraisal System, this utterance aligns with *Appreciation: Valuation+*, since the term “*special*” conveys a positive evaluation of the doll’s worth.

However, this exchange, which at first glance appears rich, since the child refrains from using possession as a source of value and instead highlights attributes, that is, identity, nonetheless becomes problematic, because C8 immediately valued “*straight hair*” (“*cabelo liso*”) as the attribute that gives value to the doll. In this context, I am particularly struck by Beauvoir’s (1949) reflection on how the female body has historically been shaped by normative frameworks that define and confine its possibilities of being. This evaluation reveals, then, how *beauty standards*, particularly the *valorization of straight hair*, remain internalized as markers of *positive* difference. Thus, these utterances, within the Appraisal System, align with *Appreciation: Composition+*, since C8 evaluates physical features (*color, texture, length of hair*) as differential markers associated with *novelty* and *diversity*⁴³, though ideologically tied to hegemonic values. In this way, transitivity and appraisal converge to project the doll as a bearer of valued aesthetic attributes, situating the “*special*” in appearance rather than possession, while simultaneously highlighting the interpersonal dimension of interaction, in which meanings are negotiated between researcher and children.

At this point, it is worth emphasizing that, although discursive *empowerment* emerges in the child’s act of reformulating the logic of the question and selecting what constitutes the doll’s distinctive element, the content of this evaluation remains anchored in hegemonic beauty standards. The valorization of straight hair as something “*special*” here reflects the reproduction of aesthetic hierarchies long naturalized in Brazilian sociocultural contexts, where straight hair is often considered more beautiful and prestigious than curly or kinky textures. While the interaction shows *agency* in defining what is relevant, at the *ideological level* it demonstrates the *internalization of dominant values*, revealing the *tension* between *meaning negotiation* and the *reproduction of cultural norms* in C8’s discourse.

To me, this tension gains deeper meaning when situated within Brazil’s broader social and historical context. What seems rather contradictory is that Brazil is a country largely composed of mixed-race people, a population that carries in its blood and skin the traces of a mixture resulting from the nation’s historical, social, and colonial formation. According to data from the 2022 Census, the majority of the Brazilian population self-identifies as Brown (*parda*) or Black, surpassing for the first time the number of those who identify as White (Moura, 2023; Benevides; Medeiros, 2023). If we look back at the country’s history, we can observe that this “*mestiçagem*”, or racial and cultural mixing, resulted primarily from the encounter of three main

⁴³ I argue that these features are associated with *novelty* and *diversity*, since, according to C8’s discourse, these were the distinctive aspects that stood out to her in comparison with the other dolls she had seen in her life, particularly after the facilitator’s question: “*Do your Barbies have something special about them?*”.

matrices: Indigenous, European (Portuguese), and African. I say “*primarily*” because there were also contributions from later European and Asian immigrations (Italian, German, Japanese, Syrian-Lebanese, among others), though these influences were not as strong as the first three (cf. Silva, 2014).

Thus, I see that within this contradictory context, the children’s words take on renewed importance, as their voices begin to challenge and reframe the dominant beauty codes echoed in earlier exchanges. For instance, C3’s remark, “*the one I thought was the coolest was that one, the wheelchair user*” (“*aquela que eu achei mais da hora foi aquela ali, cadeirante*”), beautifully illustrates this shift. In this moment, the mental process “*thought*” reflects an affective stance of approval, *Affect (Happiness+ / Satisfaction+)*, indicating admiration and liking. Seen from a Transitivity perspective, I interpret this experience shaped by a *subjective* but *positive evaluation*; and through the lens of Appraisal, it shows that difference itself carries a *positive emotional resonance*.

I notice that this sense of appreciation also extends to C3’s remark, where she mentions the Black doll in a wheelchair with kinky hair, drawing attention to features often ignored or marginalized by dominant beauty ideals. In that same exchange, it is possible to observe that C2 adds, “*it’s very beautiful*” (“*é muito bonito*”), an instance of *Appreciation (Reaction+)* that, in my interpretation, expresses genuine admiration and aesthetic pleasure. To me, these moments reveal how *mental* and *relational processes* weave together with Appraisal resources, showing that the children are not simply describing what they see, they are *responding, feeling, and valuing diversity* as something beautiful and meaningful. In doing so, they subtly question the dominant aesthetic order, *affirming other ways of understanding beauty and belonging*.

More critically, these emotional manifestations function as a counterpoint to the hegemonic aesthetic standards observed earlier in C8’s valorization of straight hair. While C8 reproduces internalized ideals of beauty, C3 reconfigures the evaluative logic toward inclusion and representation by choosing the wheelchair doll as “*the coolest*” (“*a mais da hora*”). Through this choice, the child not only attributes aesthetic value but also *legitimizes bodily difference as positive*, making it central to her criteria of appreciation. This discursive act can be read as a *gesture of symbolic empowerment*, one that, even if incipient, *challenges traditional hierarchies of beauty* privileging normative attributes. As hooks (1982, 1986, 1990) asserts, and as observed across other segments of this analysis, genuine empowerment requires dismantling the norms that sustain exclusion; in this sense, I observe that C3’s utterance opens space for *resignification* and *inclusion*.

In dialogue with Butler (1990, 2006), these statements further illustrate how gender norms regulate bodily performance, while also revealing how children can *discursively rearticulate such frameworks*, creating fissures for new readings of femininity. Along this trajectory, C2's remark reinforces the *positive aesthetic dimension* of this representational shift, situating physical diversity within the realm of the beautiful rather than the deviant. This legitimization of difference demonstrates how children construct meanings of value that transcend conventional beauty parameters, opening discursive space for the *recognition of a plurality of bodies and identities*. The articulation between *mental* and *relational processes* and the Appraisal system thus exposes the affective dimension of children's discourse, while also establishing a *symbolic arena of negotiation* in which diversity is not merely perceived but *celebrated as a marker of value, inclusion, and belonging*.

Thus, while in the first instance the children's discourse reinforces hegemonic cultural norms (*beauty = straight hair*), classified as *Appreciation: Composition+*, with ideological alignment to normative aesthetics, in the second, I observe signs of an emerging resistance and value reconfiguration, expressed through *Affect: Happiness+ / Satisfaction+* and *Appreciation: Reaction+ / Valuation+*, albeit mediated by affectivity and aesthetic appreciation. This contrast suggests that the children operate within a *discursive zone of tension* between reproducing normative standards and legitimizing the differences that subvert them. Here, I understand that such a movement resonates with Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) propositions, which reveal that categories of difference and exclusion are *interdependent and intersectional*, and with Espinosa Miñoso's (2014, 2017, 2021) critiques, which call for a *decolonial feminism* attentive to *racialized and subaltern voices*.

Later in the dialogue, when F asks "Do you think they represent many people here in Valentina, at school?" ("Vocês acham que elas representam muitas pessoas aqui no Valentina, na escola?"), I identify an articulation between a *mental process* ("think") and a *relational identifying process* ("represent"). This construction not only attributes *symbolic agency* to the dolls but also articulates a *collective meaning*, expanding Barbie's significance beyond the physical object. At the Appraisal level, F's utterance mobilizes both *Appreciation: Valuation+* (the doll's value lies in her capacity to represent) and *Judgment: Normality+* (recognition of legitimate social subjects). In my understanding, this shift from individual *aesthetics* to *collective* representation signals a crucial discursive repositioning as the doll is evaluated not only as a consumer object but also as a *symbolic mediator of identities*. Thus, C3's response, "and in the Quilombo too", reinforces this by situating representativity in a specific *community space*, linking Barbie to a *historically marginalized identity territory*. This utterance can be

interpreted through hooks (1990), who argues that *empowerment must involve the recognition of the experiences of oppressed groups*, and once again in dialogue with Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) notion of *intersectionality*, which makes clear that *gender, race, and territorial belonging* cannot be analyzed separately.

Building on this movement from collective representation to lived identification, C1's statement "*I live there*" is even more significant. In terms of transitivity, it is a *relational identifying process*, directly connecting the child to the *Quilombola community*. From an appraisal perspective, this utterance represents a *Judgment: Normality+*, as it asserts belonging to a cultural identity which, although historically subalternized, is here voiced as *legitimate* and *proudly recognized*. This discursive, then, act shifts Barbie from the plane of a *media object* to that of *lived experience*, in which the doll becomes not a representation but also a mirror of social identity. Such a movement produces, in my view, an *effect of identity empowerment*, for in recognizing herself in the object, the child validates her own existence within a regime of visibility that historically excluded her. Once again, this legitimation connects back to Beauvoir's (1949) concern with women's exclusion from full subjecthood, to hooks' (1986) insistence that Black and marginalized voices must be centered, and to Espinosa Miñoso's (2014) demand for a feminism rooted in the realities of racialized Latin American women, here echoed in a decolonial affirmation of territorial and identity belonging.

Finally, and no less important, the reactions of F are also revealing. By saying "*that's cool*" or "*awesome!*", it can be inferred that the facilitator mobilizes *exclamative evaluative processes* aligned with *Affect: Happiness+* (emotions of enthusiasm and joy), reinforcing the legitimacy of the children's contributions. These positive affects are not merely emotional responses but operate as *acts of interpersonal validation*, consolidating the representation constructed by the children and inscribing it as socially significant. By ratifying their utterances with enthusiasm, I interpret that the researcher creates a *discursive space of recognition* in which children's voices are not only heard but also *confirmed as legitimate*. This affective alignment can be interpreted as reinforcing the dialogic nature of interaction, in which meanings of belonging, identity, and diversity are *co-constructed*. From this perspective, the researcher's validation can also be interpreted as a catalyst of "*power within*" (Charlier; Caubergs, 2007), insofar as it strengthens the children's *self-esteem and self-confidence*, a dimension that resonates with Sardenberg's (2009, 2011) feminist pedagogies, which conceive empowerment as a relational and pedagogical practice of *mutual recognition*, and with Butler's (2006) formulation of performativity, which underscores that *social recognition is a condition for identities to be livable*.

In conclusion, this second segment of the focus group, referring to the first question, reveals how play with Barbie allows children's discourses to articulate across multiple dimensions of feminism and evaluation. From the perspective of the Appraisal System, this moment encapsulates a movement from *Appreciation: Composition+ and Valuation+*, associated with the aesthetic valorization of physical traits such as hair and color, toward *Affect: Happiness+ / Satisfaction+* and *Judgment: Normality+*, which emerge in the recognition of *inclusion, belonging, and identity affirmation*. In broader terms, I understand this discursive trajectory as echoing what feminist theorists have long discussed, the reproduction of *hegemonic aesthetic norms*, examined by Beauvoir (1949), Friedan (1963), and Millett (1970); the emergence of *inclusive resistances and affective reconfigurations*, explored by hooks (1982, 1986, 1990) and Butler (1990, 2006); and the *legitimization of community and racialized identities*, advanced by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and Espinosa Miñoso (2014, 2017, 2021).

At the interpersonal level, the facilitator's expressions of enthusiasm, "*That's nice*", "*Cool!*", mobilize *Affect: Happiness+*, reinforcing the children's contributions through positive emotional engagement. In doing so, her validation underscores the *relational and pedagogical nature of empowerment*, as suggested by Sardenberg (2009, 2011), in which *Judgment: Normality+* and mutual recognition emerge as central dimensions of feminist pedagogies grounded in dialogic interaction and co-construction of meaning.

Building on these insights, I now move toward the analysis of *conceptual mappings*, examined through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), to explore how such mappings shape the children's perception and construction of experience in relation to the specific Barbie dolls described and evaluated by C8, C3, and C2.

Through this examination, I was able to outline the *cross-domain mappings* displayed in the table below, which encapsulate the key conceptual correspondences observed in the children's utterances.

Table 40: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 8 – Focus Group

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
C8: "O cabelo dela é diferente da minha outra Barbie" C8: "her hair color is different from my other Barbie"	DIFERENÇA FÍSICA É IDENTIDADE SOCIAL PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE IS SOCIAL IDENTITY
C3: "Aquele ali, cadeirante..." C3: "The one in a wheelchair"	IDENTIDADE É MOBILIDADE IDENTITY IS MOBILITY
C3: "Cabelo crespo... grande" C3: "Kinky... and long"	REPRESENTAÇÃO SOCIAL É CABELO SOCIAL REPRESENTATION IS HAIR
F: "representa a muitas pessoas aqui na escola"	REPRESENTAÇÃO É VISIBILIDADE REPRESENTATION IS VISIBILITY

F: “ <i>she represents many people here at school</i> ” C3: “ <i>e no Quilombo</i> ” C3: “ <i>and in the Quilombo</i> ”	
C3: “ <i>Quilombo é um lugar onde tem várias pessoas quilombolas</i> ” C3: “ <i>Quilombo is a place where there are lots of people, quilombolas</i> ”	IDENTIDADE COMUNITÁRIA É LUGAR COMMUNITY IDENTITY IS PLACE
C1: “ <i>Eu moro lá</i> ” C1: “ <i>I live there</i> ”	PERTENCIMENTO É HABITAR BELONGING IS LIVING
F: “ <i>Então essa escola aqui é quilombola</i> ” F: “ <i>So this school here is quilombola</i> ”	INSTITUIÇÃO É IDENTIDADE INSTITUTION IS IDENTITY

Source: research data

Examining the *cross-domain mappings* that emerge from the children’s dialogues in Segment 8, I observe that these interactions extend and deepen the discursive patterns identified in the previous analysis. Their exchanges with the facilitator around the Barbie dolls seem to continue to produce a dynamic network of conceptual metaphors through which *concrete*, *embodied*, and *sensory experiences* are progressively reinterpreted as cognitive foundations for more abstract notions of *identity*, *belonging*, and *value*.

In my interpretation, these metaphors suggest that the children’s discourse within this context of play with Barbie dolls, as they recount their moments of engagement with the dolls, transcends the mere description of physical attributes, functioning instead as a cognitive mechanism through which they *structure experience* and *negotiate social meanings*. In doing so, the analysis reinforces the previous discussion developed through the lenses of Transitivity and Appraisal.

To further clarify this interpretive movement, I sought to organize the data in Table 41, which synthesizes the *source* and *target domains* identified in the children’s discourse and highlights how their conceptualizations evolve from concrete experiences to more abstract meanings.

Table 41: Source Domain and Target Domain – Segment 8 – Focus Group

Source Domain	Target Domain
PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE	SOCIAL IDENTITY
MOBILITY	IDENTITY
HAIR	SOCIAL REPRESENTATION
VISIBILITY	REPRESENTATION
PLACE	COMMUNITY IDENTITY
LIVING	BELONGING
INSTITUTION	IDENTITY

Source: research data

Building on these mappings, a clear example appears when C8 states, “*her hair is different from my other Barbie*” (“*o cabelo dela é diferente da minha outra Barbie*”). In this

utterance, I notice that the *source domain* of the *perceptual* (hair color and texture) is projected onto the *target domain* of the *social*, configuring the metaphor PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE IS SOCIAL IDENTITY (*DIFERENÇA FÍSICA É IDENTIDADE SOCIAL*). Within this process, I infer the notion of the *embodied mind* (Johnson, 1987; 2017), according to which thought is inseparable from bodily experience. The perception of *color*, *form*, and *texture* in this specific discourse does not remain at a merely sensory level; instead, it serves as the basis for the construction of social categories that, in this case, associate kinky hair with *quilombola* identity. This movement, I argue, resonates, one more time, with hooks' (1986, 1990) insistence that marginalized voices must be centered, as kinky hair functions here as a counter-hegemonic sign of *belonging* and *cultural pride*, in direct opposition to the dominant aesthetic standards denounced by Beauvoir (1949).

Another relevant excerpt is F's remark, as the facilitator, on the statement "*her 'original'... was a blonde*" ("*a 'original' dela... era loira*"), which activates the metaphor ORIGINAL IS STANDARD (*ORIGINAL É PADRÃO*). I did not include this metaphor in Table 42, as this utterance did not come directly from the children but from the facilitator. However, it is possible to observe that this formulation, which originated in F's speech, emerges interdiscursively from C8's statement, when she mentions her "*other Barbies*" as being "*blonde*", *projecting* the *source domain* of *originality* onto the *target domain* of *authenticity* and *cultural normativity*. Even unconsciously, if I may say so.

This mapping follows what Lakoff (1993) conceptualized as the *Invariance Principle*, in which only structurally compatible elements are projected from one domain to another. Here, I can see that the idea of *reference* and *standardization* remains intact, while other nuances of originality are left behind. Through this discursive move, F reaffirms the *blonde doll* as a *normative parameter*, serving as a reference point against which the other Barbie dolls are evaluated. Such a reproduction of the "*blonde original*" echoes the critique made by Beauvoir (1949), Friedan (1963), and Millett (1970), who denounced the oppressive weight of hegemonic beauty standards. Yet, at the same time, it can also be read as an attempt by F to provoke reflection, in line with *feminist pedagogies of empowerment* (Sardenberg, 2009, 2011), which emphasize critical awareness through dialogue, leading the children, then, to wonder: "*so, wouldn't these others be considered original?*".

Further into the same segment, a particularly meaningful discourse arises when C3 associates the wheelchair Barbie with curly hair and with the *Quilombo*. By stating that the doll "*in the Quilombo as well*" ("*e no Quilombo também*"), I infer that two interacting metaphors are activated: REPRESENTATION IS VISIBILITY (*REPRESENTAÇÃO É VISIBILIDADE*) and COMMUNITY IDENTITY IS PLACE (*IDENTIDADE COMUNITÁRIA É LUGAR*). The first projects the *source domain* of

sensory perception, *visibility* and *presence*, onto the *target domain* of social representativeness, where *to be seen* becomes synonymous with *to be recognized*. The second transfers the *source domain* of *physical space* onto the *target domain* of *cultural belonging*, positioning the *Quilombo* as a site of *identity* and *collective memory*.

Thus, this dual operation reflects Fillmore's (1982) idea that frames act as systems of knowledge through which people organize experience and give coherence to cultural interpretation. From this perspective, I understand the *quilombola frame* as a *cultural model of resistance and recognition*, while the *frame of representativeness* links *bodily attributes* to *social categories of identity and empowerment*. The intersection between these two frameworks resonates with Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) notion of *intersectionality*, where *disability*, *race*, and *place* converge to form a *layered sense of identity*.

Moreover, C1's comment, "*I live there*" ("*eu moro lá*"), brings this intersection to life. Her statement enacts the metaphor BELONGING IS LIVING, in which the concrete act of inhabiting a *physical space* maps onto the *abstract domain of social belonging*. I understand that, in the child's reasoning, to "live" somewhere becomes synonymous with belonging there, what I consider a powerful cross-domain mapping between inhabited space and collective identity, representing here a significant contribution to cognitive linguistics and the study of play.

In this way, I see that this interpretation aligns with Ruiz de Mendoza's (1998, p. 45) *Extended Invariance Principle*, which argues that coherence in metaphorical projection depends not only on preserving *image-schemas* but also on maintaining the *generic structures* that connect the *source* and *target domains*. It is worth noting that, while Lakoff's (1993) original principle focused on how embodied or spatial structures move across domains, Ruiz de Mendoza extends the concept to include *abstract* and *relational patterns*, such as *social roles*, *cultural frames*, and *experiential coherence*. In this example, then, the structural elements of the source domain "living in a place", including *permanence*, *familiarity*, and *rootedness*, are carried into the *target domain of belonging*, where *identity* is *imagined* as *stable*, *continuous*, and *grounded in community*. I understand that this broader notion of invariance allows the metaphor to embrace not only *spatial embodiment* but also *sociocultural meaning*, showing how the act of "living" becomes a metaphor for the *affective* and *communal dimensions of identity*.

That said, analyzing these utterances beyond metaphorical mappings, I also find traces of *metonymic projections* in this segment. This is because *hair* appears as a part standing for the *whole*, an identity marker that represents broader social groups. Moreover, I notice that there are also moments of *conceptual blending* (Fauconnier; Turner, 2002), where distinct domains

merge to create a shared space of meaning. This is the case of the wheelchair Barbie with kinky hair, for example, in which she is not merely considered an aesthetic object but, through play, becomes a site where *body*, *mobility*, *aesthetics*, and *social identity* intersect.

In this specific case of the wheelchair Barbie with kinky hair, I observe that within this *blended space*, new meanings take shape, combining notions of *difference*, *representativeness*, and *empowerment*. In my interpretation, this process of blending encompasses, on a larger scale, the multidimensional view of empowerment described by Charlier and Caubergs (2007), in which playing with this specific doll brings forth the following dimensions of power: *power within* (self-awareness), *power with* (collective solidarity), and *power to* (the ability to act). These dimensions seem to converge in the children's interpretation of Barbie as a symbol of resistance and inclusion.

In conclusion, I believe that in the analysis of this segment, in which the children play with the wheelchair Barbie, the Black version with kinky hair, *embodied experiences*, including *seeing hair*, *perceiving movement*, and *inhabiting places*, serve as the basis for abstract ideas such as *identity*, *value*, and *belonging*. Seen in this light, the association of kinky hair with the *quilombo* and the *recognition of the school as quilombola* illustrate how *conceptual metaphor* can function as a form of *symbolic empowerment*, allowing children to transform *bodily* and *spatial attributes* into *signs of cultural resistance* and *collective identity*.

Segment 9 – Focus Group

Table 42: Transitivity System and the Appraisal System in Segment 9

Segment 9
Brazilian Portuguese
F: Mas vocês acham que essa boneca aí é porque ela tem câncer também ou é porque ela optou a não ter cabelo? Tem pessoas que não... que raspam o cabelo... C3: E ela tá feliz. F: E ela tá feliz, né? C3: É... Eu acho que ela não liga. C2: Ela não liga, só quer ser bonita mesmo. F: Então pode ser bonita sem cabelo também, né? C1/C2/C3/C4/C8: É. C1: Pode. C2: Nada muda. F: As pessoas que têm câncer podem ser bonitas sem cabelo, né? C1: Pode. C3: Sim, pode. C2: Eu acho muito linda, é... as meninas que é... são bonita sem cabelo. C3: Mas tem algumas pessoas... que superaram o câncer, aí acham bonito ficar sem cabelo. F: Ah, que legal. Aí fica cortando o cabelo mesmo. F: Fiquei arrepiada. Isso é legal. Muito bem, gente.

English:

F: But do you think that doll is like that because she has cancer, or because she chose not to have hair? There are people who... who shave their heads...

C3: And she's happy.

F: And she's happy, right?

C3: Yeah... I think she doesn't care.

C2: She doesn't care, she just wants to be pretty.

F: So, you can be pretty without hair too, right?

C1/C2/C3/C4/C8: Yeah.

C1: You can.

