

# ORAL AND WRITTEN SPEECH OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

## *Discurso oral e escrito de escolares do ensino fundamental*

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** to describe the syntactic and linguistic structures of student's oral and written productions. **Methods:** the subjects of this research were thirteen students of the six grade of fundamental education of a private school. Each student made two productions: one oral (recorded and transcribed) and another one written, both productions based on two different pictures. These productions were analyzed in order to investigate syntactic and the speech structure. **Results:** showed that girls' written productions are longer than boys' who performance better in an oral way. On oral and written productions, both groups prioritized coordination form. According to the speech structure, most part of the children were level 1 classified, performing poorer than expected for their age group. **Conclusion:** this result was beneath expected for the school level. This performance can be explained with some hypotheses: these students were in a transition phase; few speech strategies were taught in school; parents and school provide few stimulation during the oral and written language development.

**KEYWORDS:** Language; Adolescent; Speech

### ■ INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the period culturally situated between childhood and adulthood, from twelve to eighteen years of age<sup>1,2</sup>. This period marks a transition moment between childhood and adulthood, with noticeable changes in the physical, social, and psychological arenas. Adolescents live a new period in their lives, in which they try to define their role inside their social group. In this new, transition phase to adulthood, new interpersonal relationships are formed and established in the context of peer group interactions<sup>3</sup>.

In this phase biological growth ceases and both biophysiological and psychosocial changes take place, enabling new and different behaviors at school and in family interactions<sup>3-5</sup>. For the boys, the change affects mainly the voice and bodily hair growth. For girls, the change has as initial milestones the menarche, breast development, the appearance of pubic hair and widening of the hips<sup>3,6</sup>. Furthermore, this period also entails psychological

changes. A study about the transformations according to the adolescents themselves<sup>3</sup>, has revealed an increase in responsibility and demands (in various daily activities); an increase in conflicts (since the rupture of the dependence from the parents is sought) and experiences with new social groups. The study authors conclude that passage rituals between childhood and adulthood refer directly to bodily change, a product of adolescence, and are significant and distinguishing features in the subject's life.

While the adolescent changes (the behavior, the language, physical and biological aspects), the environment and the demands also change<sup>4</sup>. Regarding school, the changes can be considered milestones. The shift of life phase is clearly marked: up to ten years of age, enrolled in the 4<sup>th</sup> year, the boy and the girl were children, cared for and protected by one or two teachers that were responsible for most of the events in the classroom. On the following year, they often change buildings inside the school, the period and even change schools. They face several teachers that are responsible for the papers they teach instead of the classroom, and that shift every fifty minutes. They have longer eating hours, different demands and a greater volume of

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tasks and evaluations. Moreover, greater autonomy is expected on the part of the students. However, in this phase, despite the increase in learning content, the students begin to develop interests beyond the pedagogical sphere. The daily life at school suffers influence from sexual, emotional, economic, ideological and social factors. As a consequence, the school is no longer the central axis in teenager life<sup>1,4</sup>.

The changes of this phase are reflected by the students' oral and written language<sup>5</sup>. Language development is in full construction during adolescence and extends into adulthood<sup>4,5</sup>. It is a gradual process, with subtle but significant changes. The areas subjected to greater change are: semantics, syntax and pragmatics. In this phase, the understanding and use of complex syntactic-semantic structures, figurative language, proverbs, abstract language, persuasion and negotiation abilities and slang take place. This occurs because, in this phase, the teenager begins to experience different groups, exchanging ideas, manifesting opinions, questioning what happens and reflecting about it<sup>5</sup>.

