

## WRITTEN NARRATIVE PRACTICES: SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY INTERVENTION

### *Práticas de narrativas escritas: atuação fonoaudiológica*

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#### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** to analyze the effectiveness of a Written Narratives Promotion Program in a group of third grade students from public Elementary School. **Method:** twenty-one third grade students (14 girls and seven boys), with ages between eight years and seven months and ten years, had their free writing production based on a proposed theme evaluated before and after Written Narratives Promotion Program. The written productions were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed using the Communicative Competence criteria (Generic, Encyclopedic and Linguistic), and the subjects' performances were classified as Bad, Regular, Good and Excellent, according to their scores. Data were classified and compared between the program's initial and final moments, and were statistically analyzed. **Results:** a statistically significant increase was observed in the number of subjects that obtained an excellent classification, in the final evaluation. When data were paired: Bad/Regular and Excellent/Good, there was also a statistic significance between initial and final moments, since that the number of subjects within the group Bad/Regular decreased while the number of subjects classified as Excellent/Good increased significantly. **Conclusions:** the proposed program was effective, since that the students were highly motivated and produced better and elaborated written narratives regarding the Communicative Skills.

**KEYWORDS:** Writing; Public Health; Teaching; Competency-Based Education; Educational Measurement

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Conflicts of interest: inexistent

#### ■ INTRODUCTION

The aim of speech-language pathology practice in schools is to implement health promotion initiatives<sup>1,2</sup> in order to facilitate reading and writing acquisition and stimulation of linguistic and auditory abilities. The Speech-Language Pathologist's (SLP) role is to create favorable conditions to allow the capabilities of each child to be fully explored<sup>3</sup>.

From 1984 on, different practice profiles for SLPs based in schools were traced<sup>4,5</sup>. However, current trends suggest that the professional must be connected to the dynamics of social transformation, politically committed to health and equity, as well as determines the publication of the Regional Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Council (CRFa 2<sup>nd</sup> region)<sup>6</sup>, according to which SLPs can practice within regular school as long as no therapeutic intervention is carried out, and a health promotion perspective is taken.

A few studies have pointed out the efficacy of speech-language pathology programs in schools<sup>7,8</sup>,

evidencing the evolution of phonological awareness and literacy in Elementary School children, emphasizing the importance of the partnership established between SLPs and teachers, school employees and students' families. In these studies, speech-language pathology practice consisted of screenings and, in a second moment, recreational activities approaching literacy, phonological awareness and oral narrative abilities, considered crucial factors for the development of reading and writing abilities.

Regarding oral narratives, it is known that the improvement of oral linguistic abilities through storytelling also constitutes an important factor of acquisition and domain of written language<sup>9</sup>.

The use of story books provides the reader with the presence of an immediate context, as well as introduces comprehension and critic abilities<sup>10</sup>. Some authors suggest that this occurs indirectly, due to the evolution of phonological awareness abilities resulting from the development of oral linguistic abilities, emphasizing the importance of oral language for literacy development<sup>11,12</sup>.

It is known that writing efficiently is a long process that requires formal instruction<sup>13</sup>, and narratives composition involves adequate coordination of different cognitive and communication abilities<sup>14</sup>. It's in this intersection of complex abilities that the practice of school-based SLPs is highlighted, for it has the purpose to provide the school with specific knowledge, favoring the dialog between SLPs and teachers<sup>15</sup>. It is worth noting that the practice of SLPs within school context has health promotion purposes, with the aim to emphasize the facilitation of reading and writing acquisition, and its relationship with oral language.

Based on these premises, Romano-Soares developed a study comparing written productions from third grade Elementary School students that were submitted to two different procedures. The

study showed more evolution on the subjects that had their written narratives productions stimulated with the help of multiple language resources<sup>16</sup>.

Hence, the present study had the aim to verify the effectiveness of a Written Narratives Promotion Program in third grade students from a public Elementary School.