C2: Nothing changes.

F: People who have cancer can be pretty without hair, right?

C1: They can.

C3: Yes, they can.

C2: I think very beautiful, hum... girls who are... pretty without hair.

C3: But there are some people... who have overcome cancer, and then they think it's beautiful to stay without hair.

F: Oh, that's nice. So, they keep cutting their hair short.

F: I got goosebumps. That's so nice. Very good, everyone.

Transitivity System

Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Circumstance
F: "Mas vocês acham que essa boneca aí é porque ela tem câncer também ou é porque ela optou a não ter cabelo?" F: "But do you think this doll is because she has cancer too or because she chose not to have hair?"	Mental (cognitive) + Relational (attributive) + Material (action - decision)	<i>acham / é / tem / optou</i> <i>think / is / has / chose</i>	Senser: you Phenomenon: "this doll is because..." Carrier: this doll Attribute: (no hair) Actor: she Goal: not to have hair	Circ: too
F: "Tem pessoas que não... que raspam o cabelo." F: "There are people who... who shave their hair."	Existential + Material	<i>tem (existe) / raspam</i> <i>there are / shave</i>	Existent: people Actor: people Goal: hair	--
C3: "E ela tá feliz." C3: "And she is happy."	Relational (attributive: state)	<i>é</i> <i>is</i>	Carrier: she Attribute: happy	--
F: "E ela tá feliz, né?" F: "And she is happy, right?"	Relational (attributive: state)	<i>é</i> <i>is</i>	Carrier: she Attribute: happy	--
C3: "É... Eu acho que ela não liga." C3: "Yeah... I think she doesn't care."	Mental (cognitive)	<i>Acho / não liga</i> <i>think / doesn't care</i>	Senser: I Phenomenon: she doesn't care Carrier: she Attribute: indifferent	--

C2: “Ela não liga, só quer ser bonita mesmo.” C2: “<i>She doesn’t care, she just wants to be pretty anyway.</i>”	Mental (cognitive/attitudinal) + Mental (desiderative) + Relational (attributive, projected)	<i>Não liga / doesn’t care</i> <i>quer / wants</i> <i>ser / be</i>	Senser: ela / she Phenomenon: (implicit situation) Senser: ela / she Phenomenon: ser bonita → Carrier: ela / she Attribute: bonita / pretty	--
F: “Então pode ser bonita sem cabelo também, né?” F: “So one can be pretty without hair too, right?”	Relational (attributive, modal)	<i>pode ser</i> <i>can be</i>	Carrier: (any person) Attribute: pretty	Circ: <i>without hair / too</i>
C1/C2/C3/C4/C8: “Ela pode.” C1/C2/C3/C4/C8: “She can.”	Relational (attributive, elliptical/modal)	<i>pode ser</i> <i>can be</i>	Carrier: implicit Attribute: pretty	--
C2: “Nada muda.” C2: “Nothing changes.”	Relational (attributive)	<i>muda</i> <i>changes</i>	Carrier: nothing Attribute: remains the same	--
F: “As pessoas que têm câncer podem ser bonitas sem cabelo, né?” F: “People who have cancer can be pretty without hair, right?”	Relational (possessive) + Relational (attributive, modal)	<i>têm / have</i> <i>podem ser / can be</i>	Carrier: <i>pessoas / people</i> Attribute: <i>câncer</i> Carrier: <i>pessoas / people</i> Attribute: <i>bonitas / pretty</i>	Circ: <i>sem cabelo / without hair</i>
C1: “Pode.” C1: “They can.”	Relational (attributive, elliptical/modal)	<i>pode</i> <i>can</i>	Carrier: implicit Attribute: pretty	--
C3: “Sim, pode.” C3: “They can.”	Relational (attributive, elliptical/modal)	<i>pode</i> <i>can</i>	Carrier: implicit Attribute: pretty	--
C2: “Eu acho muito linda... as meninas que são bonita sem cabelo.” C2: “<i>I think it’s very beautiful... girls who are pretty without hair.</i>”	Mental (cognitive) + Relational (attributive)	<i>acho / são</i> <i>think / are</i>	Senser: I Phenomenon: girls pretty without hair Carrier: girls Attribute: very beautiful	Circ: <i>without hair</i>
C3: “Mas tem algumas pessoas que superaram o câncer, aí acham bonito ficar sem cabelo.” C3: “But there are some people who overcame cancer, then they think it’s beautiful to stay without hair.”	Existential + Material + Mental (cognitive)	<i>tem (existe) / superaram / acham</i> <i>there are / overcame / think</i>	Existent: some people Actor: people Goal: cancer Senser: they Phenomenon: it’s beautiful to stay without hair	Circ: <i>without hair</i>

F: "Ah, que legal." F: "Ah, that's nice."	Relational (attributive, elliptical)	é is	Carrier: this Attribute: nice	--
C3: "Ai fica cortando o cabelo mesmo." C3: "Then they keep cutting their hair."	Material	fica cortando keep cutting	Actor: (implicit person) Goal: hair	--
F: "Fiquei arrepiada." F: "I got goosebumps."	Mental (affective bodily)	got	Senser: I Attribute: goosebumps	--
F: "Isso é legal." F: "This is nice."	Relational (attributive)	é is	Carrier: this Attribute: nice	--
F: "Muito bem, gente." F: "Very good, people."	Relational (attributive, elliptical)	é is	Carrier: you (guys) Attribute: very good	--
Appraisal System				
Utterance	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	
F: "Mas vocês acham que essa boneca aí é porque ela tem câncer também ou é porque ela optou a não ter cabelo?" F: "But do you think this doll is because she has cancer too or because she chose not to have hair?"	--	--	Valuation (questioning reason/meaning behind doll's hair)	
F: "Tem pessoas que... raspam o cabelo." F: "There are people who... who shave their hair."	--	Normality+ (acknowledging social practice)	--	
C3: "E ela tá feliz." C3: "And she is happy."	Happiness+ (positive emotion, well-being)	--	--	
F: "E ela tá feliz, né?" F: "And she is happy, right?"	Happiness+ (confirmation of positive affect)	--	--	
C3: "Eu acho que ela não liga." C3: "I think she doesn't care."	Security+ (confidence, indifference to problem, emotional stability)	Tenacity+ (strength of character, resilience)	--	
C2: "Ela não liga, só quer ser bonita mesmo." C2: "She doesn't care, she just wants to be pretty anyway."	Satisfaction+ (desire to be pretty)		Valuation+ (beauty as positive value)	
F: "Então pode ser bonita sem cabelo também, né?" F: "So, one can be pretty without hair too, right?"	--	--	Valuation+ (beauty independent of hair)	
C1: "Pode."	--	--	Valuation+	

C1: "Yes, she can."			(confirmation of value)
C2: "Nada muda." C2: "Nothing changes."	Security+ (stability, reassurance)	--	--
F: "As pessoas que têm câncer podem ser bonitas sem cabelo, né?" F: "People who have cancer can be pretty without hair, right?"	--	Normality+ (social inclusiveness)	Valuation+ (beauty without hair)
C1: "Pode." C1: "Yes, they can."	--	--	Valuation+
C3: "Sim, pode." C3: "Yes, they can."	--	--	Valuation+
C2: "Eu acho muito linda... as meninas bonitas sem cabelo." C2: "I think it's very beautiful... girls who are pretty without hair."	Satisfaction+ (liking, admiration)	Tenacity+ (ethic, resilience)	Reaction+ (esthetic appreciation of beauty)
C3: "Mas tem algumas pessoas que superaram o câncer, aí acham bonito ficar sem cabelo." C3: "But there are some people who overcame cancer, then they think it's beautiful to stay without hair."	Satisfaction+ (positive evaluation, admiration)	Tenacity+ (overcoming illness)	Reaction+ (beauty in baldness)
F: "Ah, que legal." F: "Ah, that's nice."	Happiness+ (enthusiasm, delight)	--	--
C3: "Aí fica cortando o cabelo mesmo." C3: "Then they keep cutting their hair."	--	Normality+ (habitual practice, social acceptance)	--
F: "Fiquei arrepiada." F: "I got goosebumps."	Happiness+ (emotional response, excitement)	--	--
F: "Isso é legal." F: "This is nice."	Happiness+ (positive affect)	--	--
F: "Muito bem, gente." F: "Very good, guys."	Satisfaction+ (approval, encouragement)	Capacity+ (Social esteem, ability) Propriety+ (Social sanction, morality)	--

Source: corpus compiled by the author based on Sarinho Júnior (2023)

When examining Segment 9 from the focal group, the final section of this thesis's analysis, I notice that the children once again rely mainly on *relational attributive processes*

within the Transitivity System. As observed throughout this chapter, these processes function as linguistic means of assigning *qualities* and *states*. Utterances such as C3's "*she is happy*" ("*ela tá feliz*"), F's "*she can be pretty without hair too*" ("*pode ser bonita sem cabelo também*"), and C2's "*nothing changes*" ("*nada muda*") illustrate this tendency.

However, I find it important to emphasize that, throughout the analysis of the focal group's segment, I have observed that the *absence of hair* is reinterpreted not as a sign of loss or deficiency but as a *condition fully compatible with positive identity traits* such as *happiness*, *beauty*, and *normality*. In these cases, the utterances, often carrying affirmative values, indicate a discursive strategy to *legitimize alternative embodiments*, shifting *baldness* from stigma toward *symbolic appreciation*.

Nevertheless, as shown in the table above, I notice that it is not only relational attributive processes that stand out in these utterances. I can also observe that meaning emerges through the interaction between *mental* and *relational processes* rather than through each in isolation. Consider C3's statement, "*I think she doesn't care*" ("*eu acho que ela não liga*"), and C2's addition, "*she just wants to be pretty*" ("*ela só quer ser bonita mesmo*"). In these two cases, the analysis indicates that the *mental processes* of "thinking" and "wanting" convey *subjectivity*, shaping an *empowering perception of the bald doll*.

These utterances exemplify what Martin and White (2005) describe in the Appraisal System as the interplay of *Affect* (expressing feelings), *Judgment* (evaluating behavior), and *Appreciation* (valuing people or objects). Expressions such as (i) *happiness*, "*she is happy*" ("*ela tá feliz*"); (ii) *reassurance*, "*nothing changes*" ("*nada muda*"); and (iii) *aesthetic appreciation*, "*I think the girls without hair are very beautiful*" ("*eu acho muito linda... as meninas que são bonitas sem cabelo*"), particularly from C2, show how Appraisal resources intertwine with Transitivity to build *inclusive and affirmative meanings*.

Over the course of the discussion, the bald doll, once marked by difference, as first seen in Segment 2 (Play-based activity, Group 1), is reimagined as a symbolic vehicle through which the children articulate a discourse of *normalization* and *value*. The repeated use of *positive attributes* linked to *beauty* and *well-being* indicates the *transformation of play* into a *counter-narrative* that resists *hegemonic ideals of femininity*, which *equate beauty with normative appearance*. Rather than emphasizing absence or loss, the children construct meanings of *possibility* and *re-signification*, showing that play with Barbie becomes a site of symbolic negotiation where social categories such as *health*, *illness*, *femininity*, and *beauty* are continuously reorganized.

Furthermore, later in the dialogue, the presence of *existential* and *material processes*, such as F's "there are people who shave their hair" ("tem pessoas que raspam o cabelo") and C3's "there are some people who overcame cancer" ("tem algumas pessoas que superaram o câncer"), expands the scope of discussion, shifting the focus from the doll to *concrete* social practices. By introducing social actors (*people*) and embodied actions (*shaving hair, overcoming cancer*), the discourse moves beyond the play context and anchors itself in socially recognized experiences. I understand that this broadening legitimizes hair loss not as stigma but as a *possibility for overcoming, belonging, and social normality*. From the perspective of the Appraisal System, this involves mobilizing *Judgment* (positivizing resilience and overcoming) and *Appreciation* (associating beauty with baldness), which together construct a narrative that once again *challenges and destabilizes* hegemonic representations of femininity.

I observe, then, through these examples evidenced in the children's discourses and through these analyses, that the articulation of *mental, existential, and material processes* demonstrates a complex discursive dynamic. This is because, while the first (mental processes) give voice to *subjective* and *evaluative* positioning, the latter connect discourse to *tangible social practices*, grounding it in culturally legitimized experiences. In my view, this complementarity operates as a mechanism that projects a network of meanings in which the *bald body* is *re-signified* as a locus of *beauty, strength, and authenticity*. *Expanding*, in this way, *the horizons of feminine representation in childhood*.

Building on these analyses, I understand that, from a feminist perspective, this movement engages in dialogue with theoretical frameworks that problematize *bodily normativity* and *hegemonic ideals of beauty*. At this point in the analysis, it becomes possible to see how the children's discourse throughout the reflections developed in this chapter resonates with ideas that have long guided feminist thought, particularly those that question the ways in which *femininity is constructed, disciplined, and represented*. In this sense, once again, I draw connections with Beauvoir's (1949) argument that feminine identity is not given by nature but socially and historically produced, and with hooks (1986, 1990), who extends this critique by emphasizing the need to challenge exclusionary beauty standards and to revalue diverse bodies, especially those of Black women, whose experiences have often been silenced or marginalized.

However, I find it is essential to move beyond a limited view of womanhood and to recognize women in the fullness of their *bodies, experiences, and identities*. Thus, extending this discussion beyond the Euro-American feminist canon, it becomes equally important to consider the contributions of decolonial thinkers such as Ochy Curiel, María Lugones, and

Espinosa Miñoso. As discussed in Chapter 3, their perspectives broaden the field of feminist critique by situating gender oppression at the *intersections of race, class, and colonial history*. In doing so, they call for a *politics of transformation* that dismantles, as mentioned here before, the hierarchies sustaining the *marginalization of the female body* and its *social roles*, proposing instead an *ethics of plurality, corporeal autonomy, and collective justice*.

Thus, in light of these perspectives, I understand that the re-signification observed in the children's discourse in this segment connects with Charlier and Caubergs' (2007) conception of power, once again, as operating across complementary dimensions, this time: *power within* (visible when the children attribute self-esteem and strength to the bald dolls), *power to* (the when the children demonstrate capacity to make decisions about one's own body), and *power with* (when their individual experiences of overcoming cancer are transformed into collective belonging).

Therefore, the analysis of Transitivity and the Appraisal System at this stage shows that, by attributing positive states such as "happy" (*feliz*), "pretty" (*bonita*), and "very beautiful" (*mucho linda*) to both dolls and real people, the children not only engage in aesthetic and affective evaluations but also *construct a discourse of empowerment and resistance*, aligned with feminist thought that values *diversity, inclusion, and representation*.

That said, having identified, through the lenses of Transitivity and Appraisal, how the children employ *relational, mental, and material processes* to *normalize* and *positively value* hairlessness, as well as how they project *affective, cognitive, and evaluative* stances toward this particular doll in the segment, I now move beyond clause-level realizations to examine how these linguistic choices reveal the underlying metaphorical structures that organize thought and discourse. To do so, I turn, consistent with the approach adopted thus far, to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) in order to explore how the children's *evaluations and negotiations of difference* are articulated through *conceptual mappings* that shape their *perception and construction of experience*.

In other words, in the next lines I focus on the *cross-domain mappings* present in the children's discourse to trace how embodied experiences, such as *hair, illness, beauty, and resilience*, are systematically projected onto abstract domains like *identity, belonging, and empowerment*. This analytical shift aims not only to broaden the interpretive scope but also to highlight the cognitive mechanisms through which the children construct alternative

frameworks of meaning, challenging conventional associations of *beauty* and *normality* with *fixed*⁴⁴ *bodily traits* (Butler, 2006).

In light of these observations, I organized Table 43 to synthesize the main *conceptual metaphors* emerging from the excerpt, demonstrating how the children's language weaves *cognitive* and *affective* dimensions into their interpretations of the dolls.

Table 43: Conceptual Metaphors in Segment 9 – Focus Group

Linguistic Expression	Conceptual Metaphor
C3: "Eu acho que ela não liga" C3: "I think she doesn't care"	DESAPEGO EMOCIONAL É DISTÂNCIA EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT IS DISTANCE EMOÇÃO É UM ESTADO INTERNO EMOTION IS AN INTERNAL STATE
C2: "Ela só quer ser bonita mesmo" C2: "She just wants to be pretty"	BELEZA É VALOR / QUALIDADE INTERIOR BEAUTY IS VALUE / INNER QUALITY
C2: "As meninas [...] são bonitas sem cabelo" C2: "girls who are [...] pretty without hair"	BELEZA É VALOR / QUALIDADE INTERIOR BEAUTY IS VALUE / INNER QUALITY
C3: "Tem algumas pessoas... que superaram o câncer, aí acham bonito ficar sem cabelo" C3: "There are some people... who have overcome cancer, and then they think it's beautiful to stay without hair"	SUPERAÇÃO É ASCENSÃO OVERCOMING IS UP

Source: research data

With regard to the conceptual metaphors mapped from the linguistic expressions of C2 and C3 found in this segment, I return to what was previously discussed in the analysis through the lens of Transitivity and Appraisal, namely, the comments made by C2 and C3 about the doll without hair. In this case, it is possible to observe the activation of conceptual metaphors that shift the meaning of physical appearance toward broader *social*, *emotional*, and *identity-related* values.

I understand that these metaphors are grounded in the principle of the *embodied mind* (Johnson, 1987), since they originate from *embodied* and *sensory experiences*, such as the *perception of hair*, the *experience of emotions*, and the *overcoming of illness*, which are projected onto *abstract domains* related to *happiness*, *social value*, and *empowerment*. Thus, the absence of hair, while perceptible as a physical trait, is not reduced to an aesthetic difference but serves as a trigger for the *formulation of social and cultural abstractions*. This process demonstrates that children's cognition is structured along a continuum between *body* and *mind*,

⁴⁴ I find it important to clarify that when I say "*fixed bodily traits*", I refer to physical characteristics commonly perceived as *natural* or *immutable*, such as *hair type*, *skin color*, or the *presence or absence of hair*, that are socially codified as markers of *identity* and *aesthetic value*. As seen in the children's dialogue, *hairlessness* can be understood as a "*fixed bodily trait*" re-signified through play, while *kinky hair*, *dark skin*, and *baldness*, though historically devalued, are *reinterpreted* as expressions of *pride* and *belonging*.

in which concrete categories of *lived experience* with the Barbie dolls become the raw material for more complex *symbolic constructions*.

However, before turning to the analysis of the examples, I find it necessary to consider how these specific metaphors are organized in relation to their *source* and *target domains*. See below:

Table 44: Source Domain and Target Domain – Segment 9 – Focus Group

Source Domain	Target Domain
PHYSICAL DISTANCE	EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT
VALUE / INNER QUALITY	BEAUTY
VALUE / INNER QUALITY	BEAUTY
UP	OVERCOMING

Source: research data

By looking at the table above, it is possible to observe that when C3 states “*I think she doesn’t care*” (“*Eu acho que ela não liga*”), her expression activates the metaphor EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE (DESAPEGO EMOCIONAL É DISTÂNCIA), in which emotional involvement is structured through spatial schemas of *proximity* and *distance*. This utterance shows how C3 positions the doll’s emotional well-being as *independent from normative aesthetic expectations*, particularly those related to hair. In this case, C3 implicitly contests the hegemonic association between *femininity*, *beauty*, and *conformity* to fixed bodily standards. In this context, hair, or the absence of it, also functions metonymically (HAIR → SELF), standing not only for the doll’s body but for her identity as a woman, and thus becoming a semiotic site where meanings of *beauty*, *health*, and *social worth* converge. In my point of view, C3’s seemingly simple comment therefore acquires conceptual depth, that is; by associating happiness with indifference to external appearance, she articulates an *embodied discourse of resistance* that *reframes beauty* in terms of *emotional autonomy* and *self-acceptance* rather than compliance with normative ideals.

In agreement, C2’s statements “*just wants to be pretty*” (“*só quer ser bonita mesmo*”) and “*girls [...] are pretty without hair*” (“*as meninas [...] são bonitas sem cabelo*”), in my perspective, activate the metaphor BEAUTY IS VALUE / INNER QUALITY (BELEZA É VALOR / QUALIDADE INTERIOR), shifting *beauty* from the *strictly aesthetic domain* to the domain of *social value* and *dignity*. This *projection* suggests that the absence of hair does not eliminate the possibility of being recognized as beautiful; on the contrary, it broadens the *concept of beauty* beyond conformity to *normative standards*. Once again, hair functions as a *metonym*, as a *bodily detail* comes to represent the *whole person* and, consequently, her *social identity*, thus reflecting what hooks (1990) calls the *politics of resistance*, in which stigmatized attributes are re-

signified as signs of affirmation, a notion that has been recurrent in the children's discourse, as I have demonstrated throughout the analyses.

Subsequently, C3's statement "*there are some people... who overcame cancer, and then they find it beautiful to be without hair*" ("*tem algumas pessoas... que superaram o câncer, aí acham bonito ficar sem cabelo*") activates the metaphor OVERCOMING IS UP (SUPERAÇÃO É AVANÇO), through which the experience of defeating illness (*source domain*) is projected onto the *target domain* of *beauty* and *social acceptance*. In this mapping, the act of overcoming ceases to belong exclusively to the field of *health* and becomes intertwined with *aesthetic* and *emotional value*. I understand that this projection exemplifies the operation of the Invariance Principle (Lakoff, 1993; Duffy; Feist, 2023), since only the coherent elements of the source experience, such as *strength*, *resilience*, and *courage*, are transferred, while incompatible features, such as *pain* or *fragility*, are left aside.

At the same time, the utterance also gives rise to a *conceptual blend* (Fauconnier; Turner, 2002), in which two mental spaces, including *the space of illness and recovery*, and *the space of beauty and social perception*, are integrated, producing an emergent space of meaning. In this new configuration, the absence of hair is no longer interpreted as a trace of suffering but becomes a visible sign of *strength*, *dignity*, and *affirmation*. In my interpretation, this cognitive integration demonstrates how the children's discourse re-signifies, once again, *bodily difference* through *affective* and *social dimensions*, turning what could be a mark of vulnerability into a *symbol of empowerment*.

As for the metaphor HAIR IS A CULTURAL SYMBOL OF FEMININE IDENTITY (CABELO É UM SÍMBOLO CULTURAL DA IDENTIDADE FEMININA), which is not included in Tables 44 and 45 but, in my view, should be mentioned given its social relevance in this segment, I understand that it emerges in a transversal way throughout the segment, since hair does not appear merely as a physical attribute but as a *symbolic marker of femininity* and *belonging to normative standards of beauty*. The facilitator's own question "*but do you think this doll there is because she has cancer too, or because she chose not to have hair?*" ("*mas vocês acham que essa boneca aí é porque ela tem câncer também ou é porque ela optou a não ter cabelo?*") already positions hair as a culturally charged sign, relating its absence not only to illness but also to *aesthetic choice*. From this perspective, I see that hair operates *metonymically*, representing the *entire body* and, by extension, the doll's *identity*, a relation that also surfaces in the children's utterances.