Regarding syntax, the deeper and more complex aspects are developed from six year old onwards, until fourteen years of age. This competence depends strictly on the degree of environmental stimulation and the introduction of activities that develop the ability of grammatical organization. The learning process isn't similar in all children and depends on individual factors, besides social and educational conditions. In the age bracket of the participants of this study, there was the surfacing and the development of relative and adverbial clauses<sup>5</sup>. There is a diversification of already available syntactic forms, signaling hypothetical and conditional conditions (if...then), conjunctions (and), disjunctions (or), the increase of the length of the clauses, including the presence and number of subordinate clauses in the same sentence<sup>4</sup>. According to author's reports, pre-adolescents frequently make a more restricted use of the possibilities they have of expressing their constructed language. Furthermore, literature shows a difference between academic performance between boys and girls<sup>7,8</sup>. There is greater prevalence of lower academic performance in males, signaling that boys are more affected by learning difficulties than girls. There are a few hypotheses for this difference of performance between the sexes. Girls are considered by teachers to be more organized and, although they talk a lot, they are less agitated<sup>9</sup>. The authors still mention that boys are considered intelligent, but more agitated and lacking discipline, which would hinder their school performance. Girls also write more, writing diaries and notes, while boys are more skilled in motor

and logical/ mathematical tasks<sup>10</sup>. Other authors describe that, in girls, there are greater productions during oral expression, better hearing distinction, better visual motor coordination and better initial performance in acquiring reading and writing<sup>11</sup>. According to neuroimaging tests, women process language better than men, and this argument may explain the differences between sexes. There are signs that when dealing with phonological material, the female sex processes verbal language in both brain hemispheres at the same time, while males use specific areas of the dominant hemisphere. It was also noted that the Broca and Wernicke areas, related to speech, are larger in women, which could also justify, biologically, a better female performance in activities associated to language.

Other factors can also interfere with the development of language and with teenager school performance. Reading habits are important stimuli to the development of all aspects related to language such as syntax, semantics, morphology and pragmatics. With little reading, the students have less opportunity to increase vocabulary, impairing their communicative skills, which would be the core of the problems presented by students in school. These communication problems may be located in comprehension, formulation and/or production of language. The teacher has an important role as the organizer of previous and acquired knowledge by the student, and it is also true regarding language<sup>5,8</sup>. In this phase, it is important that family and school cooperate to promote balance in the face of the new demands on the teenagers and contribute in a positive way to their growth as individuals and help them to develop acceptable social behaviors.

Concerning research in the field of language in adolescence, one notes the limited presence of studies in the existing databases, both national and international (PUC- Campinas Library, BIREME, SCIELO, USP, UNICAMP, MEDLINE). There are several studies on adolescents, but they focus on behavior, violence, pregnancy, eating or conduct disorders, and almost none concerning the development of adolescent language and speech. Most of the research has been conducted with preschoolers or adults, focusing on pathology, disorders and difficulties typical to such phases.

Therefore, noting the importance of knowing the development of written and oral language in the adolescence period, and the lack of studies in this field, the aim of this research was to describe the syntactic and discursive aspects of oral and written language of students enrolled on the 6th year of fundamental school.

## ■ METHODS

We present here a study of empirical nature, with a quantitative character of analysis. The school authorization was required, and the Informed Consent Form was sent to the parents, authorizing the participation of their children in the study. This research has the approval of the Ethic Committee of the Campinas Catholic University (protocol nº 325/04).

The subjects of this research were elementary school students from the 6th grade of a private school from the countryside of São Paulo State. The sample constituted of 13 students, whose age group ranged from 10 years and 8 months to 12 years and 2 months. 9 female and 4 male students, who did not present any difficulties in the areas of reading, writing, speech and language were included in the study. Were also included the students that presented the Informed Consent Form signed by the responsible and agreed to participate in the research. Were excluded of the sample: subjects that presented neurological, sensorial, psychological and behavioral alterations; students that refused to participate in the study or whose parents did not sign the Informed Consent Form. These data were provided by the teacher and the teaching coordination, prior to the application of the test.

For the data collection, were used two drawings of action, reproduced from a PhD thesis<sup>12</sup>, entitled: *“Eficiência do treino para o desenvolvimento do repertório verbal em carentes culturais: implicações para o Contexto Educacional”* (“Training efficiency for the development of the verbal repertoire in cultural needy: implications for the Educational Context”). These drawings were drawn on a white sheet, with paper dimension/size A4 and were colored. One drawing, of a family playing with a ball and a baby resting on the couch, was used specifically for the oral production, and the other, whose mother is offering a baby bottle to a baby, for the written production. The choosing of the drawings for the tasks was random.