## METHOD

This study was an action research carried out within the School Program of the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Course of the School of Medicine of the University of São Paulo (FMUSP).

The third grade group that had the worse performance on the final screening of the School Program was selected to be submitted to the Written Narratives Promotion Program. All 35 students from the participated. Data analysis considered the following inclusion criteria: signing of the Free Informed Consent; participation in initial and final evaluation; presence in at least 50% of the sessions of the program; and be enrolled in the third grade of that school since the beginning of the school year. Based on these criteria, 14 students were eliminated from the sample, totaling 21 participants, 14 female and seven male, with ages between 8 years and 7 months and 10 years.

The Written Narratives Promotion Program was carried out in a state school located at the West Zone of the city of São Paulo. The students used bond paper and number 2 black pencils for initial and final written productions evaluations. During the Written Narratives Promotion Program, the materials used were: children's story books, described in Table 1; transparencies of the children's books; an overhead projector; and bond paper for their written productions.

**Table 1 – Books used in the Written Narratives Promotion Program**

Week	Book	Author	Editor	Year
1st	Não me chame de gorducha	Bárbara Phillips	Ática	1980
2nd	O pequeno planeta perdido	Ziraldo	Melhoramentos	1986
3rd	Rita não grita	Flávia Muniz	Melhoramentos	1995
4th	A operação do Tio Onofre	Tatiana Belinky	Ática	1994
5th	Franguinho Sebastião	Ricardo Soares	Moderna	1992
6th	As confusões de Aninha	Stella Carr	Moderna	1985

In the first session, the students met the researchers and the study was explained. After that,

they received bond paper for the initial evaluation of their written production.

The initial assessment had the aim to characterize the subjects' written productions, and eliminate from the study those who were not at the alphabetical writing level. However, these children were not eliminated from the Written Narratives Promotion Program.

The theme for the written production in the initial assessment was the same used in the reduplicate study<sup>16</sup>: "Imagine you're walking in the desert. Suddenly, you see a witch. Now you're going to write on this paper a story about what happened next. Use the paper in the orientation you wish and write what you find necessary. You don't need to use a rubber or to draw lines".

Weekly 50-minute workshops were carried out from the second to the sixth sessions. The stories told during these workshops were projected on a screen and one of the researchers read it aloud, using varied prosodic resources to attract the students' attention for the relevant aspects of each story. After that, the researchers conducted a discussion with the group, regarding the theme of the book read on each session. In the sequence, the students were asked to write another story about the theme discussed.

The final assessment was carried out after the last session of the Written Narratives Promotion Program, and also used the theme developed in the reduplicate study<sup>16</sup>: "Imagine you're lost in the jungle. Suddenly, you see a flying saucer. Now you're going to write on this paper a story about what happened next. Use the paper in the orientation you wish and write what you find necessary. You don't need to use a rubber or to draw lines".

Written productions from initial and final assessments were quantitative and qualitatively analyzed. Quantitative analysis of initial and final assessments used the same score criterion from the reduplicate study<sup>16</sup>, evaluating the written production's Communicative Competencies: Generic, Linguistic and Encyclopedic<sup>17</sup>.

The present study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Speech-Language Pathologist of the Physiotherapy, Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences and Occupational Therapy Department of the School of Medicine of the University of São Paulo, FMUSP, under the number 33/2008, and was a partial reduplicate from a previous study.

Statistical analysis used non-parametric tests and techniques: Wilcoxon and Equality of Two Proportions. The study adopted 0.05 (5%) of significance level, and 95% of confidence interval.

## RESULTS

According to the selection criteria of the participants previously described, 21 students participated on this study.

Table 2 presents a comparison of the subjects' classifications regarding their performances on initial and final written production evaluations. It can be observed that there was a migration of studies regarding the various classifications, that is, the number of students within the classification Bad decreased, and there was a significant increase in the number of students within the classification Great.