In this context, the absence of hair is interpreted not merely as loss but as a sign that leads children toward processes of *identity re-signification*, as expressed in F's statement that "*people who have cancer can be pretty without hair, right?*" ("*as pessoas que têm câncer podem*

ser bonitas sem cabelo, né?”). Through this question, I understand that hair, more than just a bodily trait, becomes a *cultural symbol* whose absence challenges hegemonic norms of femininity, which is precisely what the metaphor seeks to highlight. In this sense, the discourse of both the children and the facilitator converges once again with the perspective defended by Butler (2006), who points out that bodies are produced within social frameworks that determine what is recognizable. In this case, hair is part of that framework, yet the children’s reflections suggest a rearticulation of this sign, expanding the boundaries of what can be recognized as feminine and beautiful. When the absence of hair is reinscribed as a sign of *beauty* and *dignity*, it echoes what Espinosa Miñoso (2017, 2021) describes as a *decolonial gesture*, through which *historically stigmatized attributes are retransformed into sources of recognition and power*.

From a feminist perspective, I understand that the children’s discursive process, through the activation of these metaphors in segment 9, a moment of reflection following the play-based activity, can be read as a *gesture of resistance and empowerment*. Recalling Crenshaw’s (1989, 1991) contributions, identity must be understood from an *intersectional standpoint*, where *gender, race, health, and other dimensions intersect* to shape distinct experiences of subjectivity. Thus, by valuing the absence of hair as a sign of *overcoming and beauty*, the children disrupt stigmatizing interpretations and open new possibilities for identification. In the same direction, drawing on Espinosa Miñoso (2017, 2021), I perceive that *decolonial feminism must emerge from the lived experiences of racialized and vulnerable bodies*; in this sense, the children’s discourse reframes difference as a site of recognition and strength rather than a marker of lack.

Finally, these utterances reveal how the children’s language functions as a mechanism of *cultural and symbolic reorganization*. By re-signifying the bald doll as *happy, beautiful, and resilient*, they create discursive conditions through which historically precarious identities become *livable and recognizable*, in the sense proposed by Butler (2006). I understand that this process also resonates with the dimensions of empowerment outlined by Charlier and Caubergs (2007): *power within* (self-affirmation), *power with* (solidarity), and *power to* (capacity to act).

Thus, grounded in Cognitive Linguistics, these theoretical approaches, *Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, *metonymy*, *the Invariance Principle*, and *Conceptual Blending*, offered me the analytical lens through which it became possible to understand how children’s discourse re-signifies the *absence of hair*, transforming it from a marker of stigma into a *symbol of value, difference, and empowerment*. At the same time, the integration of *Systemic Functional Linguistics*, particularly through the systems of *Transitivity* and *Appraisal*, enabled a more precise description of how these meanings were enacted in language. While *Transitivity*

revealed the experiential structures underlying the children's utterances, for instance, the use of *relational processes* to attribute *qualities to the doll* or *mental processes* to *evaluate and judge* her, the *Appraisal framework* allowed me to trace the *affective, judgmental, and axiological positions* encoded in their discourse.

Therefore, I conclude this chapter by arguing that the articulation of these perspectives makes it evident that the children were not merely describing a physical characteristic. Rather, *in relation to this specific segment*, they were mobilizing *evaluative and metaphorical resources* that reframe the bald doll as *happy, beautiful, and strong*, revealing how meaning is negotiated through *affect and embodiment*.

6.4. Concluding Remarks

At the broader level of this chapter, the convergence between Systemic Functional Linguistics and Cognitive Linguistics has made it possible for me to understand, through the analyses presented, how *embodied experience* and *evaluative language* intersected in the children's discourse to produce new symbolic meanings.

This articulation became most evident in the *focus group* session, the moment of collective reflection following the play-based activity, in which the children *revisited their experiences*, verbalizing *perceptions, emotions, and judgments* that transformed playful interaction into explicit meaning-making. Thus, I could observe that the focus group functioned as a *metadiscursive context* where the *language of play* evolved into the *language of reflection*, revealing how the children linguistically reconfigured *social values* through their own voices.

Across the analyzed segments, this aspect was most salient in the ways the children discussed both the *Barbie Career Dolls* and the *Barbie Fashionistas*. In the first group, comprising the *doctor, ballerina, soccer player, and boxer dolls*, through the analysis of their utterances, I became aware that their discourse emphasized *professional competence and agency* as they associated these dolls with *movement, intelligence, and care*, attributes that were linguistically encoded through *relational and mental processes* expressing *admiration and identification*. These utterances, then, reflected not only how the children conceptualized gendered roles but also how they projected *social value and empowerment* onto the dolls' *professional identities*.

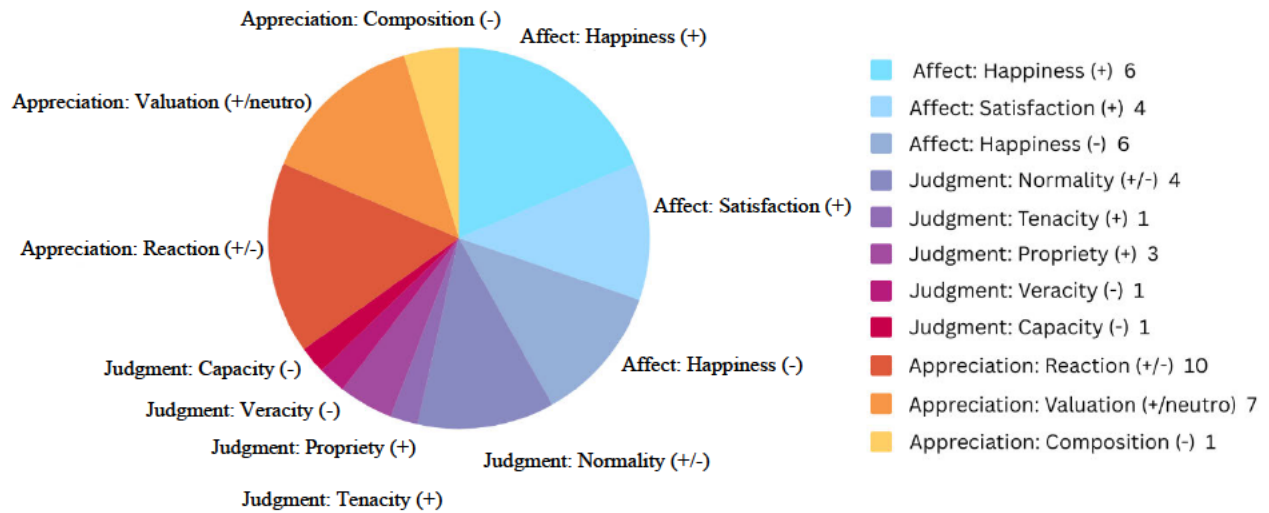
As for the second group, composed of the *Bald Barbie*, the *Barbie with Down Syndrome*, the *Wheelchair Barbie with Afro-textured hair*, and the *Black Doctor Barbie*, I noticed that the discourse moved toward *empathy, acceptance, and re-signification*. However, this took place

through a *collective process, mediated by dialogue*, confirming Heljakka's (2013) thesis. The children's utterances, as the play unfolded, focused less on professional or functional aspects and more on *emotional states and social inclusion*, valuing *happiness, dignity, and belonging* over physical perfection. Expressions such as "*She's happy*", "*She doesn't care*", and "*People who have cancer can be pretty without hair*" indicated a process of *reframing bodily difference as a sign of courage and emotional autonomy* rather than limitation. In this sense, it was possible to observe that difference was not treated as lack, after all, but as a *source of recognition, self-worth, and solidarity among peers*.

Regarding emotions, I noticed that Group 1 (children playing with the Barbie Career dolls) was the group in which there was a higher predominance of *evaluative expressions*, that is, a high density of *Attitude* system resources (*emotions, judgments, and appreciations*), indicating a strong *affective and interpretive* involvement from the participants. Among the emotional expressions (*Affect*) that emerged, I observed that the most prominent were *admiration and desire*. As for *Judgment*, that is, the children's *evaluative* stances toward the Barbies, I could see that the most recurrent ones were *empathic and positive moral* judgments. Finally, concerning *Appreciation*, aspects such as *beauty and functionality* appeared as central themes, marked by intense yet spontaneous emotional engagement. It is worth noting that Group 1 was the group assigned to the *Barbie Career dolls*, which featured diverse *professions, bodily kinesthetic movements, and outfits and accessories* that contradicted the feminine standards of the dolls the children reported owning.

As for the *negative affects, judgments, and appreciations* that appeared in Segment 2 of Group 1, I noticed that these were related to the children noticing that those in Group 2 initially seemed "sad" to have received dolls such as the *Blind Barbie*, and consequently, expressing a sense of *strangeness or discomfort* toward the dolls assigned to Group 2.

That said, I sought to develop the following graphic to provide a visual summary of the *attitudinal markers* found in the children's dialogues from Group 1.

Figure 27: Attitudinal Markers from Group 1**GROUP 1**

Source: elaborated by the author using Excel and Canva, based on research data (2025)

I emphasize that this calculation includes the analysis of all segments. Thus, in order to clarify the *attitudinal markers* found in each segment, I organized them in the following table, based on Marinho (2024). I also apply this same procedure later to the data from Group 2 and the focus group.

Table 45: Attitudinal markers in each segment of Group 1

Group	Attitudinal Marker	Segments	Identified Dolls
Group 1: Children playing with Barbie Career Dolls	Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Judgment: Normality+ Judgment: Tenacity+ Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+	01	Soccer Player Barbie
Group 1: Children playing with Barbie Career Dolls	Affect: Happiness- Affect: Happiness- Affect: Happiness- Affect: Happiness- Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness- Judgment: Normality- Judgment: Normality- Judgment: Propriety+ Judgment: Veracity- Judgment: Capacity- Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Reaction-	02	Blind Barbie

	Appreciation: Reaction- Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Reaction- Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation		
Group 1: playing with Barbie Career Dolls	Affect: Happiness- Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness+ Judgment: Normality+ Judgment: Propriety+ Judgment: Propriety+ Appreciation: Composition- Appreciation: Reaction- Appreciation: Reaction- Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+	03	Doctor Barbie (Black version) Boxer Barbie

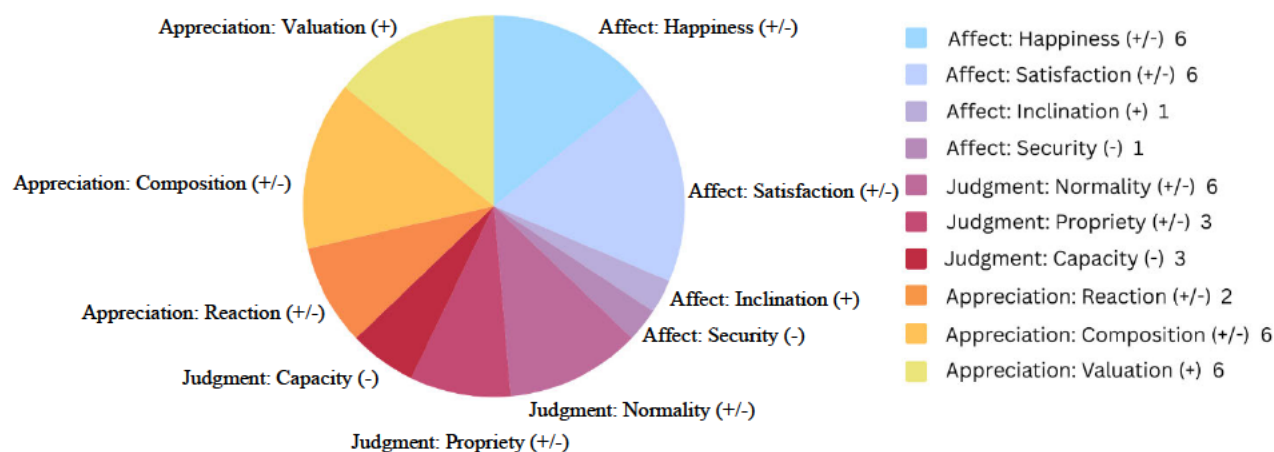
Source: elaborated by the author using Excel and Canva, based on research data (2025) and Marinho (2024)

Having presented the data from Group 1, with regard to Group 2 (Barbie Fashionistas dolls), the analysis revealed a *moderate level of evaluative predominance* among the children. That is, this was the group that I noticed remained the most silent during the time they had to play with the Barbie dolls. In this group, the dolls available were Barbies that displayed some form of *comorbidity* or *physical characteristic* differing from those of traditional Barbie dolls.

Throughout their discourse, I noticed that the children expressed emotional reactions (*Affect*) marked by a certain degree of *reticence* and *discomfort*, feelings that were made visible especially through their silence. With regard to *Judgment*, I observed that the evaluative stances were either *absent* or *external*, often coming from Group 1, which was playing nearby.

As I reviewed the video and analyzed the segments, I found it noteworthy that some of the children from Group 1 commented more frequently on the dolls assigned to Group 2 than the children from Group 2 themselves, since C7 and C8 remained silent for most of the activity. This observation also contributes to the analysis of *Appreciation*, as I noticed that, overall, the evaluations consisted mainly of *neutral physical descriptions*, with C5 and C6 being the only ones who actually made verbal evaluations about their dolls.

The following graphic (Figure 29) visually illustrates this analysis.

Figure 28: Attitudinal Markers in Group 2**GROUP 2**

Source: elaborated by the author using Excel and Canva, based on research data (2025)

Given this organization, the following table illustrates the occurrence of these *attitudinal markers* in each segment of Group 2 and the dolls identified in their discourse. See below.

Table 46: Attitudinal markers in each segment of Group 2

Groups	Attitudinal Marker	Segments	Identified Dolls
Group 2: Children playing with Barbie fashionists	Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Happiness- Judgment: Normality Judgment: Normality- Judgment: Propriety- Judgment: Capacity- Appreciation: Composition- Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Reaction-	04	Wheelchair Barbie (Black version) Doctor Barbie (Black version)
Group 2: Children playing with Barbie fashionists	Affect: Inclination + Affect: Security- Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Judgment: Propriety+ Judgment: Capacity- Judgment: Propriety+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Composition- Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+	05	Wheelchair Barbie (Black version) Blind Barbie

Group 2: Children playing with Barbie fashionists	Affect: Happiness- Affect: Satisfaction- Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness- Affect: Satisfaction- Affect: Happiness- Affect: Satisfaction- Judgment: Normality+ Judgment: Normality- Judgment: Normality- Judgment: Capacity- Judgment: Normality+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Composition- Appreciation: Composition Appreciation: Composition- Appreciation: Composition-	06	Blind Barbie Wheelchair Barbie (Black version)
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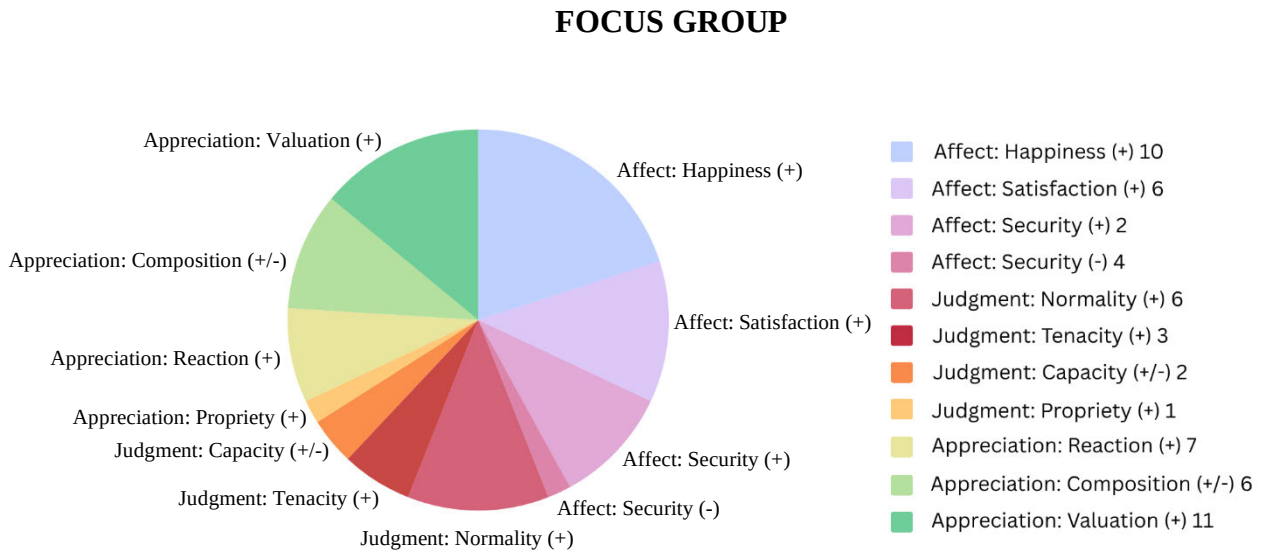
Source: elaborated by the author using Excel and Canva, based on research data (2025) and Marinho (2024)

Once the attitudinal markers related to Group 2 have been illustrated in the table above, I now turn to the evaluations concerning the focus group. I noticed that, in the focus group, the *evaluative predominance* was *relatively high*, though the dialogues between the facilitator and the children, particularly C1, C2, C3, C5, and C6, stood out the most in the reflections. Among them, C3 was especially remarkable, as she consistently offered *socially critical insights* in response to the facilitator's questions.

It is worth noting that during the play sessions, C3, who had been part of Group 1, often stood out in my interpretation for displaying a *constructive* and *critical perspective* toward comments that I considered "derogatory" toward women, while also questioning why some children seemed "sad" when receiving certain dolls. This attitude was visible during the analysis of the segments from Group 1, but it could also be seen in Group 2, since C3 occasionally intervened in the other group's interactions.

Taking these nuances into account, I observed throughout the analyses of the focus group that the children's emotional expressions (*Affect*) reflected *empathy* and *collective reflection*. The *Judgments* revealed aspects related to *morality* and *social recognition* among the children. As for *Appreciation*, the analyses indicated that the children expressed *symbolic* and *ideological appreciations*, in other words, there was indeed a *reconfiguration of meanings* and a form of *discursive empowerment* throughout the focus group reflections.

The following graphic summarizes the attitudinal markers identified in the focus group.

Figure 29: Attitudinal Markers in the Focus Group

Source: elaborated by the author using Excel and Canva, based on research data (2025)

As it is possible to observe, the graphic above shows that, during the focus group, the children expressed a considerable number of *positive* Attitudinal Markers in their discourses. I see that this finding reveals not only their *affective engagement* during the play activity but also the importance of *collectivity as a space for constructing shared meanings*.

From this perspective, I understand that the post-play moment played an essential role in this research, as it was during this phase that the children were able to reflect on their own actions and interactions, in this way, understanding play not merely as entertainment, but as a *social and formative practice*. However, I am also aware that, for this reflection to occur meaningfully, the presence of a *facilitator* was necessary, someone prepared to *mediate* experiences, *promote questions*, and *guide* the group toward a *critical reading of the social world* that emerges through play.

I believe that this reflective process was fundamental for the children to develop *values of respect for others*, and especially for *women*, within a society still marked by stereotyped gender representations. Thus, as the analyses demonstrate, play with these Barbie dolls indeed became a space of *empowerment* and *awareness*, one that transcended the boundaries of the school environment and extended into other contexts of daily life, as could be seen in the children's discourses, thereby promoting *lasting social and emotional learning*.

That said, the following table shows how these attitudinal markers appeared in each segment analyzed in this study through the focus group.

Table 47: Attitudinal markers in each segment of the Focus Group

Groups	Attitudinal Marker	Segments	Topic and subtopics of Discussion
Focus Group	Affect: Insecurity- Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Security- Affect: Security- Affect: Security- Affect: Happiness+ Judgment: Capacity- Appreciation: Composition+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Composition- Appreciation: Composition-	07	Affective experience and novelty in the interaction with diverse dolls - Recognition and prior familiarity - Affection and sense of belonging - Construction of contrast
Focus Group	Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness+ Judgment: Normality+ Judgment: Normality+ Judgment: Normality+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Composition+ Appreciation: Composition Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Composition	08	Perception of aesthetic difference and connection with Quilombola identities - Aesthetic diversity (hair, skin color) - Recognition of representativeness - Community belonging - Cultural affirmation
Focus Group	Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Security+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Security+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Happiness+ Affect: Satisfaction+ Judgment: Normality+ Judgment: Tenacity+ Judgment: Normality+ Judgment: Tenacity+ Judgment: Tenacity+ Judgment: Normality+ Judgment: Capacity+ Judgment: Propriety+ Appreciation: Valuation Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+ Appreciation: Valuation+	09	Re-signification of beauty and coping with cancer - Discussion on illness and aesthetics - Deconstruction of beauty standards - Empathy and resilience - Overcoming

	Appreciation: Reaction+ Appreciation: Reaction+		
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Source: elaborated by the author using Excel and Canva, based on research data (2025) and Marinho (2024)

Having identified the attitudinal markers across the corresponding segments of each group through the Appraisal System proposed by Martin and White (2005), as well as *the dolls mentioned* in the discourse and the *main themes and subthemes* discussed in the focus groups, I also found it necessary to present a concise summary of the conceptual metaphors that emerged across the analyzed segments.

With regard to the metaphors, I sought to compile, in a single table, the *themes* of all instances that emerged through *cross-domain mapping* in the children's discourse, in accordance with Cognitive Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). See Table 48 below:

Table 48: Synthesis of Themes Across Groups Based on Cross-Domain Mapping

Dimension	Group 1	Group 2	Focus Group
Core focus	Aesthetics and identity projection	Embodiment and care	Representation and empowerment
Cognitive movement	From <i>self as object</i> → <i>social negotiation</i>	From <i>judgment</i> → <i>agency through empathy</i>	From <i>difference</i> → <i>visibility and empowerment</i>
Social meaning of play	Play as negotiation of values	Play as embodied action	Play as reflection on collective identity

Source: own authorship

This table first highlights the *core focus* of this thesis, given that the study centers on children's empowerment through play. I can observe that both in Group 1 and Group 2, the nuances of the dialogues led the children to *reflect* and *develop awareness* regarding *representation* and *empowerment* within the focus group, which stood out as the final stage of observation in this research.