The oral production was registered on a PANASONIC RQ-L 31 recorder, and the written production was registered on a white paper sheet.

With the teacher’s authorization, one by one the students were conducted to the room where the evaluator was waiting. The evaluator gave the following instruction: “Create a narrative from this drawing that I am showing”. The oral story developed by the child was recorded by the researcher. After the end of the speech, the evaluator, showing the second drawing asked: “Write a narrative from this drawing”. The written story remained with the evaluator.

Half of the researched group started the narrative orally, and then graphically, while the other half made the reverse process. All the subjects, who were authorized, did the test. By means of an equiprobable draw, those that constituted the sample were identified.

Prior to data collection, a pilot research was conducted, with a 6th year grade subject, to evaluate the material to be utilized.

The syntactic structures of the oral and written production were analyzed, in accordance to the quantity of lines and paragraphs used by the subjects and the types of clauses made by the children. The clauses were classified as: absolute clause (AC), main clause (MC), coordinated clause (CC), and subordinated clause (SC).

For the analysis of the elements of speech structuring used by the students, were considered<sup>13</sup>: characters, staying on topic, events and ending, in accordance with the following classification:

### 1. Maintenance of the main character:

P1: Undefined main character, featuring various characters without being possible to define the main one;

P2: Defined main character, but that disappears during the story, wich can return or disappear, replaced by another.

P3: Main character is defined and sustained throughout the entire narrative. Not replaced until the end of the story.

### 2. Staying on topic throughout the narrative:

T1: undefined topic; there may be a topic at the beginning that is replaced by another during the narrative;

T2: there is a topic at the beginning that is replaced by another during the narrative, however it is resumed at the end of the story;

T3: permanence of the topic throughout the story.

### 3. Events/main plot:

E1: There is a sketch of an event or the presence of various events without being the main one. These are sequences of episodes or actions unrelated to each other.

E2: there are various events, being difficult to define the main one, but there is some relation between them.

E3: Presence of a defined main event, plot or central problem-situation that governs the entire story and the characters’ actions.

#### 4. Ending that finalizes and concludes the story:

D1: Ending is absent. The story is suddenly concluded;

D2: there is an ending, however it does not present relation with the main event;

D3: defined ending, bearing a close relationship to the main event..

According to the analysis of the discursive aspects described above, the level of the child production is verified, according to the authors<sup>7</sup>:

#### Output: ( level)

N1: P1P2 OR P3; T1,E1,D1

N2: P1, P2 OR P3; T2;E1 or E2; D1 or D2

N3: P2 or P3;T3;E2 or E3; D2;

N4: P3;E3;T3;D3

Level 1 classification is characterized by stories in which there are topic shifts and disconnected events in sucession, making the text difficult to understand.

Level 2 differs from the previous one for including a tendency to saty on topic throughout the narrative, but lacking a precise relation to the development of the story.

Level 3 is defined by the maintenance of the topic and of the event throughout the narrative, but what hinders the comprehension is the absence of relationship between the ending and the events.

Level 4 is characterized by the presentation of a connected narrative chain, centered in a defined topic connecting events, characters and ending. It features a close relationship between events told during the development of the story.

According to the authors, the distinctions between levels are in accordance to the level of the children's schooling. The levels 1 and 2 amount to the initial grades, correspondent to the ages of 6-7 years.

#### Example:

S4 (girls):	S3 (boys):
Character: 1	Character: 3
Staying on topic: 1	Staying on topic: 3
Events: 1	Events: 3
Ending: 1	Ending: 3
Level: 1	Level:4

The results to each of the tests were analyzed separately, verifying their association with the resulting data of the participants' anamneses. To such end, we've employed Spearman correlation tests (in case both the variables were continuous), or contingency chi-square test (for two categorical variables). Furthermore, tests of mean were used to verify the difference between two (T test) or more than two (ANOVA) groups according to one or more dependent continuous variables.