**Table 2 – Distribution of the students' classification regarding initial and final assessments**

Classification	Initial assessment		Final assessment		p-value
	N	%	N	%	
Bad	5	23.8%	1	4.8%	0.078#
Regular	9	42.9%	5	23.8%	0.190
Good	5	23.8%	6	28.6%	0.726
Great	2	9.5%	9	42.9%	0.014*

# Value tending towards significance

\* Statistically significant value

Equality of Two Proportions Test

p-value = 0.05 (5%)

Table 3 shows a grouping of the subjects' classifications regarding their written productions, which confirms their significant improvement.

Table 4 presents a comparison between the students' performances in initial and final

assessments, in each evaluated subject. Significant results were found for genre, use of title, role of the narrator, use of deictics, verb tense, subjectivity, and total score. The use of paragraphs tended towards significance.

**Table 3 – Distribution of students regarding initial and final assessments by written productions classification groups**

Classification	Initial		Final		p- value
	N	%	N	%	
Bad/Regular	14	66.7%	6	28.6%	0.013*
Good/Great	7	33.3%	15	71.4%	

\* Statistically significant value  
Equality of Two Proportions Test  
p-value = 0.05 (5%)

**Table 4 – Comparison between initial and final assessments in each evaluated subject**

Assessment		Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Q1	Q3	N	CI	P- value
Discourse genre	Initial	1.48	1.0	0.51	1.0	2.0	21	0.22	0.007*
	Final	1.90	2.0	0.30	2.0	2.0	21	0.13	
Knowledge	Initial	1.67	2.0	0.58	1.0	2.0	21	0.25	0.813
	Final	1.62	2.0	0.59	1.0	2.0	21	0.25	
Reliability	Initial	1.52	2.0	0.68	1.0	2.0	21	0.29	0.796
	Final	1.48	2.0	0.68	1.0	2.0	21	0.29	
Title	Initial	0.19	0.0	0.60	0.0	0.0	21	0.26	<0.001*
	Final	1.71	2.0	0.64	2.0	2.0	21	0.28	
Narrator	Initial	1.33	2.0	0.80	1.0	2.0	21	0.34	0.006*
	Final	1.95	2.0	0.22	2.0	2.0	21	0.09	
Deictics	Initial	0.52	0.0	0.60	0.0	1.0	21	0.26	0.008*
	Final	1.10	1.0	0.62	1.0	1.0	21	0.27	
Verbal tense	Initial	0.76	1.0	0.54	0.0	1.0	21	0.23	0.004*
	Final	1.24	1.0	0.44	1.0	1.0	21	0.19	
Organization	Initial	1.00	1.0	0.63	1.0	1.0	21	0.27	0.617
	Final	1.10	1.0	0.70	1.0	2.0	21	0.30	
Subjectivity	Initial	0.76	1.0	0.83	0.0	1.0	21	0.36	0.040*
	Final	1.24	1.0	0.83	1.0	2.0	21	0.36	
Direct discourse	Initial	0.86	1.0	0.91	0.0	2.0	21	0.39	0.642
	Final	0.76	0.0	0.89	0.0	2.0	21	0.38	
Paragraph	Initial	0.86	1.0	0.73	0.0	1.0	21	0.31	0.059#
	Final	1.24	1.0	0.83	1.0	2.0	21	0.36	
Extension	Initial	1.29	1.0	0.46	1.0	2.0	21	0.20	0.527
	Final	1.38	1.0	0.59	1.0	2.0	21	0.25	
Punctuation	Initial	0.95	1.0	0.50	1.0	1.0	21	0.21	1.000
	Final	0.95	1.0	0.67	1.0	1.0	21	0.29	
Total	Initial	13.19	14.0	4.18	11.0	15.0	21	1.79	0.001*
	Final	17.67	19.0	4.87	13.0	22.0	21	2.08	

# Value tending towards significance  
\* Statistically significant value  
Wilcoxon Test  
p-value = 0.05 (5%)

## ■ DISCUSSION

The present study had the aim to present a program that could help the teacher to grant a reflexive, discursive and pleasant emphasis to reading and writing activities in class, since the teacher plays a fundamental role in children's formal education, with the responsibility to provide learning opportunities to the students in school. Within this context, language has a central role, due to its importance for subject's formation<sup>18,19</sup>.