Regarding the *cognitive movement* of the children, I found, through the analysis of the mapped conceptual metaphors, that the children in Group 1 were constantly *projecting* their own "self" onto the Barbies, thus engaging in a *social negotiation*. They were, quite literally, during play, *negotiating what was possible or not possible* within the interaction with the dolls available to them. In Group 2, however, I noticed that certain *judgment patterns* were initially reconsidered by the children, gradually transforming into forms of *agency* through empathy. This was, to me, a profoundly moving process to observe and witness, especially because, as the facilitator and researcher of this study, I had the honor of being present throughout every stage of the research.

Finally, in the focus group, the children were able to reflect collectively, with peers from both Group 1 and Group 2, as well as with the facilitator, reaching the understanding that what is socially constructed as “different” should instead be *recognized* and *empowered*. I see that they brought visibility to what used to be perceived as “strange” or “excluded”, thus *empowering* those diverse female bodies represented by the Barbies, particularly those with *physical differences or conditions*.

Lastly, in relation to this table, the dimension of the *social meaning of play* demonstrated that, during play, there was indeed a *negotiation of values* in Group 1; in Group 2, play functioned as an *embodied action*; and in the focus group, play emerged as a *collective reflection* of the children’s shared *identity*.

Finally, I consider, as *final remarks* of these analyses, that the linguistic evidence gathered across the nine analyzed segments confirms that, within this playful context, the children engaged in profound acts of *cultural negotiation*, transforming everyday discourse into a space of *agency*, *recognition*, and *empowerment*. This dynamic becomes particularly evident when play involves toys designed to promote inclusion, such as the Barbie dolls discussed by Rolim (2020).

Therefore, having taken these aspects into consideration, I now move to the final stage of this thesis, the concluding section, in order to reflect upon the findings presented, address the research questions, verify whether I was able to fulfill the general and specific objectives of the study, and propose possible actions or developments arising from this research.

7. CONCLUSION: HARVESTING THE FRUITS OF PLAY, IMAGINATION, AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH BARBIE DOLLS

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”
(2 Timothy 4:7)

The present chapter, the one I have most eagerly awaited throughout the long journey of writing this thesis, represents the culmination of what I like to call an eight-year process of planting, nurturing, and finally harvesting the sweetest fruits of a path sown with care and affection. As explained in the introductory chapter, this research did not emerge abruptly or merely as a requirement for obtaining a doctoral degree. Rather, it is the continuation of a trajectory that began in 2018 and has since unfolded through multiple stages of study, reflection, and transformation. Thus, as I bring this thesis to its conclusion, I am, in fact, closing an eight-year cycle of research and personal growth within this theme.

7.1. The fruits

Turning my gaze back to the initial proposal, I would like to recall that my intention in this thesis was to investigate, through three linguistic lenses, namely *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), the *Appraisal System* (Martin; White, 2005), and *Conceptual Metaphor Theory within Cognitive Linguistics* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Duffy; Feist, 2023); along with a complementary perspective from *the systemic view of communication* and *the ecology of mind* (Bateson, 1972), how Barbie, a doll widely disseminated by Mattel as an empowered figure and defended as such in my master's thesis (Rolim, 2020), influences children's play.

In other words, I aimed to identify how the narratives created by children, both during their interactions with Barbie in play situations and in their post-play reflections through interviews, may reveal or not elements of women's empowerment. Based on these frameworks, I sought to analyze the children's evaluative positioning, focusing on how they express attitudes, emotions, and judgments within their narratives, as well as their cognitive mappings, in order to understand how they conceptualize empowerment and femininity in relation to the dolls. For these play experiences, I provided the children with dolls whose physical attributes

were designed to evoke empowerment, following the dimensions of power proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007).

For this analysis, I also felt the need to draw on the feminist theorists discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, whose works shaped the *first three waves of feminism*, such as Wollstonecraft (1792), Beauvoir (1949), Friedan (1963), Millett (1970), and Hooks (1981, 1982, 1986, 1990), as well as more contemporary scholars who address issues of *gender fluidity* and the *decolonization of feminism*, including María Lugones (2008, 2010, 2020), Ochy Curiel (2013), and Yuderlys Espinosa Miñoso (2017), in order to make the analysis more grounded. I considered these theoretical perspectives essential not only to contextualize the representations of *empowerment embodied by Barbie* but also to question the boundaries between the ideals of empowerment disseminated by global media discourses and the ways in which children reinterpret such ideals through play. Thus, by connecting classical feminist thought with more recent Latin American perspectives, I sought to articulate a dialogic space in which the notions of *gender*, *power*, and *representation* could be revisited through the lens of children's voices and imaginative interactions.

However, since this thesis deals with toys and play, I realized that this theoretical framework alone would not be sufficient for readers to fully grasp the nuances of childhood and the act of playing. Therefore, I could not fail to include in this thesis the contributions of theorists such as Philippe Ariès, who, as mentioned in Chapter 2, presents in his *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1986) a seminal discussion on the historical construction of childhood. Moreover, as I delved into the field of childhood studies, I also drew on the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1889), Sarmiento (2002), and Brougère (1998, 2010, 2014, 2018), among others, to explore different dimensions of childhood and play.

Besides, since the idea for this research emerged after my master's thesis (Rolim, 2020) and, more specifically, from my experience at the ITRA Conference in 2023, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, I felt the need to broaden the theoretical scope of this study, revisiting the scholars who grounded my earlier work, along with those influential voices in play studies who were also present at the ITRA conference. Thus, in Chapter 2, I gathered, in what I like to call my "drawer" of theoretical contributions, the authors who have most deepened my view of play and its multiple dimensions, such as: Heljakka (2013), Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), Brougère (2014, 2018), Nicolopoulou (1993), Vygotsky (1998), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Ferrari (2022), and Walter Benjamin (2009). I believe that Benjamin's reflections, in dialogue with those of Karl Gröber (1928), Peers (2004), Almeida

(2006), and Sarinho Júnior (2023), open a deeper conversation about *toys, dolls, gender*, and the *multimodal meanings* that emerge from them.

In this context, by incorporating the studies of these theorists, I was able to analyze my data in ways that enabled me to both examine my research objects and address my research questions. In this regard, I consider it necessary to restate here, in the conclusion, the main objective and guiding questions of this study, so that the conclusions drawn from the data analysis can be understood more clearly and cohesively.

Accordingly, I present below the following illustrative table, which outlines the overall and specific objectives.

Table 49: Overall and Specific Objectives of the Thesis

Overall Objective	Specific Objectives
To investigate how children construct meanings related to women and, consequently, to empowerment, as widely publicized by Mattel, through their spontaneous narratives generated during play with Barbie dolls and their subsequent reflections on this activity.	i) to identify the processes, based on the system of Transitivity (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), in children's narrative discourses about power and empowerment, derived from their experiences when playing with Barbie dolls and in subsequent reflections;
	ii) to interpret the most prominent processes in children's narrative discourses, both during play with Barbie dolls and in subsequent reflections, about power and empowerment, based on the evaluation mechanisms of the Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005), examining sentences according to the actions, events or states in which the participants are involved;
	(iii) to identify, from a cognitive perspective (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), through cross-domain mapping, the conceptual metaphors present in children's discourses during play with Barbie dolls and in their subsequent reflections, with particular attention to discussions of power and empowerment, while also examining the role of conceptual metonymies;
	iv) to examine, from a cognitive perspective (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), how the metaphorical patterns in children's narrative discourses, both during play with Barbie dolls and in subsequent reflections, construe their perceptions about Barbie and women;
	v) to discuss how the four levels of power outlined by Charlier and Caubergs (2007) are linguistically configured in children's narrative discourse from both social and cognitive perspectives, with the aim of understanding how playing with Barbie dolls, considered empowered (Rolim, 2020), can promote the struggle for representation, respect, and inclusion regarding the diversity of women and their roles in society.

Source: own authorship

Considering the overall and specific objectives presented in the table above, which relate to the development of this thesis, I can draw the following conclusions: First, in light of the analyses presented throughout this study, I consider that the objectives proposed at the outset were indeed achieved. This was possible primarily due to the integration of the three linguistic theories adopted to address each proposed objective.

Let me explain: the articulation between *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), the *Appraisal System* (Martin; White, 2005), and *Cognitive Linguistics* (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Duffy; Feist, 2023) enabled me to reach an integrated understanding of how children construct not only *social* but *cognitive* meanings related to women and empowerment through their spontaneous narratives during play with Barbie dolls and in their subsequent reflections on this activity.

How so? By drawing on these complementary perspectives, and by working through the analytical categories proposed within each of these frameworks, I could observe how the children's *language*, *cognition*, and *imagination* converged to construct discourses about Barbie and women, in which *gender*, *agency*, and *power* were continuously *negotiated* and *redefined*. These negotiations were, in fact, carried out through discourse, through language itself. However, for this to be possible, it was necessary not only to analyze the processes of Transitivity, which form part of the *ideational* metafunction within the Transitivity System, but also the subcategories of *Attitude*, particularly *Affect*, as well as the mappings of *cross-domain conceptual metaphors* that characterize the cognitive dimension of the analysis.

All of this that I have described corresponds directly to the first three specific objectives of this research. See Table above. As can be seen in the analysis, I was able to follow each of these stages, examining every *process*, *subcategory of attitude*, and *cognitive mapping of the conceptual metaphors* in each highlighted segment, that is, those most prominent for the analysis and most relevant, from my research perspective, considering the themes addressed, as shown in Tables 22, 25, 28, 30, 33, 35, 37, 39 and 42, and in the final remarks of the analysis chapter.

Therefore, I believe that the specific objectives from (i) to (iv) have already been strongly detailed throughout Chapter 6, entitled *Data Analysis and Discussion of Results: Enhancing Play and (Re)Shaping Barbie Dolls*. What remains here, in my interpretation, is to direct the final discussion toward addressing the fifth specific objective, namely: v) *to discuss* how the four levels of power outlined by Charlier and Caubergs (2007) are linguistically configured in children's narrative discourse from both social and cognitive perspectives, with the aim of understanding how playing with Barbie dolls, considered empowered (Rolim, 2020), can

promote the struggle for representation, respect, and inclusion regarding the diversity of women and their roles in society.

Thus, in order to discuss this specific objective, I must first bring back the research questions that have accompanied me throughout all stages of this thesis, up to this moment, when I am finally able to answer them. Therefore, the following Table presents these guiding research questions:

Table 50: Research Questions of the Study

No.	Research Question	Analytical Focus & Theoretical Framework
(1)	What do the ideational metafunction processes in SFL (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2004; 2014), encoded in children's narrative discourses during play with Barbie dolls and in subsequent reflections, indicate about the meanings constructed in relation to power and empowerment, based on the four levels of power that constitute the term <i>empowerment</i> (Charlier; Caubergs, 2007)?	Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) Transitivity / Ideational Metafunction; Empowerment Theory (Charlier; Caubergs, 2007).
(2)	How do children's experiences of playing with empowered Barbie dolls, and their subsequent reflections, externalized through the processes of the <i>ideational metafunction</i> , contribute to their <i>Attitude positioning</i> (Martin; White, 2005) regarding the social and ideological meanings constructed about women's roles in society and their perceptions of their own bodies?	Appraisal System (Martin; White, 2005) <i>Attitude positioning</i> ; Evaluation and Ideological meaning.
(3)	How do conceptual metaphors and metonymies (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) manifest in children's narrative discourses while playing with Barbie dolls; considered empowered; and in their subsequent reflections, especially regarding issues of inclusion and respect for diversity?	Cognitive Linguistics <i>Conceptual Metaphor and Metonymy Theory</i> (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980-1999).
(4)	What do conceptual metaphors and metonymies (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Turner, 1989; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999) suggest about children's cognitive and social meanings regarding their perception of women, based on the bodies of Barbie dolls, considered empowered?	Cognitive and Social Perspectives <i>Conceptual mappings</i> and gender perception through <i>embodiment</i> .

Source: own authorship

Well, regarding the research questions, before beginning to answer them, I would like to emphasize, in this conclusion, the context in which my data were collected: a *Quilombola* school located in the peripheral neighborhood of Paratibe, in João Pessoa, where eight girls from that same Quilombola community participated. It is therefore important to highlight that the discourses presented across these nine segments the voices of these specific children, whom I affectionately consider “the cherry on top of my cake”.

That said, regarding the answer to the first research question, question (1), I observe that, overall, when considering all segments, the analysis revealed a predominance of *material* and *relational* processes, followed by *mental and verbal processes*. And what does this mean? It means that, with respect to *material* processes, I notice that they foreground *agency* and the

capacity to act, suggesting, in my interpretation, that the children construed Barbie and women as *agents capable of transforming reality*. In other words, these processes indicate that the Barbie dolls, and, above all, the children's own *selves*, since they frequently projected their "self" onto the doll, embodied empowerment. Thus, during play, the *material* processes revealed that the children, through the Barbie dolls, enacted possibilities of *helping people*, *saving lives*, and *being strong*. Within this context, I see that these linguistic realizations through the *material processes* align with *power to*, understood as the ability to perform and to decide (Charlier; Caubergs, 2007).

As for the *relational processes*, I observed that they were frequently employed as a means of encoding both *identity* and *possession*, but I would say, *in a positive way*. For instance, when the children said "*She is beautiful even without hair*" or "*She has a wheelchair*", they were not merely describing attributes; rather, they were *assigning value* and *recognition* to the doll's social status. In my view, these clauses demonstrate how these children conceptualized Barbie, and, symbolically, women, through processes of *identification* and *attribution*, revealing how power operates in more subtle and internalized forms. In this sense, I understand that such relational realizations correspond to what Charlier and Caubergs (2007) define as *power with* and *power within*, since they express *solidarity*, *belonging*, and *self-recognition*, dimensions that move beyond the external exercise of authority and highlight the *collective* aspects of empowerment.

As for the *mental processes*, I observed that they stood out mainly in terms of *awareness* and *empathy*, especially in references to Barbie dolls with some type of comorbidity. I could even refer again to one of the children's utterances, when she said, "*I think she is beautiful even without hair*". The mental process "*think*" marks how this child internalized notions of empowerment through *affective cognition*. In this specific case, it suggests a moment of reflection that connects *emotion* and *understanding*. In my view, this realization corresponds to what Charlier and Caubergs (2007) describe as *power within*, as it demonstrates an *internal sense of self-worth*, *acceptance*, and *emotional awareness*, the kind of empowerment that emerges from within rather than from external validation.

Finally, regarding the processes that stood out in my analysis, I observed that the *verbal processes*, although less frequent than the others discussed above, played a *mediating role* in the construction of *dialogic meanings* and *moral positioning*. In other words, through the use of *verbal processes*, the children *evaluated* and *justified female agency* through discourse. For instance, in the focus group, when the facilitator said "*You told me at the very beginning that they were a little different*", this utterance retrieved and reaffirmed the children's prior

evaluations, suggesting that they were indeed *negotiating* and *legitimizing female agency* through language. I state this because, immediately afterward, C3 responded, “*We felt it was really nice and different*”, and C2 added “*Yeah. Very pretty... I’ve never gotten a doll like this*”. I interpret, then, these instances reflecting what Charlier and Caubergs (2007) describe as *power with*, since the dialogic exchange fosters *shared recognition, collaboration, and collective empowerment*.

Having addressed Research Question (1), I now turn to Research Question (2). Regarding this question, I observe that the children’s experiences of playing with Barbie dolls, especially the Doctor, the Boxer, and the Wheelchair Barbie, revealed discursive constructions and subsequent reflections that indicated a coherent pattern of *Attitude positioning* (Martin; White, 2005), articulating *affective, ethical, and aesthetic* meanings related to women’s roles and body perception. But how did this occur? Well, I noticed that, through *Affect*, the children expressed emotions of *admiration, joy, and empathy*, particularly toward those Barbie dolls that represented *diversity* in their bodies, for instance, those showing many kinesthetic features of movement, or that challenged conventional beauty standards, such as the Boxer Barbie, for example.

However, I see that these emotions were not limited to this specific type of Barbie, although they were more salient in that context. They also transcended to the *bald doll*, after all. When one participant said, “*I think she is beautiful even without hair*”, her choice of words revealed more than affection, it also demonstrated *emotional awareness and acceptance*, projecting a positive *re-evaluation* of what “beauty” means. Another statement that reinforced this perspective was: “*Every doll here is beautiful*”. Such *affective positioning*, in these very specific cases, points to an *internalized discourse of empowerment*, as the children *redefined beauty in inclusive and compassionate terms*.

Therefore, regarding the levels of power proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007), I interpret that these *affective* expressions reflect the dimension of *power within*, since they emerge from an inner sense of *self-worth* and a *recognition of difference as value* rather than deficiency. At the same time, when the children collectively agreed that “*every doll is beautiful*”, I understand that their discourse also evoked *power with*, as beauty became a shared space of *solidarity and belonging*. Thus, the *affective* domain here indicates as a bridge between *individual awareness* and *collective empathy*, showing how the children’s emotional responses linguistically construct empowerment both from *within* themselves and *with* others. Nevertheless, I also perceive traces of *power over*, since their evaluations and emotional

positioning *influence the social perceptions of others*, reshaping how beauty and difference are understood.

Regarding the subcategory of *Judgment*, the analyses indicated that the children's discourse often involved an *ethical evaluation* of women's roles, associating *agency* with *moral worth*. However, it is important to highlight that, at first, there was a certain *reluctance* and *tension*, marked by a sense of strangeness toward difference, until reaching this stage of "social negotiation". Thus, throughout the play, I observed that the children were, little by little, dialogue by dialogue, constructing a *moral narrative of social responsibility and empathy*, directed not only toward the dolls but also toward themselves and women in general, developing, in this way, their social consciousness.

In terms of the levels of power within Charlier and Caubergs' (2007) framework, I see that these *judgments* reflect mainly the dimension of *power to*, because, in my interpretation, the children's discourse indicates the capacity *to act ethically* and *to transform understanding* through *reflection* and *empathy*. At the same time, I observed moments of *self-recognition*, which also point to *power within*, since they involve the internalization of *values* and an *awareness of moral agency*. Moreover, when their judgments began to influence one another's perspectives, especially as they moved from *strangeness* to *acceptance*, I could identify traces of *power over*, understood here not as domination, but as a *positive influence* that fostered the group's collective moral growth.

Finally, regarding the subcategory of *Appreciation*, I observe that this system was most apparent in moments when the children commented on Barbie's *aesthetic* or *functional* aspects. There were many *positive evaluations* in this respect; however, I can assure here they were not framed in a negative–positive binary, but rather signaled a *reorientation of value*, in which *appearance was linked to diversity and self-expression* rather than to a fixed or hegemonic ideal. In this case, I understand that these evaluations suggested a *gradual shift in aesthetic perception*, connecting beauty to empowerment and inclusion (*beauty* → *empowerment and inclusion*). Logo, drawing on the four levels of power proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007), I interpret that these aesthetic appreciations relate primarily to the levels of *power within* and *power to*. Through the children's appreciative discourse, I could observe the development of *self-esteem* and *self-recognition* (*power within*) and the *capacity to act* and *redefine values* through play (*power to*). Thus, in my point of view, their *redefinition of beauty* through *inclusion* and *empathy* reflects not only a change in aesthetic judgment but also an emergent sense of *agency* and *empowerment*, as they exercised their *power to transform social meanings* associated with women's *bodies* and *identities*.

Having considered the findings related to Research Question 2, I now turn to Research Question 3, which shifts its analytical lens toward the cognitive dimension of the children's discourses. As I examine this question more closely, I can affirm that the analyses revealed that the children's discourses during play with Barbie dolls in Groups 1 and 2, as well as in their subsequent reflections, enabled me to identify specific conceptual metaphors through cross-domain mapping of their narratives. This finding was further supported in Chapter 6, where the mapping of several metaphors, presented in Tables 23, 26, 29, 31, 34, 36, 38, 40, and 43, showed recurrent patterns, especially those related to the Barbie dolls' physical attributes. Among these, metaphors such as *BEAUTY IS VALUE*, *BEAUTY IS VALUE / INNER QUALITY*, and variations like *THE SELF IS EXTENDED THROUGH THE TOY* and *THE SELF IS EXTENDED INTO THE DOLL* were notable prominent. To better visualize these metaphors as a whole, I organized a comprehensive list of all those mapped across the analyzed segments. The complete list of conceptual metaphors can be found in Appendix C.

However, throughout the analyses, I also observed the presence of metonymies in the children's discourses. For instance, in the case of the Bald Barbie doll, the children inferred that, because she had no hair, she must have cancer. This interpretation suggested that the children employed what Lakoff and Johnson (1999) describe as the *PART FOR WHOLE* metonymy, that is, they used a visible feature, or the symptom of baldness, to represent a broader concept, in this case, a disease. Although they could have interpreted it differently, considering that there are bald men, the representation of a bald woman immediately evoked, for them, the notion of cancer.

Thus, regarding this question, I can affirm that I identified certain conceptual tendencies. For example, in the case of the recurrent metaphor *BEAUTY IS VALUE* and its variations, as discussed above, I understand that this metaphor indicated that the children often conceptualized *worth* or *social acceptance* through *aesthetics*. However, these initial conceptualizations, which reflected *hegemonic beauty standards*, were gradually reframed throughout the play interactions. How so? For instance, during moments involving dolls such as *Wheelchair Barbie*, *Boxer Barbie*, and *Doctor Barbie*, I was able to map metaphors such as *DIVERSITY IS VALUE*, *INCLUSION IS BEAUTY*, *PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE IS SOCIAL IDENTITY*, and *REPRESENTATION IS VISIBILITY*. These metaphors revealed that the children's discourse extended beyond aesthetic judgment, reframing difference as an element of *belonging* and *visibility*.

Besides, metaphor such as *SOCIAL NEGOTIATION IS PLAY* indicated that *play* functions as a space for *discursive experimentation*, which, in fact, is precisely what could be observed. Indeed, this idea served as the very starting point for the development of this thesis, that was to

literally create a kind of “laboratory moment”. By providing the children with opportunities to play with the empowered Barbie dolls, I aimed to assess whether, through play, they could actually embody traits of empowerment during their interactions. Thus, during the sessions in Groups 1 and 2, as well as in the focus group, it was indeed possible to observe the children using the dolls as social actors to test *moral boundaries*, *empathy*, and *inclusion*, demonstrating, then, that play itself became in this thesis a metaphorical domain for constructing *inclusive meanings*.