It was adopted as basic hypothesis ( $H_0=0$ ) the presence of correlation and alternative hypothesis  $H'0$ , for a level of significance (n.sig) 0,05, appropriate to human sciences.

## ■ RESULTS

The production by the research subjects, either oral or written, was analyzed by two judges, a university professor, Doctor in Psychology and graduated in speech therapy and Language and Literature, and a speech therapist, with specialization in Language. The analysis occurred independently, aiming at securing the reliability and validation of results. In the procedure employed in this research, interference of a judge's opinion over another did not occur, prevailing in each analysis the decision of a single element, based in the definition of the categories.

In order to verify if both samples were interrelated, a non-parametric Spearman correlation test was performed. The analysis results demonstrated the occurrence of  $r_s=1$  significant positive correlation (to  $N=4$ ,  $r_c=1$ ) with non-rejection of the basic hypothesis, being both interrelated.

It was observed, according to obtained data, that the girls' written production showed a larger extension than the boys'. Nonetheless, in the oral communication, the boys' speech was longer, even though this difference is non-significant.

In the elaboration of the written and oral speeches, in relation to the syntactic elements, the girls prioritized the coordinated clauses, followed by the use of the subordination, of the main clauses and absolute clauses (Table 1).

**Table 1 - Amount of syntactic elements used by girls in oral and written output**

	GIRLS-WRITTEN		GIRLS-ORAL	
	N	%	N	%
<b>AO</b>	14	6,25	7	3,5
<b>OP</b>	24	10,7	16	8,12
<b>OC</b>	148	66,07	129	65,48
<b>OS</b>	38	16,96	45	22,8

Key: OA= absolute clause; OP= main clause; OC=coordinated clause; OS= subordinate clause.

The statistical analysis of results obtained by the girls' written speech, had the aim of verifying the significance of the distribution of the different types of clauses, lines, and paragraphs (Table 2).

In the comparison between absolute clause and main clause, the observed value  $r_s = -0,64$  and between AC and MC ( $r_s = -0,74$ ,  $n=9$ ) surpassed the  $r_c = 0,60$ , allowing the rejection of  $H_0$ , and therefore, the assertion that the absolute clauses and the main and subordinate ones indicate negative correlation

in the population from which they constitute sample. In the comparison between MC and SC of the girls' written speech, the correlation calculation had as result a  $r_s = 0,85$  that surpassed the critic, being thus interrelated in the sample. And the obtained result of the comparison between lines and paragraphs ( $r_s = 0,70$ ) superior to the  $r_c = 0,60$  also indicates that  $H_0$  rejection exists, and that the lines and paragraphs indicate relation in the population from which they constitute a sample.

**Table 2 - Correlation between clause type, lines, and paragraphs in the written speech of girls**

	OA	OP	OC	OS	LINES	PARAGRAPHS
<b>OA</b>	-	-0,64*	-0,12	-0,74	0,16	0,21
<b>OP</b>	-	-	0,19	0,85*	-0,23	0,02
<b>OC</b>	-	-	-	0,21	0,91*	0,35
<b>OS</b>	-	-	-	-	-0,14	-0,19
<b>LINES</b>	-	-	-	-	-	0,70*
<b>PARAGRAPHS</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-

$P < 0,05$

Spearman correlation test (1958)

Key: OA= absolute clause; OP= main clause; OC=coordinated clause; OS= subordinate clause.

Regarding the girls' oral production, a significant positive correlation was verified, evidencing the occurrence of relation in the analyzed sample (Table 3).

Table 4 illustrates that the contents of the boys' written production was expressed mainly through

coordinated, subordinated, absolute, and in lesser number, the main absolute clauses. In the oral production, one can also observe the predomination of coordinated clauses, followed by the subordinated clauses. The main and absolute clauses were seldom used.