The fact that Brazilian children do not have much access to reading as a pleasant activity takes away any interest they might have for it. Studies<sup>20,21</sup> have shown the importance of metalinguistic abilities and the development of programs to motivate students' reading habits and, consequently, improve written production, a fact that was observed after the program developed in the present study.

In this study, the use of an overhead projector presenting the text with the images of the books together with the researchers using prosodic resources to emphasize different aspects of the stories was effective to make the students pay attention to the books being read, making comments to each other about the stories and/or the pictures presented. It is important to emphasize that all of them felt like authors during the retelling activity, while they were encouraged to think about the general theme and sub-themes of the story to write an individual story about one of these aspects.

Moreover, it was observed that the program stimulated vocabulary increase, with present of intertextuality, since many children mentioned terms and made references to passages of other stories. Such fact corroborates other studies<sup>22,23</sup> that stated that having familiarity with books provides more gain and improvement to written language in children, especially if the stories lead to joint discussion and interpretation between the story teller or reader and the listeners.

Qualitatively, it was observed that many aspects addressed in this project produced interesting results, since the students tried to produce longer texts week after week, using titles, punctuation,

questioning about the orthography of some words and the names of certain elements present on the text.

The child's overcoming each week worked as an extremely positive reinforcement to pay attention to the text read and to strive to produce a better text on the next session, increasing written production time to the point of overlapping the interval period.

It was found that the students who were eliminated from the study sample for being, initially, in pre-syllabic and syllabic levels of writing hypotheses, along the period of the program started to write words and phrases, and eventually reached the alphabetical and even then orthographic levels. Hence, the program can be used within the classroom setting including children with reading and writing disorders, for it allows that each child progresses in her own rhythm.

## ■ CONCLUSION

The program proposed in this study was effective, since the students were motivated and started to carry out more cohesive and coherent written productions, using typical linguistic markers for the narrative genre, showing improvement in all Communicative Competencies.

The use of multimodal stimulation, emphasized on the program by the SLP and the teacher together in school context, reinforces the benefits of this partnership for health promotion of school-age children, facilitating the development of reading and writing abilities, besides making possible for the child to associate reading activities to something pleasant and interesting.

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## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** analisar a efetividade de um Programa de Promoção de Narrativas Escritas, em escolares da terceira série do Ensino Fundamental de uma escola pública. **Método:** vinte e um escolares de 3ª séries (14 meninas e sete meninos), entre oito anos e sete meses e 10 anos, foram avaliados quanto à produção escrita livre com base em um tema proposto antes e após um Programa de Práticas de Narrativas Escritas. As produções escritas foram analisadas qualitativa e quantitativamente por meio dos critérios das Competências Comunicativas (Genérica, Enciclopédica e Linguística), sendo o desempenho classificado como Ruim, Regular, Bom e Ótimo de acordo com a pontuação adquirida. Estes dados foram classificados e comparados nos momentos inicial e final do programa e receberam tratamento estatístico. **Resultados:** houve um aumento estatístico significativo no número de sujeitos que obtiveram a classificação Ótimo na avaliação final. Quando os dados foram agrupados em dois: Ruim/Regular e Ótimo/Bom também houve uma significância estatística entre os momentos inicial e final uma vez que o número de sujeitos do grupo Ruim/Regular reduziu-se enquanto que o Ótimo/Bom aumentou significativamente. **Conclusões:** o programa proposto foi efetivo uma vez que os escolares mostraram-se muito motivados e realizaram produções narrativas escritas melhor elaboradas em relação às Competências Comunicativas.

**DESCRIPTORIOS:** Redação; Saúde Pública; Ensino; Educação Baseada em Competências; Avaliação Educacional

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