Finally, I highlight that these metaphors helped me perceive that there was indeed, throughout the sessions, a link between *empowerment* and *embodied diversity*. In this regard, metaphors such as OVERCOMING IS UP and AGENCY IS MOBILITY, and REPRESENTATION IS VISIBILITY were mapped, as the children’s discourses clearly connected *empowerment* to *bodily experience* and *relationality*. This connection became even more evident in chapter 6 where, for each segment, I explored the analyses in dialogue with feminist theorists such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan (1963), Kate Millett (1970), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), and bell hooks (1982; 1986; 1990), among others.

Here, I could observe that the diversity contemplated by the children was not abstract, but rather *embodied*, *functional*, and enacted through *action*. Collectively, these metaphors demonstrated that *empowerment* was understood as *agency* through *embodied difference* in the act of playing with the so-called empowered Barbie dolls (Rolim, 2020), thus addressing, finally, Research Question (4).

In conclusion, I reaffirm my thesis that it is not only the Barbie dolls that are empowered, but that, through playing with them, children also, at varying degrees, have the potential to embody the four dimensions of power proposed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007): *power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*. Through these dimensions, I came to understand that, in the context of play with these Barbie dolls and in relation to the four dimensions of power, children demonstrated that:

- ✓ *Power over* was present when the children guided their peers toward critical and reflective thinking, in other words, when they helped others to be themselves and achieve their goals, not through domination but through supportive and empathetic leadership.
- ✓ *Power to* was observed when the children demonstrated intellectual and social capacities that enabled their peers to act empathetically toward others, in this case, toward women and their diverse bodies, by encouraging creativity, decision-making,

and collaborative problem-solving during play, particularly when engaging with dolls representing disability.

- ✓ *Power with* emerged when the children nurtured an awareness of collective power, emphasizing social and political collaboration and the pursuit of shared goals. In this sense, they invited one another to rethink social and political norms related to femininity and representation.
- ✓ *Power within* was evident when the children developed self-awareness and internal strength, enabling themselves and others to respond critically and empathetically to issues such as bullying and prejudice, while recognizing their own self-sufficiency, personal empowerment, and capacity to transform both their own lives and those of others.

In light of these conclusions, I realize that the seeds I began planting in 2018, regarding Barbie, women's empowerment, and now play, were initially meant to bring closure to my academic restlessness. However, since life is dynamic, I now see that the roots of those seeds have grown far beyond and longer what I had imagined, extending beyond the boundaries of my own, I would say "farm", reaching into new and neighboring soils. And how could that be?

I say this because the context of my research took place in a *Quilombola* community school. Yet, when I presented my study at V SELIP, still in 2025, both evaluators and students encouraged me to continue cultivating this research in new terrains, that is, in other contexts and with different participants. Among them, I envision working with children with autism, ADHD, and those from diverse social classes and ethnic backgrounds. After all, the field, indeed, is vast. And, what I once thought was the end of a journey now feels like the germination of new life, my research, finally, beginning to breathe and grow beyond its initial soil.

This is because, considering the observations related to disability, I would like to clarify that the analysis presented in this thesis does not extend to additional segments specifically addressing the explicit recognition of disability, as this dimension did not emerge as interactionally salient during the children's play. Throughout the play-based activity, the children did not identify or verbalize the doll representing Down syndrome as embodying a particular condition; instead, their attention was directed toward surface features, such as hair, body, among others. By contrast, the wheelchair-using Barbie became the most interactionally meaningful representation of disability, as demonstrated in the analytical segments discussed. Only during the focus group interview, guided by the facilitator's questions, were the children able to reflect more explicitly on issues related to disability.

In this regard, I consider that the relative *silence* observed in the group playing with *Barbie Fashionists* is itself analytically significant. The absence of extended dialogue surrounding certain embodied differences suggests that these features were not foregrounded in the children's meaning-making processes during play. Silence, therefore, operates as data, indicating which representations became socially and discursively salient and which remained backgrounded or unmarked. From this perspective, the decision not to analyze further segments does not signal an analytical omission; rather, the silence itself responds to this question by revealing how particular forms of difference were acknowledged, negotiated, or rendered invisible through interaction.

Finally, it is worth noting that although the dolls selected from the *Barbie Fashionists* line included representations of disability, they largely conformed to a thin body ideal. While this observation raises important questions concerning bodily norms and representation, a systematic analysis of body size and beauty standards would require a distinct analytical focus and therefore lies beyond the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, this tension points to a productive avenue for future research, particularly studies that examine how *intersecting dimensions of disability, body norms, and representation* are taken up, or left unarticulated, in children's play across diverse social contexts.

Thus, considering all the aspects that emerged from the present thesis, I now aim, in this concluding section, to address, and, for the time being, respond to, the questions raised by my qualification committee, particularly those posed by Professor Dr. Tiago de Aguiar, regarding my contributions to:

- (1) the dialogue with the toy industry;
- (2) the foundations for public policies and educational projects;
- (3) the promotion of awareness and the production of knowledge;
- (4) and the empowerment of educators and local communities.

In light of the preceding topics, I begin with a reflection on "*the dialogue with the toy industry*". To address this theme, I draw upon scholars who, over the past two decades (2000-2020+), have critically and thoughtfully contributed to raising the toy industry's awareness regarding toy production, particularly the production of dolls.

Among them, as discussed in the introductory chapters of this thesis, I highlight the works of Campenni (1999), Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Almeida (2006), Brougère (2010), Rolim (2020), Sarinho Júnior (2023), and Prochner (2024). Over these two decades, these scholars have stood out for emphasizing, in their research, the question of the

dolls' *materiality*, an aspect that I have observed remains central to contemporary toy studies. Their discussions encompass *the material design of dolls for boys and girls as a matter of pedagogical and social concern; the importance of kinesthetic movement*; and, more recently, *the representation of diverse bodies*, including women with disabilities, dolls of multiple ethnicities, professional roles, body types, and gender expressions, reflecting the plural composition of contemporary communities.

In this regard, since I have always followed Mattel's official website, both for purchases and general observation, I noticed that the company's current campaign, launched around mid-2025, clearly reflects how the ongoing dialogue between academia and the toy industry has begun to shape and influence the production of dolls. The following image, taken from Mattel's official website, illustrates this commitment to diversity within the Barbie line:

Figure 30: Promotional image by Mattel highlighting diversity and inclusion through the Barbie brand



Source: MATTEL, Inc. Loja oficial – Brasil.

I believe that this image, in itself, already addresses topic (1) listed above, as there is indeed a market awareness of academic contributions regarding *inclusion, diversity, and empowerment*. However, I reiterate my question for future research: *to what extent is this “market awareness” genuinely committed to such representations? Or is this campaign merely intended to boost Mattel’s sales?*, a concern already raised by Prochner (2024)?. Regardless of whether it is a marketing strategy or not, the fact remains that we can clearly observe tangible changes in the *bodies, materiality, and overall design of the Barbie line* over the past decades.

Regarding point (2), *“the foundations for public policies and educational projects”*, I would like to raise a rather delicate issue. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, I began my academic studies on Barbie within the graduate program I am part of, where there was a professor and researcher, Dr. Danielle Lins de Almeida, who led studies on childhood, not only in the Northeast but also across Brazil. Danielle, who was also my Master's supervisor, sadly passed away this year. Beyond being a profound personal loss, it was also a

significant academic one, as the research group she led was left without another scholar to continue the studies on play and childhood.

Therefore, recognizing its social and academic importance, I, as one of the last researchers “nurtured” by the scientific guidance of Professor Dr. Danielle Almeida, respond to question (2) by expressing my wish to continue conducting research on childhood. Should I one day have the opportunity to teach in the academic context, I intend to carry forward Professor Danielle’s project and lead her research group, GPSM (*Research Group on Visual Semiotics and Multimodality*), unless by then another professor has already taken the initiative to continue this line of study.

However, I emphasize that, as a researcher, I must confess that I have already been planting the seeds of this work in other, non-academic contexts. For instance, I have been taking my Barbie dolls to children, especially those whose parents cannot afford to buy them, so that they can play and experience these toys. I can affirm that this initiative has been quite meaningful, since (i) I am a volunteer member of Greenpeace and therefore have access to groups of marginalized children, and (ii) my sister works at an Indigenous community school in the city of Pitimbu, where she has also been sharing my research. Thus, I can say that my study remains alive and active. Additionally, in relation to question (2), I add that, in the future, when I am in a better financial position, I have plans to establish an NGO dedicated to purchasing and collecting toys to distribute to marginalized communities, so that children may also have access to dolls such as Barbie.

Furthermore, I believe that my research can open doors, windows, and perhaps even an entire house for schools to begin implementing, within their curricula, public policies that allow them to provide toys and create dedicated spaces for play. From these very spaces, I consider that it would also be possible to develop laboratories that promote more in-depth research on childhood and play in Brazil, and, more specifically, in my own city, João Pessoa. This perspective, in fact, aligns with the recent update of Resolution No. 002/2025, which establishes new regulations for the operation of municipal daycare centers and preschools. According to Rocha (2025, our translation), certain points in this resolution deserve particular attention, namely:

- The curriculum must follow national guidelines but may be adapted to include local culture and characteristics;
- Teachers should listen to children and value cultural and ethnic diversity;

- It is mandatory to include topics such as Afro-Brazilian History and Culture, as well as that of Indigenous peoples;
- Schools must be prepared to welcome children with disabilities or with high abilities;
- Principals are required to hold a degree in Pedagogy, and teachers must have a teaching license in their respective field.

However, I believe that this curriculum could include the proposal of a play laboratory, one that would not be interpreted as a “subject”, but rather as a right granted to all daycare and preschool classes, allowing them a specific time within their school schedule to go to this room and play.

Building on this insight, I also take the opportunity to address topic (3): *“the promotion of awareness and the production of knowledge”*. In this regard, I draw attention to the small Brinquedoteca (Toy Library) of the Education Center (CE) at UFPB. According to Poquiqui (2025), this space welcomes children so that they can experience activities that foster cognitive, emotional, social, and motor development. It is linked to extension, teaching, and research projects, and also serves as a “training laboratory for undergraduate students in Pedagogy and Educational Psychology, as well as for graduate students at the Education Center” (n.p., para. 3).

However, as a UFPB student enrolled in the Graduate Program in Linguistics since 2018, and as someone who has long worked within the context of play and, more recently, joined a research group that studies language and cognition, I must confess that I had never heard of this laboratory before, nor do I have any idea how it functions. Thus, I respond to this topic by highlighting the need for stronger academic engagement with this laboratory and the projects developed within it. Moreover, I reiterate the importance of encouraging, following the publication of this thesis, collaborative efforts so that the CCHLA (Center for Human Sciences, Letters, and Arts) and PROLING (Graduate Program in Linguistics) may also become partners in this initiative, promoting the production of knowledge and its return to society, given its valuable contributions.

Therefore, I consider it necessary that these discussions also extend to contribution (4): *“the empowerment of educators and local communities”*. Once this academic articulation takes place, we will not only be empowering ourselves as scholars, through knowledge production and the pursuit of academic titles, but also empowering our society and, most importantly, our children.

Finally, I bring these reflections on the contributions raised by Professor Dr. Tiago de Aguiar to a close, and with them, this thesis. I believe that this collective endeavor, which began with theorists I first knew only through their writings, later reached Professor Dr. Danielle Almeida, who nurtured the need to continue this line of research within our own academic context. It then reached me and other students from her research group, gradually gaining international recognition and yielding meaningful outcomes for both our local and global communities, especially for the peripheral communities of João Pessoa.

Ultimately, this journey also led to connections with other research groups, such as LACON (Laboratório de Compreensão Neurocognitiva da Linguagem), through the political commitment and vision of Professor Dr. Jan Edson, whose dedication helped turn this shared dream into reality.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO E LIVRE ESCLARECIMENTO

(A ser utilizado pelos pais/responsáveis dos participantes menores de idade)

(Elaborado de acordo com as Resoluções N° 466/12 e 510/2016 do CNS)

O(A) seu(ua) filho(a) está sendo convidado (a) a participar da pesquisa intitulada: “**BRINCAR É PODER: UMA ANÁLISE SISTÊMICO-FUNCIONAL E COGNITIVA DO EMPODERAMENTO FEMININO NA BRINCADEIRA COM A BARBIE**”, desenvolvida por **JANAÍNE DOS SANTOS ROLIM**, aluna regularmente matriculada no Curso de Mestrado/Doutorado em **LINGÜÍSTICA** do Programa de Pós-graduação em **LINGÜÍSTICA** da Universidade Federal da Paraíba (PPGG/UFPB), sob a orientação do Prof. Drº. JAN EDSON RODRIGUES LEITE.

O presente estudo tem como **objetivo geral**: investigar como as crianças constroem significados ideológicos relacionados ao empoderamento – amplamente divulgado pela Mattel –, com base em suas narrativas espontâneas derivadas do brincar com as bonecas Barbie e de suas reflexões posteriores a este ato, e como **objetivos específicos**: i) identificar os processos verbais, com base no Sistema de Transitividade (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), nos discursos narrativos das crianças sobre poder e empoderamento, derivados de suas experiências ao brincar com bonecas Barbie e nas reflexões subsequentes; ii) interpretar os processos verbais mais proeminentes nos discursos narrativos das crianças – no brincar com a Barbie e nas reflexões subsequentes – sobre poder e empoderamento, com base nos mecanismos de avaliação do Sistema de Avaliatividade (Martin; White, 2005), verificando as orações a partir da ação, evento ou estado em que os participantes estão envolvidos; iii) identificar, sob uma perspectiva cognitiva (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980), os domínios de poder expressos por meio de metáforas nos discursos das crianças ao brincar com a Barbie e nas reflexões subsequentes; iv) verificar, sob uma perspectiva cognitiva (Lakoff; Johnson, *ibid.*), como os padrões metafóricos nos discursos narrativos das crianças durante o brincar com bonecas Barbie e nas reflexões subsequentes refletem suas percepções sobre a Barbie e as mulheres; v) discutir como os quatro níveis de poder listados por Charlier e Caubergs (2007) são linguisticamente configurados nos discursos narrativos das crianças em termos de análise social e cognitiva, buscando compreender como o brincar com bonecas Barbie consideradas empoderadas (Rolim, 2020) pode promover a luta por representatividade, respeito e inclusão em relação à diversidade das mulheres e seu papel na sociedade.

Justifica-se o presente estudo por se tratar de uma pesquisa que busca contribuir, por meio de análises cognitiva e sistêmico-funcional, para a compreensão e conscientização sobre o papel da Barbie na formação das identidades infantis, particularmente das meninas, durante a infância. O foco está na relação entre gênero e poder, na luta pela representação e inclusão das mulheres em diversas esferas sociais e na promoção do respeito à diversidade dos corpos femininos e da condição de ser mulher, além de representações mais diversas de beleza para combater o estigma associado às deficiências físicas.

A participação do seu(ua) filho(a) na presente pesquisa é de fundamental importância, mas será voluntária, não lhe cabendo qualquer obrigação de fornecer as informações e/ou colaborar com as atividades solicitadas pelos pesquisadores se não concordar com isso, bem como, participando ou não, nenhum valor lhe será cobrado, como também não lhe será devido qualquer valor.

Para este estudo adotaremos o(s) seguinte(s) procedimento(s): i) observação – gravação – do(a) participante enquanto brinca com as bonecas Barbie, e de ii) grupo focal – entrevista gravada em grupo – para acesso às reflexões discursivas dessas mesmas crianças através de perguntas sobre suas experiências ao brincar com as bonecas Barbie tendo em vista o tema empoderamento.

Caso o seu(ua) filho(a) decida não participar do estudo ou resolver a qualquer momento dele desistir, nenhum prejuízo lhe será atribuído, sendo importante o esclarecimento de que os riscos da participação do(a) seu(ua) filho(a) são considerados mínimos, limitado à possibilidade de eventual desconforto psicológico ao ser gravado(a) e responder as perguntas durante o grupo focal, para que isso não venha a ocorrer, será escolhido um local privado sem a presença de pessoas alheias ao estudo. Nesse tocante, o risco mínimo possível ao participante pode se referir a não querer brincar com as bonecas e/ou brincar com uma boneca que não seja de seu agrado devido as poucas amostras disponíveis para o estudo. Enquanto, em contrapartida, os benefícios obtidos com este trabalho, os quais dizem respeito a relação entre gênero e poder, a luta pela representação e inclusão das mulheres em diversas esferas sociais e a promoção do respeito à diversidade dos corpos femininos e da condição de ser mulher, serão importantíssimos e traduzidos em esclarecimentos para a população estudada. Apesar disso, seu(ua) filho(a) terá assegurado o direito a ressarcimento ou indenização no caso de quaisquer danos eventualmente produzidos pela pesquisa.

Os resultados deste estudo estarão à sua disposição quando finalizado. O nome do(a) seu(ua) filho(a) ou o material que indique sua participação não será liberado sem a permissão do responsável. Os dados e instrumentos utilizados na pesquisa ficarão arquivados com o(a) pesquisador(a) responsável por um período de 5 anos, e após esse tempo serão destruídos.

Em todas as etapas da pesquisa serão fielmente obedecidos os Critérios da Ética em Pesquisa com Seres Humanos, conforme Resoluções nº. 466/2012 e 510/16 ambas do Conselho Nacional de Saúde, que disciplina as pesquisas envolvendo seres humanos no Brasil.

Solicita-se, ainda, a sua autorização para apresentar os resultados deste estudo em eventos científicos ou divulgá-los em revistas científicas, assegurando-se que o nome do(a) seu(ua) filho(a) será mantido no mais absoluto sigilo por ocasião da publicação dos resultados.

Caso a participação de seu(ua) filho(a) implique em algum tipo de despesa, o(a) mesmo(a) será ressarcida pela pesquisadora responsável, o mesmo ocorrendo caso ocorra algum dano.

Os pesquisadores estarão à sua disposição para qualquer esclarecimento que considere necessário em qualquer etapa da pesquisa.

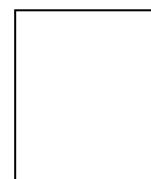
Eu, _____, declaro que fui devidamente esclarecido (a) quanto aos objetivos, justificativa, riscos e benefícios da pesquisa, e dou o meu consentimento para que meu(inha) filho(a) possa dela participar e para a publicação dos resultados, assim como o uso da imagem dos mesmos nos materiais destinados à apresentação do trabalho final, com a devida proteção. Estou ciente de que receberei uma via deste documento, assinada por mim e pelo(a) pesquisador(a) responsável, como se trata de um documento em duas páginas, a primeira deverá ser rubricada tanto pelo(a) pesquisador(a) responsável quanto por mim.

João Pessoa-PB, ____ de _____ de 202____.

Pesquisador(a) Responsável

Responsável pelo(a) Participante da Pesquisa

Testemunha



Em caso de dúvidas com respeito aos aspectos éticos deste estudo, você poderá consultar:

Pesquisador Responsável: Prof.^a Maria José

Endereço da Pesquisadora Responsável: Rua, 565, casa 102, Jardim – Cabedelo-PB - CEP: 58.003-000 - Fones: (83) 9 0000-0000 - E-mail:@hotmail.com

Com respeito aos aspectos éticos desta pesquisa, você poderá consultar o CEP e a CONEP:

Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa do Centro de Ciências da Saúde da Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Campus I - Cidade Universitária - 1º Andar – CEP 58051-900 – João Pessoa/PB - (83) 3216-7791 – E-mail: eticaccsufpb@hotmail.com. Horário de Funcionamento: 08:00 às 12:00 e das 14:00 às 17:00 horas.

CONEP – Comissão Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa

Endereço: SRTVN 701, Via W 5 Norte, lote D - Edifício PO 700, 3º andar – Bairro Asa

Norte, Brasília-DF – CEP: 70.719-040 – Fone: (61) 3315-5877 – E-mail: conep@saude.gov.br

A Comissão Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa (CONEP) é uma comissão do Conselho Nacional de Saúde - CNS, criada através da Resolução 196/96 e com constituição designada pela Resolução 246/97, com a função de implementar as normas e diretrizes regulamentadoras de pesquisas envolvendo seres humanos, aprovadas pelo Conselho. O Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa (CEP) é um colegiado interdisciplinar e independente, com “múnus público”, que deve existir nas instituições que realizam pesquisas envolvendo seres humanos no Brasil, criado para defender os interesses dos sujeitos em sua integridade e dignidade para contribuir no desenvolvimento da pesquisa.

APPENDIX B

Representative table, adapted⁴⁵ from Rolim (2020), based on Dionísio (2001), showing the transcription conventions.

OCORRÊNCIAS	SINAIS	EXEMPLIFICAÇÕES
Indicações dos falantes	C1: child 1 C2: child 2 C3: child 3 C4: child 4 C5: child 5 C6: child 6 C7: child 7 C8: child 8 SOG: student from the other group F: facilitator	C1: C3: C3: C4: C5: C6: C7: C8: SOG: F:
Pausas	...	I just... I only like soccer
Ênfases	MAIÚSCULAS	
Alongamento de vogal	: (pequeno) :: (médio) ::: (grande)	
Silabação	-	N/A
Interrogação	?	What?
Segmentos incompreensíveis	[()	
Truncamento de palavra ou desvio sintático	/	
Comentário da transcritora	(())	((while positioning the soccer player doll next to her face))
Discurso reportado	“ ”	
Superposição de vozes	[	
Simultaneidade de vozes	[[	
Ortografia		
Trecho suprimido	/.../	

⁴⁵ The examples used were taken from the corpus of this thesis.

APPENDIX C

Quantitative Summary

Total metaphors listed:

1. BEAUTY IS VALUE
2. SELF IS OBJECT
3. THE SELF IS EXTENDED THROUGH THE TOY
4. SELF-DEFINITION IS PREFERENCE
5. IDENTITY IS PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTE
6. PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE IS LACK / LOSS
7. WOMEN ARE DOLLS
8. SOCIAL ACTORS ARE TOYS
9. DIVERSITY IS VALUE
10. INCLUSION IS BEAUTY
11. SOCIAL NEGOTIATION IS PLAY
12. AESTHETIC VALUE IS WEIGHT / LOAD
13. THINNESS IS BEAUTY / VALUE
14. BELONGING IS PERCEPTUAL SIMILARITY
15. IDENTITY IS AN INDEX
16. THE SELF IS EXTENDED INTO THE DOLL
17. PROFESSION IS STATUS / IDENTITY
18. SOCIAL NEGOTIATION IS PLAY
19. APPEARANCE IS SCALE / MEASUREMENT
20. BEAUTY IS HAIR
21. FATNESS IS LACK OF VALUE
22. LIMITATION IS IMMOBILITY
23. FUNCTIONALITY IS MOBILITY / ACTION
24. HELPING IS SUPPORTING
25. HELPING IS MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER
26. PHYSICAL TRAITS ARE INHERENT
27. SELF-IDENTITY IS HAIR
28. SOCIAL EXPECTATION IS HAIR

- 29. TEMPORAL CHANGE IS HAIR CHANGE
 - 30. APPEARANCE IS COMPETITION
 - 31. DIFFERENCE IS SOCIAL IDENTITY
 - 32. BEAUTY IS VALUE
 - 33. HAVING IS BELONGING
 - 34. SOCIAL ROLE IS TOY
 - 35. AGENCY IS MOBILITY
- 36. PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE IS SOCIAL IDENTITY
 - 37. IDENTITY IS MOBILITY
 - 38. SOCIAL REPRESENTATION IS HAIR
 - 39. REPRESENTATION IS VISIBILITY
 - 40. COMMUNITY IDENTITY IS PLACE
 - 41. BELONGING IS LIVING
 - 42. INSTITUTION IS IDENTITY
- 43. EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT IS DISTANCE
 - 44. EMOTION IS AN INTERNAL STATE
 - 45. BEAUTY IS VALUE / INNER QUALITY
 - 46. BEAUTY IS VALUE / INNER QUALITY
 - 47. OVERCOMING IS UP
- 48. HAIR IS A CULTURAL SYMBOL OF FEMININE IDENTITY

APPENDIX D

Video_Transcript_1_Barbie_Career_Dolls_Brazilian Portuguese

Interview – 4 Participants

Date: May 30, 2025

Location: Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado Municipal School

Duration: 21 minutes and 54 seconds (however, I only transcribed up to minute 13:00 due to the poor audio quality, as that portion was already sufficient for the analysis).

1. C1: eu escolhi a bailarina
2. C1: eu nunca vi essa daqui ((não deu para ver qual foi))
3. C2: abre ela primeiro
4. C3: ((apontou para a Barbie bailarina enquanto a C2 falou))
5. C2: é, abre
6. C1: vamos abrir essa primeiro
7. C1: ver qual...
8. [()
9. C1: consegue abrir?
10. C1: não sei abrir
11. R: Podem brincar, gente.... sem vergonha
12. P: Façam um círculo... podem brincar
13. [()
14. C1: eu tou com medo de rasgar... a caixa
15. C1: eu tou com medo de rasgar a caixa...
16. P: Pronto. Aí, vocês podem brincar uns quinze minutinhos, vinte... A gente vai só pegar uma água, ta bom?
17. C1: eu tou com medo de rasgar a caixa
18. C3: aw!!! ((surpresa)) Ai, que boneca grande!
19. C1: a boneca cadeirante!
20. [()
21. C1: poxa, ela ganhou com um estojo!
22. C2: Ai, eu consegui tirar os pés! ((alívio))
23. [()
24. C2: vê se dá pra tirar ela
25. [()
26. C2: essa é muito [(), sério!
27. C2: essa combina muito comigo ((enquanto posiciona a boneca jogadora de futebol ao lado do seu rosto))
28. [()
29. C2: eu só... eu só gosto de futebol
30. C1: Ah, tem lacre.
31. C1: Mulher do céu!
32. C2: que foi?
33. C3: que foi?
34. C3: mulher, é pra rasgar, mulher, a caixa!
35. C1: é não.
36. C3: é, ela falou assim:
37. C2: aqui...
38. C3: 'tem que rasgar a caixa'
39. C2: 'fiquem à vontade' ((enquanto rasgou a caixa da coleguinha C3 com certa força))
40. C4: é... eu não tou conseguindo...
41. [()

42. C1: gente, eu não tou conseguindo abrir.
43. C4: tem essa fotinha aqui ((fazendo referência para a foto da boneca médica na parte detrás da caixa))
44. C2: eu posso desgrampear?
45. [[()
46. C2: tentar que tirar a capa, minha filha
47. [[()
48. C2: é uma médica ((sobre a boneca da outra coleguinha))
49. [[()
50. C1: ela é pesada ((sobre a médica da coleguinha))
51. C3: tá grudada
52. C1: ela tá grávida!!!
53. [[()
54. C3: tá não
55. SOG: a minha tá careca
56. C3: é o corpo, Gabriela
57. [[()
58. C4: é gordura
59. [[()
60. C2: arranquei
61. [[()
62. C2: eu puxei
63. C3: na cintura...
64. C3: amarra aqui
65. C1: não tou conseguindo abrir. Me ajuda.
66. [[()
67. C4: é pra tirar essa [[() aqui? Suca?
68. C2: é.
69. C4: deixa eu ver qual é a suca.
70. SOG: essa aqui fica em pé
71. C1: não tou conseguindo abrir.
72. [[()
73. C1: ninguém tem uma tesoura?
74. C2: abre a tua logo, mulher.
75. C1: apois vai ficar assim. Eu vou ficar assim, ó ((olha)).
76. SOG: tem 45 minutos...
77. C1: parece uma bacia de água ((fazendo referência ao plástico que veio a boneca))
78. [[()
79. C1: de quem é essa boneca aqui?
80. C3: é minha.
81. SOG: Consegui! Ô, gente, eu tirei.
82. C3: Olha!!! ((sorrindo))
83. SOG: olha isso aqui...
84. [[()
85. C1: gente, tem um texto no meu.
86. C4: olha, gente, a de X! ((apontando))
87. C2: é carequinha!
88. C1: ((Risos))
89. SOG: é cega! É cega!
90. C3: é que cada uma é de cada tipo, gente!
91. C2: é!
92. C2: abre o teu, mulher.
93. C4: ah, ela botando a mão na de rodar... ((em referência a boneca cadeirante do outro grupo))
94. C4: agora ela tá até triste ((em referência com a criança que recebeu a boneca careca))
95. C1: coitadinha

96. C3: Nossa, gente! Só porque a boneca é careca?
97. C2: Eu hein!
98. C1: Não. Tô dizendo é que ela tá triste.
99. C3: Não. Vocês tão dizendo que ela não gostou da boneca.
100. C1: apois eu amei.
101. Toda boneca aqui é bonita.
102. [()
103. C3: aí a boneca não pode ser...
104. C4: coitada da boneca.
105. C2: tome soco. Tome soco. ((brincando com a boneca lutadora))
106. C1: gente, eu vou pedir pra mulher abrir que eu não tou conseguindo abrir.
107. C3: quando ela chegar vai ser uns 15 minutos daqui.
108. [()
109. C1: eu vou quebrar essa Barbie... eu vou quebrar essa Barbie e não vou conseguir não.
110. [()
111. C3: Olha a bola dela!!!! ((sobre a Barbie jogadora de futebol))
112. C4: a minha foi a mais fácil de abrir.
113. C1: Claro, né!
114. C1: ela é pesadinha! ((fazendo uma feição de estranhamento ao segurar a Barbie médica))
115. C1: gordinha...
116. C3: gordinha...
117. Risos
118. C2: olha, como ela é bonita.
119. C2: A minha é igual a eu, ó, magrinha... ((fazendo referência a Barbie lutadora enquanto levanta a sua própria camisa e mostra a sua barriga – não a da Barbie))
120. C2: Ohh!! ((surpresa))
121. C2: mesma cor, véi! Mesma cor! Ó, a mesma cor!!! ((colocando o braço da boneca ao lado do seu))
122. C1: a mesma cor, a mesma cor ((rindo, e apontando a Barbie médica negra para a coleguinha negra))
123. C2: eu ia descendo a calça da outra ((enquanto mexe no calção da boneca))
124. C2: ela não usa, não... ela não usa calcinha?!
125. C3: será que ela ((a pesquisadora)) vai falar assim?!: cada uma vai levar pra casa a sua boneca.
126. C2: aí, eu falo: “ah, mentira, tia?!.. Eu queria levar” ((colocando a mão na boca, encenando emocionada))
127. C2: [()
128. C3: o sapato já tá... [()
129. C4: ow. Tira aqui, por favor!
130. [()
131. C2: quem quer lutar comigo aqui?
132. C1: eu
133. C1: tá gravidinha... pá pá pá ((encenando soco))
134. C4: vai quebrar...
135. C3: vai não... aqui, ó...
136. [()
137. C4: essa e essa...
138. [()
139. SOG: finalmente...
140. [()
141. C2: Ohh! ((surpresa))
142. C3: liga!
143. C2: meu Deus! ((segurando a boneca bailarina enquanto ela brilha))
144. C3: olha, Melissa!!!
145. C2: Ela canta!!
146. C1: só brilha!!

147. C3: deixa eu tentar abrir
 148. C4: eu pensei que ela cantava.
 149. C3: Nossa, também canta...
 150. [()
 151. C4: essas aqui são irmãs, olha ((Barbie bailarina e médica))
 152. C2: ela é do bem
 153. C1: olhaaa! ((surpresa))
 154. C4: só mexe a perna ((Barbie médica))
 155. C1: quando toca... quando toca que coisa, é?
 156. C4: ela sobe ((Barbie médica))
 157. C1: quando eu toco...
 158. C1: aaw ((surpresa))
 159. C3: é do lado aqui, ó
 160. C4: após eu tava vendo do lado errado
 161. C4: ó, gente. Ó como ela é linda?! ((mostrando a Barbie médica para o outro grupo
 162. [()
 163. C2: ó como ela é linda [sobre a Barbie lutadora]
 164. [()
 165. C2: meu sonho é ter uma dessa, velho!
 166. C1: o meu também. Bora pedir à tia?
 167. C2: claro que não! Essa aqui é pras outras crianças brincar ((falando triste))
 168. [()
 169. C1: acho que... acho que a gente só tem que abrir a dos outros...
 170. [()
 171. C2: ó lá, o da Lívia é um... é uma aleijadinha.
 172. C3: é cega, menina!!! Oxe! ((corrigindo a coleguinha))
 173. SOG: você é que nem ela ((fazendo referência a C3 que usa óculos))
 174. C4: olha, uma bola de futebol!
 175. C2: eu gostei muito da... o da da Isabelly é muito bonitinha.
 176. [()
 177. SOG: então troca ela aí...
 178. C2: eu não. Quero não! Mas achei bonita.
 179. C1: essa daí é normal... essa daí é normal.
 180. C1: ah!! O pé. ((fazendo referência para a boneca portadora de Syndrome de Down do outro grupo))
 181. [()
 182. SOG: oxe! ((reação de estranhamento))
 183. [()
 184. C4: A minha foi eu que examinei. ((referência a Barbie médica))
 185. C1: A minha brilha! A minha brilha! A minha brilha!
 186. SOG: cadê?
 187. C3: aqui.
 188. C4: Eu sou médica e ajudei todas elas.
 189. SOG: ajudou nada aqui... ó.
 190. SOG: ajudou a ficar a minha... a ficar careca. ((decepcionada))
 191. Risos
 192. [()
 193. C3: ela tá com câncer, menina! ((corrigindo))
 194. C4: é.
 195. C2: eu acho que essa aí, foi muito bom, viu! ((sobre o comentário da coleguinha))
 196. C2: muito bom!
 197. C2: coitada! Falou que a médica não ajudou a boneca dela.
 198. C1: Vai brincando, gente. Vai brincando.
 199. [()
 200. C1: Como é que vê...

201. [()
 202. C1: olha, ela é tão mole...
 203. C4: gente, brinca, gente...
 204. C1: como é que brinca?
 205. C2: deixa eu ver o que ela traz! ((sobre a boneca jogadora de futebol))
 206. C2: deixa... tem que arrancar a bola.
 207. C1: essa boneca fica em pé ((boneca boxeadora))
 208. C4: só tá mexendo ela pra lá e pra cá ((movimentando a boneca médica))
 209. [()
 210. C2: você viu a boneca que mexe?
 211. C2: ow, X brinca com ele aí pra eu ver?
 212. [()
 213. C2: oxe! Não é só a minha, não! ((surpresa))
 214. C1: Aqui, olha.
 215. C1: Sou a bailarina ((sorrir))
 216. C2: a minha se mexe isso aqui, ó! ((apontando para o joelho))
 217. C2: mexe a mão e os braço.
 218. SOG: a minha se mexe também.
 219. C2: Como? A tua sai da cadeira, não?
 220. SOG: Sai.
 221. C3: A gente pode ver o de vocês também?
 222. SOG: Du du du. ((cantarolando e não respondeu))
 223. C2: Não. A gente tá brincando pra cá, né?!
 224. SOG: Du du du. ((continua cantarolando))
 225. C2: eu achei muito bonita.
 226. SOG: Oíá, ela saiu.
 227. SOG: Só que ela fica assim.
 228. C3: é melhor no chão. ((coloca a boneca com os pés no chão))
 229. SOG: Du du du. ((continua cantarolando))
 230. As crianças colocam as quatro para brincarem juntas
 231. C2: vou dar um soco. Toma! ((com a boneca boxeadora))
 232. ((Deu uns soquinhos na boneca jogadora de futebol da colega C3))
 233. C2: A boneca tua... a boneca tua é muito mais bonita... ((cochichando para C3))
 234. [()
 235. C2: é meio... ((cochichando para C3))
 236. [()
 237. C3: ahn?
 238. C2: É mais... diferente! ((falando baixo))
 239. [()
 240. C1: é preto!
 241. C3: deixa de ser doida, bexiga!
 242. C2: Eu, hein!
 243. C1: olha aqui, gente.
 244. C2: deixa ela cantar, velho!
 245. C3: Nossa!
 246. C3: Não pode perder isso daqui.
 247. C4: Ela tem um estojo.
 248. C2: Uma dúvida. Deixa eu falar assim...
 249. [()
 250. C2: Na hora da tia falar... ((cochichando))
 251. C2: eu vou dar a boneca àquelas meninas... ((cochichando))
 252. C2: a tia vai chegar lá...
 253. C2: crianças, aqui pra vocês... ((encenou com as mãos dando as bonecas a elas))
 254. C2: “você, pra você, pra você”
 255. C2: eu: “ohh” ((encenando emocionada))

256. [()
 257. C1: eu vou chorar.
 258. C2: olha, gente...
 259. C4: Eu... que não gosto de boneca...
 260. C2: que perfeição, véi! ((mostrando a Barbie boxeadora)
 261. C3: Ei, eu só gosto de boneca assim ((mostrou a boneca jogadora de futebol))
 262. C2: que perfeição essa menina é, gente!
 263. [()
 264. C1: Ahh! A saia dela sai!!
 265. C3: nossa!! Não sabia.
 266. C2: Meu Deus! A minha cueca... eita! Cueca não.
 267. ((Risos))
 268. C2: A minha... a minha calcinha
 269. C3: Ai, que bonita.
 270. C2: Ela tem peito?. Ahh! ((surpresa))
 271. C1: A minha é magrinha, óia.
 272. C4: aah, a tua tem peito. ((surpresa))
 273. C4: ela também tem.
 274. C2: a minha também tem.
 275. C2: olha isso! olha isso! olha isso aqui! ((apontando para o próprio peito))
 276. C3: Claro! Que elas já são adultas, né gente?!
 277. C2: eu tenho.
 278. C3: Vamos trocar? Tipo...
 279. C3: Tu dá essa ((Barbie médica)) pra ela [C1]. Ela dá essa ((Barbie boxeadora)) pra mim ((C3)).
 280. C3: Vai...
 281. C2: A gente vai brincar um pouquinho. Entendeu?
 282. C3: Toma...
 283. C2: pra brincar.
 284. C3: Aí, tu dá essa ((Barbie bailarina)) pra ela ((C2)).
 285. Todas: AHHH!!! Oi!!!!
 286. C4: Oh, que linda.
 287. C3: Uma boxer.
 288. C2: Vê se aprendeu inglês, ai.
 289. C2: nhanhã ((imitando falando inglês))
 290. [()
 291. C3: AAh! Gente, ela mexe tudo. Tudo tudo tudo.
 292. C3: Até o pé, ó!! ((mostrando))
 293. C3: Até o... até o pé, ó! ((mexendo))
 294. C3: Mexe o pé.
 295. C1: Oxe, é muito legal.
 296. C2: Cadê a tia?
 297. C1: Isso aqui tira.
 298. C3: Ela foi beber água. Acho que ela não soube...
 299. C3: Não tira, amiga, isso. Pelo amor de Deus!
 300. C4: Mulher, isso aqui tira.
 301. C3: Eu sei.
 302. C2: Para, pra não quebrar isso, não, X.
 303. C2: Eu tou morrendo de medo de tirar isso.
 304. [()
 305. C2: Ah, eu vou ajeitar meu cabelo. Olha isso aqui. ((tocando o cabelo da Barbie bailarina com as próprias mãos da boneca))
 306. C2: Vou ajeitar o meu coque.
 307. C4: calma ai...
 308. C4: alguém pode...
 309. [()

310. C3: Olha o cabelo da dela. ((apontando para a boneca do outro grupo))
311. C2: Gente!! Olha isso aqui, olha. A gente trocou pra gente brincar um pouco cada uma com uma boneca. Entendeu?
312. C2: Aií, é pra trocar. Trocando...
313. C3: Mas tu não gostou da tua. Não? ((perguntando para a colega do outro grupo))
314. [()
315. C3: E por que tu tá assim,ó ? ((imitando pose de triste))
316. C2: Vamo trocar. Vamo trocar.
317. C2: Vamos brincar, gente. Vai, troca, de novo. ((falando para C3))
318. C1: Não, mulher!! Quando ela chegar, já não dá pra brincar mais. ((falando para a colega do outro grupo))
319. C1: Já passou.
320. C2: Vai, gente, trocando de boneca.
321. C3: troca de boneca ((falando para C4))
322. C3: vai, vai.
323. C2: Esse aí... ó o balanço desse cabelo aqui ((mexendo no cabelo da Barbie médica))
324. C2: Parece o meu cabelo, gente!
325. C1: Eita, o sapato caiiiu!
326. C3: Gente, ó isso aqui. ((mostrando a Barbie bailarina para o outro grupo))
327. C4: risos
328. C1: Coloca o sapato aqui, mulher.
329. C2: Essa aqui ((Barbie médica)) é meio gordinha mesmo, viu.
330. C4: a minha é cabeleireira. ((Barbie jogadora de futebol))
331. C2: ah, é porque tá buchuda.
332. C4: Cabelo leira.
333. C1: É goooooool ((brincando))
334. C4: Olha! Ela tá com a marca aqui da Barbie.
335. C4: A de vocês tem a marca da Barbie?
336. C2: Não.
337. C3: Não.
338. C2: Olha! Olha! Olha!
339. C3: dududu ((cantarolando o som da música 'Carol of the bells' e fazendo a Barbie bailarina dançar em giros))
340. C2: Vamo trocar agora de novo.
341. C1: Gente, ela vem com calcinha sim!
342. C4: Calma aí. Olha! Olha! Olha!
343. C1: Ela vem com calcinha sim! Olha a calcinha. ((mostrando))
344. C2: Uhum.
345. C2: Tá.
346. C3: dududu ((continua cantarolando o som da música 'Carol of the bells' e fazendo a Barbie bailarina dançar em giros))
347. C2: Tá. Vamo trocar de novo.
348. C3: Não. Calma! Tá com uma gota!
349. C1: Ela gostou. Tu gostou, num foi?
350. C4: Ah?
351. C2: Eu nunca vi ela brincando de boneca.
352. C2: [()
353. C1: Pra mim quem... quem eu gostei mais foi essa boneca aqui. ((apontando para a Barbie bailarina))
354. C2: A minha foi aquela dali, ó! ((apontando para a Barbie boxeadora))
355. C3: [()
356. C1: E a tua? ((perguntando para C4))
357. C1: Essa? ((apontando para a Barbie médica))
358. C4: E a minha foi a jogadora de futebol.
359. C2: E a tua? ((perguntando para C3))

360. C1: É só uma!!!!
361. C3: Essa. ((mostrando a Barbie bailarina))

APPENDIX E

Video_Transcript_2_Barbie_Fashionists_Brazilian Portuguese

Interview – 4 Participants

Date: May 30, 2025

Location: Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado Municipal School

Duration: 21 minutes and 54 seconds

1. F: Pronto, meninas. Essas vocês podem olhar. E vocês podem escolher. E a partir de agora a gente tá conversando entre nós. Divirtam-se.
2. C6: A minha é essa. ((puxando a boneca e informando com movimento de negação sem deixar C7 pegar)).
3. C7: Inaudível
4. ((não falaram nada quando viram as bonecas. Ficam silenciadas e sem reação, como frustradas))
5. [()
6. C5: é o que... a boneca?
7. C6: [()
8. C5: ah ((com feição de estranhamento quando tirou a boneca sem cabelo da caixa))
9. C5: A minha é careca.
10. C8: Tem essa fitinha aqui que eu não consigo tirar.
11. C7: A minha veio uma corda colada com uma fita.
12. C5: A minha é tão parada.
13. C6: Oh, gente ((para o outro grupo)). Vocês conseguem tirar isso daqui?
14. SOG: como assim?
15. C6: isso daqui tá preso.
16. C5: Ela tá colada.
17. C5: A minha tá careca.
18. C7: [()
19. C5: Aqui a minha. ((apontado para C7 com olhar de sarcasmo))
20. C6: A outra é careca ((apontando para a boneca de C5))
21. C5: é feia.
22. C6: [() ... acho que é câncer.
23. C5: Câncer? ((fazendo expressão de estranhamento))
24. C5: [()
25. C6: Ah, consegui.
26. C5: Ela é cadeirante.
27. C6: Oh, gente. Tirei.
28. C6: É cega! É cega! ((apontando para a de C8))
29. SOG3: É porque cada uma é de cada tipo, gente.
30. C6: É. Ó ela botando a mão pra [() pra andar. ((colocando a mão da boneca na roda da cadeira de rodas))
31. SOG4: C5 tá até triste.
32. SOG1: Coitadinha
33. SOG3: Nossa, gente?! Só porque a boneca é careca?
34. SOG2: Eu hein!
35. SOG1: Não. Tô dizendo é que ela tá triste.
36. SOG3: Não. Vocês tão dizendo que ela não gostou da boneca.
37. SOG1: depois eu amei.
38. SOG2: Toda boneca é de todo tipo, galera.
39. SOG1: A da gente também não é diferente, não?
40. SOG3: Toda boneca aqui é bonita.
41. [()

42. SOG3: aí a boneca não pode ser...
43. C4: coitada da boneca.
44. C6: Deixa assim mesmo. É só para brincar. ((falando para C7))
45. C5: Será que ela é modelo? ((perguntando a C6 sobre a boneca sem cabelo))
46. C6: Não sei.
47. C6: [()
48. ((Passaram um longo tempo só com as bonecas nas mãos e olhando para o outro grupo))
49. C6: Eu pensei que ela cantava. ((sobre a boneca do outro grupo]
50. C6: Não sobre. ((sobre a rampa da boneca cadeirante))
51. C6: Ah, é assim. ((mudou a posição))
52. C6: Aqui tava do lado errado.
53. C6: [()
54. C5: Por que não tira ela daqui, hein?
55. SOG2: ó lá, o da Livia é um... é uma aleijadinha. ((apontando para C8 – com síndrome de Down))
56. SOG3: é cega, menina!!! Oxe! ((corrigindo a coleguinha))
57. C6: Gente, eu tirei ela. ((da cadeira de rodas – com expressão feliz))
58. SOG2: eu gostei muito da... o da X é muito bonitinha.
59. SOG1: Só tem aleija...
60. SOG1: essa daí é normal... essa daí é normal. ((para a boneca de C7 – com Síndrome de Down))
61. SOG1: ah!! O pé.
62. SOG4: Eu sou médica e ajudei todas elas.
63. C5: ajudou nada aqui... ó.
64. C5: ajudou a ficar a minha... a ficar careca. ((decepcionada))
65. ((Risos))
66. SOG3: ela tá com câncer, menina! ((corrigindo))
67. SOG4: é.
68. SOG2: eu acho que essa aí, foi muito bom, viu! ((sobre o comentário da coleguinha))
69. SOG2: muito bom!
70. SOG2: coitada! Falou que a médica não ajudou a boneca dela.
71. C5: Aqui, ó. Modelo ela. ((sobre a boneca sem cabelo))
72. C5: [()
73. C6: [()
74. C6: Ó, ela fica em pé. ((apontando para C7 ver a boneca de C5 careca))
75. C6: Aqui, óia. ((mostrando a boneca cadeirante))
76. SOG2: Ela não sai da cadeira, não?
77. C6: Sai.
78. SOG3: A gente pode ver o de vocês também?
79. C6: Olha aqui. Ela saiu ((mostrando a boneca cadeirante fora da cadeira))
80. C6: Só que ela fica assim, ó. ((mostrando que as pernas não se movem para ficar em pé))
81. SOG2: É melhor deixar na cadeira.
82. C6: Olha, que bonita. ((sobre a boneca do outro grupo))
83. C6: [()
84. [()
85. C7: ela tem um estojo ((para C5))
86. [()
87. C7: Eu vou pedir... pra trocar.
88. ((C5 e C6 ficaram brincando uma com a outra)) [()
89. SOG3: Vamos trocar? Tipo...
90. SOG3: Tu dá essa ((Barbie médica)) pra ela ((C1)). Ela dá essa ((Barbie boxeadora)) pra mim ((C3)).
91. SOG3: Vai...
92. SOG2: A gente vai brincar um pouquinho. Entendeu?
93. SOG3: Toma...
94. SOG2: pra brincar.
95. SOG3: Aí, tu dá essa ((Barbie bailarina)) pra ela. ((SOG2))

96. ((Todas: AHHH!!! Oi!!!!))
97. C5: Me leva... me leva... ((colocando a boneca sem cabelo na boneca cadeirante))
98. C6: ((move a boneca cadeirante brincando com a boneca sem cabelo))
99. C5: [()
100. C6: Oia, ela é uma modelo mesmo.
101. C5: ó, o teu aqui. ((apontando na embalagem))
102. C6: Calma aí... aqui tá com...? [()
103. SOG3: Mas tu não gostou da tua. Não? ((perguntando para C7))
104. C7: Eu gostei. ((com incerteza))
105. SOG3: E por que tu tá assim,ó ? ((imitando pose de triste))
106. SOG2: Vamo trocar. Vamo trocar.
107. C7: Eu tou esperando ela. ((apontando para a boneca de C8))
108. SOG2: Vamos brincar, gente. Vai, troca, de novo. ((falando para C3))
109. SOG1: Não, mulher!! Quando ela chegar, já não dá pra brincar mais. ((falando para a colega do outro grupo))
110. SOG1: Já passou.
111. C6: Olha, isso.
112. C6: Olha.
113. Olha, deu certinho olha. ((encaixando a mão a boneca sem cabelo com a mão da boneca cadeirante com o gesto de dar as mãos))
114. C6: Olha, a minha é cabeleireira. ((sobre a boneca cadeirante))
115. C5: Cabeleireira leira.
116. SOG4: A de vocês tem a marca da Barbie?
117. C6: Não.
118. C6: Aqui não tem a marca da Barbie. ((procurando na embalagem da boneca cadeirante))
119. C5: Não tem, amiga.
120. C6: [()
121. C7: [()
122. C5: Amigaaaaaa... ((brincando))
123. C6: [()
124. C7: [()
125. C5: tá com meeeedo... ((brincando))
126. C5 / C6 / C7 / C8: [()
127. C5: A modelo careca?!
128. [()
129. C5: Ela morreu.
130. [()
131. C6: Oxe, já vi isso.
132. SOG: Que nota vocês dão para as bonecas de vocês?
133. C5: Vai...
134. C6: a minha é curiosa.
135. SOG: O brinco é maior que a cabeça da boneca. ((para a boneca sem cabelo de C5))
136. SOG2: Ei, X. Ei, a de X é muito chacheadinho. Bonitona, né?
137. SOG3: Porque tu também não tá com a tua, X? ((para C6))
138. C6: É porque a gente tá fazendo uma passarela. A minha já passou.
139. SOG3: Deixa eu ver a tua?
140. SOG1: A passarela... só gordura e sem canela.
141. C6: Nossa.
142. [()
143. C6: Gente! Gente! Gente, o cabelo da boneca tem duas cores.
144. C5: A minha nem cabelo tem. ((rindo))
145. C5: Nossa.
146. C6: Aqui só tem essa cadeirante...
147. C5: Então, bota aquela dali ((para a boneca de C8 cega))
148. C6: Aquela dali é cega.

149. C5: [()
150. C5: Bota a boneca aqui. Bota a boneca aqui. ((pedido para C6 colocar a boneca sem cabelo na cadeira de rodas))
151. C5: Eu acho que ela tá colada.
152. C6: Ela senta. ((mostrando a boneca cadeirante))
153. C6: Ta vendo, olha. Pega na cintura.
154. [()
155. C6: Vou ajudar ela. ((brincando com a boneca cadeirante))
156. C6: Pega a tua aqui. ((pedindo a de C5))
157. C6: Ah não, a tua não vai.
158. C6: Vai ajudar ela. ((usando a boneca sem cabelo para empurrar a boneca cadeirante))
159. SOG: Oi, tudo bem? ((brincando))
160. C6: Tudo bem.
161. [()
162. C5: Ela já nasceu com o cabelo assim.
163. C6: Esse é o meu cabelo quando eu acordo. ((mexendo no cabelo da boneca cadeirante))
164. C5: ((risos))
165. C6: Esse é meu cabelo quando eu... [()
166. C6: Esse é meu cabelo quando eu molho. ((para C7 com a boneca Síndrome de Down))
167. C6: Esse é meu cabelo quando seca. ((para a boneca cadeirante))
168. C7: Por que tu não vem com o cabelo solto?
169. C6: Porque não dá tempo... porque toda vez que eu acordo tá desajeitado
170. C6: Olha...
171. C6: [()
172. C5: Mas tu sempre tá primeiro que eu.
173. C6: Ahn?
174. C5: Sempre tá aqui primeiro que eu.
175. C6: [()
176. C6: Bora ajudar a tirar as caixas?
177. C5: Tem mais fita?
178. C6: Acho que não.
179. C5: Olha, ela não tem cabelo.
180. C5: Não tenho cabelo.
181. C5: Agora ela tem um pouquinho de cabelo.
182. C6: Que cheirinho bom. ((cheirando a embalagem))
183. C6: Cheirinho de novo.
184. C5: Olha, dá pra tirar o sapato.
185. C5: Pra vender! Pra vender!
186. C5: X, bota o sapato aqui pra vender.
187. C5: E aí elas duas vão comprar.
188. C6: A minha não sai, não.
189. C5: Deixa eu ver.
190. C5: ((tocou no cabelo da boneca cadeirante))
191. C6: Não!
192. C5: Amigaaa...
193. C6: Dá pra botar o braço aqui, ó ((apontando para a boneca de C8 cega))
194. C5: X, bota o sapato aqui pra vender. ((pedindo a C8))
195. C8: O que?
196. C5: Bota o sapato aqui pra vender.
197. [()
198. C6: Enfermeira, enfermeira... ((para a criança do outro grupo))
199. C6: A minha tá passando mal aqui.
200. C5: [risos]
201. C5: Tá passando mal.
202. C5: Tá passando mal.

203. C6: Enfermeira!!!
204. C6: Cadê a enfermeira desse lugar?
205. C6: A enfermeira...
206. C5: Cadê a enfermeiraaaaa?
207. C5: Pow!
208. C6: Salvei ela.
209. C6: Agora bora trocar?
210. C5: [()
211. C6: A gente tá trocando a boneca.
212. C7: Não sai.
213. [()
214. C5: Ó, fica em pé sim!
215. C6: OHHH!!! ((impressionada))
216. C5: O pé dela ficou torto.
217. C5: [()
218. C5: Agora vou ajeitar ela, né?!
219. C6: Sabia que essa... essa...

APPENDIX F

Video_Transcript_3_Focus_Group_Brazilian Portuguese

Interview – 9 Participants

Date: May 30, 2025

Location: Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado Municipal School

Duration: 27 minutes and 35 seconds.

1. F: Pronto. Aí vamos fazer um círculo pra gente conversar agora? Sim.
2. F: Aí vocês podem colocar as caixas... as caixas mais pra lá...
3. F: Aí cada uma...
4. F: Fica com a bonequinha...
5. F: Vocês são tão fofas... meninas.
6. F: Vocês têm quantos anos, meninas?
7. C2: Eu tenho 9.
8. C3: Eu tenho 10.
9. F: Então 9 e 10, mais ou menos, né?
10. C5: Eu tenho 9!!!!
11. F: Olá!
12. F: Tudo bem?
13. F: Sim... aí eu trouxe algumas perguntinhas pra vocês, pra vocês... tá?
14. F: Só que eu não memorizei, aí eu trouxe no papelzinho.
15. F: Uhmhhh...
16. F: Tá, então a primeira pergunta que eu queria saber é se vocês já conheciam a Barbie, né?
17. F: As bonecas Barbies, antes de brincar hoje?
18. C1 / C3: Sim.
19. F: Então todas já conheciam, né?
20. C1 / C2 / C3 / C4 / C5 / C6 / C7: Sim, sim.
21. C3: Eu acho que sim.
22. F: Uhmhhh...
23. F: Mas só que essas daí, vocês disseram pra mim logo no início que elas eram um pouquinho diferentes.
24. F: E como... como foi que vocês se sentiram ao brincar com elas?
25. C3: A gente sentiu muito legal e diferente.
26. C2: É muito bonita... eu nunca ganhei uma boneca assim.
27. C1: Sim.
28. C3: Eu também não.
29. F: Nunca o quê?
30. C2: Nunca ganhei uma boneca assim antes.
31. F: Nunca ganhou?
32. C3: Pra brincar.
33. C8: Uhum
34. F: Boneca assim?
35. C2: Só boneca mais bebê.
36. F: Bebê?
37. C3: Boneca normal que não se mexe muito assim.
38. C2: É...
39. F: Ah, como assim boneca normal que não se mexe?
40. C3: Não, tem boneca, que vem normal, que não... que não é jogadora, que não tem uma profissão, sabe?
41. C2: É.
42. C1: Que é normal... que só... vem com acessórios.
43. F: Com acessórios... Vocês também? Concordam?

44. C6: Sim...
45. C1: Uhum...
46. F: Ah, de vocês...
47. F: Como é que elas são? Essas daqui?
48. C1: Essa daqui é cadeirante.
49. C1: Essa aqui é careca.
50. F: Ah... uma que é careca.
51. C3: Aquela ali ela tem deficiência no pé...
52. F: deficiência no pé...
53. C1: E aquela é cega.
54. F: E essa é cega?
55. C1: É.
56. C3: Uhum.
57. F: Como é que você sabe que ela é cega?
58. C1: Ela tem câncer.
59. C3: Por causa do óculos e do negócio que ela tá segurando.
60. F: Ah, ela tem câncer...
61. C1: Ela tem câncer.
62. F: Como é que você sabe que ela tem câncer?
63. C: Por que câncer faz o cabelo cair.
64. F: Hum... câncer faz o cabelo cair?
65. C3: Uhum.
66. F: É verdade. Realmente.
67. F: Deixa eu ver se tem mais algumas perguntinhas.
68. F: Tá.
69. F: Diante de todas, cada uma agora vai ter que me dizer, dar essa resposta.
70. F: O que vocês acharam mais diferente na boneca de vocês, que cada uma tem?
71. C3: Ela sendo jogadora.
72. F: Então, uma de cada vez, só porque eu queria conhecer todos, ok?
73. F: Vamo... vamos começar pelas que estão caladinhas. Que estão caladinhas.
74. F: O que você achou mais diferente na sua bonequinha?
75. C3: Fala, X...
76. F: Ela é igual a todas?
77. C1: Ela tem vergonha.
78. F: Tudo bem, sou tímida também, tá?
79. F: Eu tô com vergonha de vocês hoje. ((risos))
80. F: E aí, qual... qual... o quê que tem de diferente nela das outras bonecas que você já brincou na sua vida?
81. C3: Vai X, é tu.
82. C1: Vai, fala.
83. F: Alguém que gostaria de ajudar ela a falar nesse momento? Gostaria?
84. C7: É... eu achei... feio por causa da cor do cabelo dela.
85. F: Por causa da cor do cabelo?
86. C: Duas cores.
87. F: Ah, tem duas cores? Nem eu tinha prestado atenção. Muito interessante.... Ok.
88. F: E você falou outra coisa antes também, dessa aí. O que que é?
89. C7: O pé?!
90. F: Ah, tem uma prótese, né?
91. C2: Eita. Tem.
92. C7: Uhum...
93. F: No pé.
94. F: E essa roupinha dela, você acha que ela... É como?
95. C7: Eu achei bonita a roupa.
96. F: Achou bonita? Você acha que tem...

97. F: Eu vi ali fora que tinha uma fotinha de uma bonequinha que tinha uma roupa bem parecida com essa.
98. F: Com essas cores, azul e amarelo. Você sabe por quê?
99. F: É porque tem um...
100. F: Ela representa um grupo de crianças que tem síndrome de Down.
101. C3: Ah... ((surpresa)). É mesmo!!!
102. F: Quem já ouviu falar?
103. C3: ...que é diferente.
104. F: Ela... Digamos, se você tem um coleguinha que tem síndrome de Down, aí vocês precisam ajudar eles, né?
105. C3: Uhum
106. F: a... entender melhor... as matérias, porque é mais difícil pra eles.
107. C3: aham, eles acham bem mais difícil do que a gente.
108. F: É.
109. : E... e... e você? ((para C6)) Qual foi a sua boneca... a sua boneca é bem interessante, né?
110. C6: A minha é cadeirante.
111. F: A sua é cadeirante... Ela é...
112. F: O quê que mais ela tem de diferente? ((perguntando para a C6 que está com a boneca cadeirante))
113. C6: O pé dela mexe.
114. F: Olha que legal, o joelho dela mexe.
115. C6: E o cabelo também é diferente.
116. F: O cabelo é diferente.
117. F: Vocês veem muitas bonecas dessa forma?
118. C1 / C2 / C5: Não.
119. F: Assim?
120. C3: Eu não tenho nenhuma.
121. F: Nenhuma assim?
122. C1: Eu tenho uma bailarina.
123. F: Tem uma bailarina, né?
124. F: Eu vou chegar em você, prometo.
125. F: E você, qual foi a sua diferença da sua boneca? ((para C5))
126. C: Que ela tem câncer.
127. F: Ela tem câncer.... Vocês conhecem alguém que tem câncer?
128. C1 / C2 / C5: Não.
129. F: E como é que você sabe que o câncer perto do cabelo?
130. C3: Eu vi uma mulher hoje quando eu tava indo pra escola que ela era do careca. Ela deve ter câncer.
131. F: Foi?
132. C3: Uhum
133. F: Hoje vindo pra cá?
134. C3: Sim.
135. F: Capaz mesmo.
136. F: E a sua? ((para C1))
137. F: Qual a diferença dela?
138. C: Ela brilha.
139. F: Ela brilha? ((risos)) Mas ela...
140. F: Ela é uma bailarina essa aí?
141. C1: É, bailarina.
142. F: Você disse pra mim que ela é diferente de outras...
143. F: ... alguma coisa no corpo.
144. C2: É, mexe aí ela.
145. F: Ela mexe.
146. C2: A mão também.
147. F: Então pra fazer escala, dá?

148. C1: Dá.
 149. F: O auge. Arrasou. Eu queria ter uma boneca bailarina.
 150. F: A sua outra boneca bailarina, ela faz isso? ((para C1))
 151. C1: Faz.
 152. F: Faz também? Mas ela dobra os joelhos, o cotovelo.
 153. C1: Dobra.
 154. C1: Mas só que ela não brilha e não tem essa saia aqui... ela não tem.
 155. F: Okay.
 156. C1: Ela tem um vestido.
 157. F: É diferente a roupa, né?
 158. F: E a sua? ((para C2))
 159. F: Qual a diferença da sua?
 160. C2: Porque ela luta.
 161. F: Ela luta?
 162. C2: Box.
 163. F: Você geralmente vê bonecas que lutam?
 164. C2: Não.
 165. F: Não?
 166. F: Como é a maioria das bonecas?
 167. F: Como é a maioria das bonecas que você vê?
 168. C2: Olha, normal... é que...
 169. C2: ... boneca.
 170. C2: Boneca Barbie, só que é bem diferente.
 171. C2: Eu tenho sereias, só que eu não gosto de brincar com ela porque ela não se mexe, ela só brilha mesmo.
 172. F: Essa aí se mexe?
 173. C2: Se mexe.
 174. F: Eita! Ela mexe o joelho também.
 175. C2: Ela já pode brincar assim, ó.
 176. F: E a sua? Qual a diferença da sua? ((para C3))
 177. C3: A minha é jogadora de futebol, que eu...
 178. F: Oh!
 179. C2: vai.. vai.. vai..
 180. F: ((risos))
 181. F: E esse sapato dela, como é que é, hein?
 182. C3: O sapato é pra ela não cair.
 183. C4: uma chuteira.
 184. C2: Uma meia é uma chuteira.
 185. C3: Uhum.
 186. F: Uma chuteira...
 187. C3: E o cabelo dela vem uma liguinha...
 188. C3: Pra não soltar na hora que ela tiver jogando a bola.
 189. F: Você já tinha visto boneca de chuteira?
 190. C1 / C2 / C3: Não.
 191. C2: nunca tinha visto.
 192. C3: nunca vi boneca jogadora.
 193. F: Nunca viu boneca jogadora?
 194. C3: Não.
 195. F: Arrasou.
 196. C3: É bonita, não é?
 197. F: Ela mexe também, essa aí?
 198. C3: Não, só assim, ó...
 199. F: Ah, ela não tem articulação, né?
 200. C3: Não, não tem.
 201. C: Nem no pé. Só na cabeça.

202. F: É verdade.
203. C1: A minha também.
204. F: E a sua, X? ((para C4)) Qual a diferença da sua?
205. C4: Ela é médica.
206. F: Ela é médica... O que mais?
207. C4: O cabelo dela tem duas cores também, que é meio claro e escuro.
208. F: Que legal. E... Ok!! Essa é a diferença, então?... que você mais notou assim, legal?
209. C4: Sim.
210. F: Muito bem, então eu tenho mais perguntas pra vocês, tá?
211. C1: Tá.
212. F: Ah, ok. Todo mundo vai ter que responder essa aqui, tá?
213. C1: Tá.
214. F: As bonecas que vocês têm, de alguma forma, elas se parecem com vocês ou com alguém que vocês conhecem?
215. C3: Não, não tenho nenhuma boneca dessas que... é caro quando você comprar, mais de R\$ 40,00 reais.
216. F: É...
217. F: Não, mas tipo, o estilo, o estilo, né?
218. C2: Uhum.
219. C3: Parece um pouquinho.
220. C2: Comigo parece, porque eu gosto de lutar em casa.
221. F: Você gosta de lutar em casa?
222. C2: Gosto de lutar e jogar futebol.
223. F: E vocês, meninas, aqui, essas daqui em especial, elas parecem com alguém que vocês conhecem? ((para C5, C6, C7 e C8))
224. C7 / C8: Sim.
225. C5: Aquela o cabelo parece com o da minha mãe ((para a boneca Síndrome de Down que está com C7))
226. C7: Ela dá mexa no cabelo?
227. C5: Uhum.
228. F: E essa aqui, parece com alguém que você conhece? A que é cega? ((apontando para a boneca cega que está com C8))
229. C8: Sim.
230. F: Você conhece uma pessoa que é cega?
231. C8: Sim.
232. F: E cadeirante?
233. C2: Eu conheço.
234. C6: Eu já me lembro de pessoa de cadeirante.
235. F: Muito bom. E você já falou também da que não tem cabelo, né? ((para C5))
236. F: Que lembra uma pessoa que viu hoje ou foi a coleguinha que falou?
237. F: Foi a coleguinha que falou. ((para C3))
238. C3: Que eu tava indo na escola mulher.
239. F: Muito bem, ok.
240. F: Deixa eu ver outra pergunta.
241. F: Ok, então agora pensando nessas Barbies que vocês estão brincando e as Barbies que vocês já tinham visto anteriormente.
242. F: Se vocês pudessem mudar alguma coisa naquelas Barbies, né? O que vocês mudariam?
243. C3: Eu mudaria a roupa e o estilo dela.
244. C1: Eu também.
245. F: O que seria o estilo?
246. C3: O estilo é o jeito de usar a roupa. Diferentes cores, entendeu? Modelo.
247. C3: Pode ser curto ou longo. Entendeu?
248. C3: Porque todas usam vestido.
249. F: Ah, interessante.
250. C2: Eu mudaria o short.

251. F: Você colocaria um short?
 252. C2: Outro short.
 253. F: Outro short...
 254. F: O que mais? Só a roupa?
 255. C1: Tem que colocar brilho.
 256. C2: O acessório.
 257. F: Brilho...
 258. F: O acessório?
 259. C1: Sim. Que acessório?
 260. C1: Um brinco e um colar.
 261. F: Ah. Ok.
 262. C3: E tu, x? Tu mudaria o que na tua boneca?
 263. C5: Colocaria um colar...
 264. C1: Um cabelo... ((risos))
 265. C5: um sapato, um cabelo.
 266. F: Colocaria um cabelo nela?
 267. C1: Um cabelo falso.
 268. F: Um cabelo falso? O que é um cabelo falso?
 269. C2: Uma peruca.
 270. C1: Uma peruca.
 271. F: Ah... Vocês conhecem alguém que usa peruca?
 272. C8: Sim.
 273. C3: Não, eu só vi pelo vídeo.
 274. C2: Eu também.
 275. C1: Menina que faz sobrancelha... que pinta a sobrancelha.
 276. C3: Ela é branquinha.
 277. C1: Tem duas meninas que é branca... elas fizeram um vídeo...
 278. C3: Fazendo maquiagem.
 279. C1: Elas são bonitonas.
 280. F: Legal. Eu gosto de ver também.
 281. F: Deixa eu ver outra perguntinha.
 282. F: Ah.... ok! As Barbies de vocês, ela tem alguma coisa especial nelas? Bem diferente, assim, algo bem especial.
 283. F: Que vocês nunca tinham visto em outras Barbies.
 284. C3: Sim, eu acho.
 285. C1 / C2 / C8: Sim.
 286. F: Sim? O que?
 287. C8: É...
 288. C8: O cabelo dela.
 289. F: O cabelo!!! Por que o cabelo dela?
 290. C8: Porque a cor do cabelo dela é... diferente da minha outra Barbie.
 291. F: Como é essa outra Barbie?
 292. C8: Ela é... Ela tem o cabelo liso, dessa cor... ((apontando para a Barbie com cabelo loiro de C7))
 293. F: Que cor é essa?
 294. C8: Loiro.
 295. C8: Ela é loiro escuro.
 296. F: Hum... a outra, a sua Barbie é loira, né?
 297. C8: É.
 298. F: E qual a cor dessa aí que você me falou?
 299. [()
 300. F: Que cor é essa, mais ou menos?
 301. C8: Essa cor é...
 302. C7: Marrom claro.
 303. F: Marrom claro, ok.

304. F: Tem mais alguma outra Barbie que difere da cor do cabelo? E é diferente assim?
305. C3: Loira
306. C2: Sim.
307. C2: Loira.
308. C2: Tem uma Barbie loira.
309. F: Ela disse que a “original” dela... era loira. E essas outras, hein? ((apontando pra C8))
310. F: Essas outras aí, como é que são?
311. C3: A que eu achei mais “da hora” foi...
312. C3: ... aquela ali, ó. Cadeirante.
313. C3: ... por causa que o cabelo dela é muito diferente.
314. C2: É muito bonito.
315. F: Como é o cabelo dela?
316. C3: Crespo.
317. C2: Crespo.
318. C3: E grande.
319. F: Vocês acham que ela apresenta a muitas pessoas...
320. C3: Sim.
321. F: ...aqui no Valentina, na escola?
322. C3: E no Quilombo também.
323. F: No Quilombo?
324. F: Você falou em Quilombo. O que é o Quilombo?
325. C3: Quilombo é um lugar onde tem várias pessoas, quilombolas... que fazem brincadeiras, capoeira, essas coisas...
326. F: E como são as pessoas que você falou que parecem com aquela boneca?
327. C1: Eu moro lá.
328. F: Mora lá?
329. C1: É.
330. F: Que legal.
331. C1: Tem um Quilombo aqui perto da escola, é ir reto, ali na curva. Aí você encontra um Quilombo lá.
332. Quilombo de Paratibe, eu acho.
333. C1: É, tem um quatro zero zero.
334. C1: Um quatro zero zero.
335. F: Aí lá tem muitas pessoas com cabelo crespo?
336. C1: Tem.
337. F: Tem? Também? Que legal.
338. F: Então essa escola aqui é quilombola, né?
339. C1 / C3: É.
340. C1: É. Quilombola.
341. F: Top!
342. C3: Também... também tem a escola lá embaixo. Sabe? É lá também quilombola.
343. C3: Lá embaixo é a mesma, só que um pouco diferente. Aquela é pequena...
344. C3: Aqui é maior. Aquela é pra crianças, essa aqui é mais pra adolescentes.
345. F: Legal. Vocês são adolescentes.
346. C3: Quase.
347. C1: Eu estudava lá. Mas só que eu vim pra cá.
348. C3: Eu também.
349. F: E foi pra cá, foi agora?
350. C3: Uhum Sim.
351. F: Eu quero que vocês falem mais comigo também. As três aqui, quatro.
352. F: Deixa eu ver... tá terminando, eu prometo, tá?
353. F: Ah tá, lembra que X falou que ela queria saber da história que vocês estavam brincando?
354. C1: Sim. ((feliz))
355. F: Qual foi a brincadeira que vocês estavam criando?
356. C3: A gente tava...

357. C3: Essa boneca tava cuidando da gente vendo o coração batendo.
 358. F: Qual boneca?
 359. C3: Ela. ((apontando para a boneca de C4)) Que ela é médica.
 360. F: Ah, tava vendo o coração batendo.
 361. C3: E a gente tava jogando bola uma com a outra.
 362. C3: Ela ((apontando para a boneca de C2)) estava lutando e eu só tava aprendendo a dançar.
 363. F: Ah, que legal!
 364. C3: É, uma se conheceu... outra ficaram brincando com a outra... a outra aprendeu a lutar e elas viraram amigas.
 365. F: Que legal! E elas são bem diferentes entre si, viraram amigas, né?
 366. C1: Sim, e aquela é a minha mãe. ((apontando para a boneca de C4, Barbie médica))
 367. F: A sua mãe?
 368. C3: Elas são igualzinhas agora.
 369. F: Por que que elas viram iguais?
 370. C3: Por causa da cor... da pelagem.
 371. F: Ahhh...! ((surpresa))
 372. F: Da pelagem?
 373. C3: Uhum.
 374. F: São da mesma família, provavelmente, né?
 375. C3: Sim, e o cabelo também.
 376. F: Legal.
 377. F: E vocês aqui, o grupinho...
 378. F: Qual foi a história que vocês criaram?
 379. C8: A gente estava brincando...
 380. C8: A gente estava brincando de vender sapato.
 381. F: Vender sapato?
 382. C8: Sim.
 383. F: Por que vender sapato?
 384. C6: Ela que começou. ((apontando para C5))
 385. F: Por que você... começou com essa brincadeira?
 386. C5: Porque a gente ia ter que... ia mudar os sapatos da gente e não entra.
 387. F: Ah...
 388. F: Porque são diferentes, né?
 389. F: E o sapato daquela? ((apontando para a boneca com síndrome de Down que está com C7))
 390. C3: Ela é diferente também, o sapato dela. Ela é bem mais bonita.
 391. F: E vocês já trocaram o sapato dela também?
 392. C7: Não.
 393. F: Não?
 394. C3: Eu não trocaria ela não, porque ela combina com a da boneca.
 395. F: É, é verdade.
 396. F: Eu sei que vocês queriam levar elas pra casa também. ((risos))
 397. F: Tá, deixa eu ver outra perguntinha.
 398. F: Sim... vocês já falaram isso aqui, né?
 399. F: Mas eu queria perguntar se as Barbies que vocês estão aqui hoje, se elas representam as pessoas da comunidade de vocês, daqui do bairro?
 400. C3: Não.
 401. C2: Não, a minha não.
 402. C3: Só o futebol feminino.
 403. F: Hum... Okay.
 404. F: Então vocês acham que não representam?
 405. C2: Não.
 406. F: Não?
 407. F: Não tem pessoas cegas na comunidade de vocês?
 408. C3: Tem. Tem... algumas pessoas.
 409. F: Então não representam?

410. C3: Representam. Todas.
 411. F: Todas representam?
 412. C3: Uhum. Todas.
 413. F: Tem Barbie médica lá na... Tem Barbie, não... Tem pessoas... é... médicas?
 414. C3: Sim.
 415. C2: Tem.
 416. C1: A minha tia. Ela é médica.
 417. F: Ela é médica?
 418. F: Ela é negra? Ou ela é loira?
 419. C2 / C3: Negra.
 420. F: Negra? Ah, que legal.
 421. C3: Da cor mais escura.
 422. F: Ok.
 423. C3: Diferente das outras.
 424. F: Muito bom.
 425. F: E... tem pessoas cadeirantes?
 426. C3: Tem. Ali.
 427. C2: Tem.
 428. F: Na comunidade de vocês?
 429. C2: Tem. Meu tio.
 430. F: Ah, legal...
 431. C2: Ele não queria usar esses negócios, porque... desde pequenininho. Aí ele.... ficou cadeirante.
 432. C3: Um amigo da minha mãe tá precisando da cadeira.
 433. F: Vai?
 434. F: Olha aí, já tá representando, ó.
 435. C3: Por causa que o pé dele quebrou.
 436. F: Foi?
 437. F: E tem Barbie... oh... Barbie não... tem pessoas sem cabelo lá? Com câncer, talvez?
 438. C3: Tem. Bastante.
 439. C3: Tem várias pessoas que estão morrendo por causa disso.
 440. F: É, verdade.
 441. C3: Isso tá acontecendo muito.
 442. F: Mas vocês acham que essa boneca aí é porque ela tem câncer também ou é porque ela optou a não ter cabelo? Tem pessoas que não... que raspam o cabelo...
 443. C3: Eu achoque ela tá feliz.
 444. F: E ela tá feliz, né?
 445. C3: É... Eu acho que ela não liga.
 446. C2: Ela não liga, só quer ser bonita mesmo.
 447. F: Hum...Então pode ser bonita sem cabelo também, né?
 448. C1/C2/C3/C4/C8: É.
 449. C1: Pode.
 450. C2: Nada muda.
 451. F: As pessoas que têm câncer podem ser bonitas sem cabelo, né?
 452. C1: Pode.
 453. C3: Sim, pode.
 454. C2: Eu acho muito linda, é... as meninas que é... bonita sem cabelo.
 455. C3: Mas tem algumas pessoas... que superaram o câncer, aí acham bonito ficar sem cabelo.
 456. F: Ah, que legal.
 457. Aí fica cortando o cabelo mesmo.
 458. F: Fiquei arrepiada.
 459. F / C2: ((risos))
 460. F: Isso é legal. Muito bem, gente.
 461. F: Hum... Okay!
 462. F: Tem algumas Barbies de vocês... essas daqui que são mais com profissões, né?

463. C3: Uhum.
464. F: Vocês são meninas, né, todas?
465. C1 / C2 / C3: Sim.
466. F: Vocês acham que vocês podem ser quem vocês quiserem...
467. C2: Sim.
468. F: quando crescerem?
469. C1 / C2 / C3 / C4 / C5 / C6 / C7 / C8: Sim.
470. F: Ou vocês, pelo fato de serem meninas, não podem?
471. C3: A gente pode, sim.
472. F: Pode?
473. C2: Mas quando eu crescer, eu vou ser médica.
474. C1: Mas eu sou ser veterinária.
475. C3: Eu vou ser... eu vou fazer medicina veterinária também.
476. F: Também?
477. C3: Uhum... Também.
478. E vocês?
479. [()
480. C8: Eu também quero veterinária.
481. F: Também? ((para C6))
482. F: Também quer ser veterinária?
483. F: Por que vocês todas, a maioria...
484. C3: A gente...
485. C2: Eu tenho cachorro...
486. C3: gosta de ajudar os animais.
487. C1: Eu tenho três cachorros...
488. C2: que foi achado na rua...
489. C7: Tipo, eu sei encontrar um cachorrinho na rua... a gente pode ajudar.
490. F: Vocês querem cuidar, né?
491. C2: Eu também.
492. C2: Eu tenho um pastor alemão.
493. C1: Sim. Porque... várias pessoas botam na rua eles. E não ajudam.
494. C2: Eu tenho um cachorro [()].
495. F: Então vocês gostam muito de animais, né?
496. C3: Sim.
497. C2: Uhum.
498. C2: [()].
499. F: É porque essa aqui não tem, mas tem umas bonequinhas que são cegas que elas são acompanhadas por cachorro também, né?
500. C3: É. Por cachorros que é...
501. C1: Cão-guia.
502. C1: Cão-guia, é verdade. Muito bom. Ok.
503. F: Hum...
504. F: E vocês conhecem mulheres adultas que fazem esse tipo de profissões aqui?
505. C2 / C3: Sim.
506. C3: Bastante.
507. F: Bastante?
508. C3: Sim.
509. F: Que são médicas, né? Que vocês falaram?
510. C3: Sim.
511. F: Humm...
512. F: Que são lutadoras? Conhecem?
513. C2: Sim.
514. F: Eita! ((surpresa))
515. F: E é?
516. F: No quilombo, é?

517. C3: No quilombo acho que não tem, não.
 518. F: Mas vocês conhecem tipo na TV, talvez?
 519. C3: Sim. Bastante.
 520. F: Muitas?
 521. C1: No celular também.
 522. C3: Na televisão...
 523. F: No celular, na televisão?!
 524. F: Legal, muito bom.
 525. F: Humm...
 526. F: Tá, agora essa pergunta é específica, tá, pra vocês?
 527. F: Se vocês pudessem CRIAR uma Barbie, criar, tá?
 528. F: Vocês vão criar sua Barbie agora na imaginação.
 529. F: Como é que seria sua Barbie?
 530. F: Não precisa ficar com vergonha, vamos compartilhar os sentimentos.
 531. F: Quer que eu comece a minha? Então?
 532. F: Eu vou começar a minha e depois eu passo pra todo mundo, tá?
 533. C2: Tá.
 534. F: Eu acho que a minha seria baixinha, porque eu sou baixinha.
 535. C1 / C2 / F: ((risos))
 536. F: Ela usaria botas de rock.
 537. F: E teria roupa preta com rosa e teria uma guitarra.
 538. F: E teria um cabelo castanho e óculos.
 539. F: Porque eu não enxergo sem óculos.
 540. C3: A minha, ela tem o cabelo preso e é o do lado, grande.
 541. C3: Ela usaria tipo uma chinelinha rasteirinha branca.
 542. C3: Ela usaria uma blusa azul e uma saia preta.
 543. C3: E usaria um óculos também, pulseiras e óculos de relógio.
 544. F: Ai, muito bom!
 545. C7: A minha seria uma a Jennie.
 546. F: Tá, então uma foi ok.
 547. F: E a sua seria como?
 548. Ela seria a Jennie do Blackpink.
 549. F: A gênio?
 550. C7: Jennie.
 551. F: Jennie?
 552. C7: Sim.
 553. C1: Blackpink.
 554. F: Eu não conheço. Como ela é fisicamente?
 555. C7: Tipo, a roupa dela tem preta e rosa, que comparado com a Blackpink.
 556. F: Ahhh...
 557. C7: O cabelo dela é grande, é preto.
 558. C7: E ela usa vários acessórios... todo [().
 559. F: E qual é a cor da pele dela?
 560. C7: Branca. Ela é coreana.
 561. F: Ela é coreana?
 562. C1: Tia... oh tia, olha o que ela faz! ((apontando para a boneca de C3 para F ver))
 563. F: Ela faz escala também!
 564. C1: Tenta fazer a escala também, tenta! ((mandando C2 fazer com a boneca dela, que é boxeadora))
 565. C6: Olha! A minha [() roda!
 566. C4: [()
 567. F: Essa médica não faz, né?
 568. C1: Olha, ela também, ela faz a escala! ((apontando para a boneca de C5))
 569. F: É tudo... a maioria... elas todas fazem. Elas são atletas.
 570. F: Eita!!! Ela foi curada. Ela ficou em pé, olha.

571. C3: ((risos))
 572. F: Sim... E a sua? ((para C8)) Como seria a sua Barbie?
 573. C7: [().
 574. F: E a dela? Que ela quer falar agora. ((para C7))
 575. F: Olha a Barbie da amiguinha de vocês. ((para todas))
 576. C8: A cor da blusa dela seria roxa.
 577. C8: Ela vai usar como uma saia.
 578. C8: Se ela... Fosse rosa escura, ela teria um sapato da cor roxa.
 579. F: Roxa?
 580. F: Vocês gostam de rosa, né?
 581. F: E a sua, como é que seria? ((para C6))
 582. F: Vamos no círculo, assim. ((apontando a ordem de fala))
 583. F: Como é que seria a sua?
 584. C6: A minha teria uma blusa, uma saia... E um sapato... e um cabelo liso. Castanho.
 585. F: Um cabelo como?
 586. C6: Castanho?
 587. F: E seria...
 588. F: Terminando já. Rapidinho. ((para a mulher que apareceu na sala para levar as crianças de volta à aula))
 589. F: Acho que dois minutos, pode ser?
 590. F: Tá.
 591. F: Você repete de novo, só pra eu ouvir?
 592. C6: A minha teria uma blusa, uma saia...
 593. C6: Um sapato.
 594. C6: E um cabelo castanho.
 595. F: E como seria o formato do cabelo dela?
 596. C6: Liso.
 597. F: Ah, ok. Certo.
 598. F: Por que não igual a esse?
 599. C3: O seu cabelo também é crespo.
 600. F: É tão bonito! E estiloso.
 601. F: E cheio de... ela tem... ela tem...
 602. C3: Brincos.
 603. F: Brincos, né?
 604. C6: Ela é dourada.
 605. F: Ah, é parecido, realmente.
 606. C1: Só que o dela é amarelo, essa aqui é dourado. (comparando a boneca careca de C5 com a boneca com síndrome de Down de C7))
 607. F: Que legal.
 608. F: E a sua, como é que seria? ((para C5))
 609. F: A sua boneca se iria criar?
 610. C5: Ela teria o cabelo castanho. teria um vestido vermelho.
 611. F: Vermelho?!
 612. C5: Um sapato... branco... E seria a Branca.
 613. F: Ah, ok. Certo.
 614. F: E a sua como é que seria? ((para C1))
 615. C1: A minha seria uma boneca [(). Ela era bailarina. Igual a essa.
 616. F: Bailarina também?
 617. C1: Uhum.
 618. F: Ok.
 619. F: E a sua, como é que seria? ((para C2))
 620. C2: Seria a mesma coisa dela. ((sobre a boneca boxeadora))
 621. F: Igualzinha... porque você gostou dela lutadora?
 622. C2: ((concordando com a cabeça e sorrindo))
 623. F: Você gosta de lutar...!! Já vi.

624. F: A gente vai vacinar um ‘fight’ depois. ((gesticulando luta))
 625. F / C1 / C2: ((risos))
 626. F: Aí, você me derruba no chão.
 627. C1 / C2 / C3 / C8: ((risos))
 628. F: Fala a sua de novo só porque eu esqueci.
 629. C3: Tá bom.
 630. F: Qual seria a sua?
 631. C3: Eu queria a minha de cabelo grande, castanho...
 632. C3: Ela usaria óculos, pulseira, relógio...
 633. C3: Ela usaria uma rasteirinha, mas que branca.
 634. C3: Ela estaria usando uma blusinha roxa com uma saia preta.
 635. C3: E ela usaria uns anéis.
 636. F: Ok, uns anéis. Chique.
 637. F: E a sua, como é que seria? ((para C4))
 638. F: Sua boneca é...
 639. C4: Do mesmo jeito.
 640. F: Do mesmo jeito que essa?!
 641. F: Você achou ela maravilhosa?
 642. C4: ((balançando a cabeça em afirmação))
 643. F: Como é que ela é, então?
 644. C4: Ela tem cabelo marrom, liso e longo.
 645. C4: Ela usa um casaco... amarelo, branco.
 646. C4: Um vestido rosa... um vestido florido. Ela é morena.
 647. F: Ah, ela é morena ou ela é negra, hein?
 648. C3: Negra. Morena é tipo da X.
 649. F: Ah, olha que maravilhosa ela é, né?
 650. F: Porque é muito difícil ver uma Barbie negra.
 651. F: Mas a médica que... o meu pai teve um infarto, sabia? Uma vez.
 652. F: E a médica dele era negra. Ela foi maravilhosa. Ela que ajudou... ele na cirurgia.
 653. F: Muito bom, meninas.
 654. F: Só pra terminar que a tia Jana vem buscar vocês. Num instante passou a hora, não foi?
 655. C3: Ela trouxe outras meninas aí.
 656. F: Foi?
 657. C2 / C3: Foi.
 658. C2: [().
 659. F: Ah, então só uma pergunta, tá?
 660. Vocês gostariam de brincar com essas barbas novamente?...
 661. C3: Sim.
 662. F: E o que vocês gostariam que tivessem na brincadeira?...
 663. F: Tipo, outras coisas para ser ainda mais divertida.
 664. C3: Tipo...
 665. C2: Eu queria ter um ringue de boxe.
 666. C2: [() pra lutar.
 667. F: Ah, você queria um ringue de boxe?
 668. C2: É.
 669. C3: Eu queria que tivesse um campo.
 670. F: Um campo de futebol também.
 671. C1: Eu queria o negócio de bailarinas.
 672. F: O negócio de bailarinas.
 673. F: Um corrimão, né? Pra segurar...
 674. F: Ah, realmente, né, também?
 675. F: Vocês queriam o lugar delas, né, da profissão.
 676. C1 / C8: Sim.
 677. F: E você, e você? ((para C4))
 678. C4: Hospital.

679. F: Hospital...
680. F: E você? ((para C5))
681. C5: Uma passarela que é pra ela ser modelo.
682. F: Olha que legal, um modelo careca, né?
683. C3: Uhum.
684. C3: Eu já vi o desfile da Victoria's Secret. ((risos))
685. F: Maravilhosa.
686. F: E a sua? ((para C6))
687. C6: [().
688. F: A sua também... uma passarela? Pra desfilar cadeirante. Okay.
689. F: E o que é aquilo ali, laranja?
690. F: Ela tem uma rampa...
691. F: Aqui na escola tem rampa?
692. C2 / C3 / C5: Tem.
693. F: Tem?
694. F: Então é acessível, né? Muito bonita.
695. F: E a sua, o que você queria que tivesse? ((para C7))
696. C7: Uma passarela.
697. F: Uma passarela pra desfilar?
698. C7: Uhum.
699. F: Ah, que legal. Então uma mulher com síndrome de Down, ela pode des... desfilar também, né? Muito bom.
700. F: E a sua, o que você queria? ((para C8))
701. Pra ajudar ela assim, talvez?
702. C8: Uma passarela.
703. F: Uma passarela?
704. F: Então, mesmo sendo cega, ela pode desfilar?
705. C8: Sim.
706. F: Sim?
707. F: Ok.
708. F: Faltou alguma coisa pra ajudar ela a andar?
709. C8: Não.
710. F: Não?
711. F: Então ela consegue andar sozinha mesmo cega, né?
712. C8: Sim.
713. F: Muito bom, meninas.
714. F: Que pena que a gente vai ter que terminar agora porque a tia de vocês está vindo, né?