**Table 3 - Correlation between clause types in the oral speech of girls**

	<b>OA</b>	<b>OP</b>	<b>OC</b>	<b>OS</b>
<b>OA</b>	-	0,82*	0,91*	0,88*
<b>OP</b>	-	-	0,69*	0,85*
<b>OC</b>	-	-	-	0,71*
<b>OS</b>	-	-	-	-

P&lt;0,05

Spearman correlation test (1958)

Key: OA= absolute clause; OP= main clause; OC=coordinated clause; OS= subordinate clause.

**Table 4 - Amount of syntactic elements used by girls in oral and written output**

	<b>BOYS-WRITTEN</b>		<b>BOYS-ORAL</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>AO</b>	30	19,35	8	6
<b>OP</b>	23	14,8	7	5,3
<b>OC</b>	71	45,8	94	17,4
<b>OS</b>	31	20	23	71,2

Key: OA= absolute clause; OP= main clause; OC=coordinated clause; OS= subordinate clause.

Concerning the boys' performance in the written activity, there was no correlation in all the comparisons made. Nonetheless, in the boys' oral speech, the majority of the comparisons made obtained positive correlation (Table 5).

It was observed in the aforementioned data that, even though some subjects present a longer and/or more elaborated production, all have presented the predominance of the coordinated clauses, either in the oral or in the written speech, in both sexes.

**Table 5 - Correlation between types of causes in the oral speech of boys**

	<b>OA</b>	<b>OP</b>	<b>OC</b>	<b>OS</b>
<b>OA</b>	-	0,90*	0,95*	0,75
<b>OP</b>	-	-	0,95*	0,95*
<b>OC</b>	-	-	-	0,80
<b>OS</b>	-	-	-	-

P&lt;0,05

Spearman correlation test(1958)

Key: OA= absolute clause; OP= main clause; OC=coordinated clause; OS= subordinate clause.

### Speech Analysis

In accordance with the author's analysis referential<sup>13</sup>, the majority of girls (55.55%) achieved a level 1 performance, in the written speech, and 66.66% in the oral speech. Three girls (33.53%) obtained maximum level (4) in written speech, and two girls (22.22%) in oral speech. Only one girl, achieved level 3 both in the oral and in the written speech, and none obtained level 2.

There was predominance of classification 1 for characters, staying on topic, and ending in the girls' written and oral speech, with addition of the central event in the last (55.5% P, T, D (written); 77.77%P; 66.66%T, E, D). This classification was followed by classification 3, found in 33.33% of all the factors of the written speech analysis, and in 22.22% of P, E, D, and 33.33% in T, described in TABLE 6:

**Table 6 – Oral and written speech analysis of students by gender**

	GIRLS-WRITTEN					GIRLS-ORAL				
	P	T	E	D	N	P	T	E	D	N
S1	3	3	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1
S2	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	2	2
S3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
S4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
S5	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	3	3	4
S6	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4
S7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
S8	3	3	3	3	4	1	1	1	1	1
S9	3	3	3	3	4	1	1	1	1	1
	BOYS-WRITTEN					BOYS-ORAL				
	P	T	E	D	N	P	T	E	D	N
S1	1	2	3	1	2	1	3	2	3	3
S2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
S3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4
S4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Key: S= research subject; P= character; T= plot; E= event; E= ending; N= level

As to the boys, two achieved level 2 (50%) in the written speech, and the same percentage was found in level 1 for the oral speech. One student reached level 4 (25%) both in the oral speech as in the written speech, and one got level 3 for the oral speech. There was predominance of classification 1 in P (75%), both in the oral speech as in the written speech. Half of the students obtained this classification 1 in T (oral and written) and in event (oral). The level 3 was obtained in half of E (written) and ending (oral).

Classification 2 was seldom used both by the girls as by the boys, in both productions.

According to the authors<sup>13</sup>, the characters are not level differentiators, since they are the starting point for the story to happen. But the topic and the event are better level differentiators since, in the production of a coherent story, both the topic and the event establish and maintain central points in evidence in the course of the entire narrative.

The ending appears not only as a differentiator of coherence levels, but also as a specific difficulty the child stumbles upon when producing a coherent history. It is noticeable that both boys and girls had a prevalence of classification 1 for characters, topic, events and ending. Classification 3 has appeared in a smaller number.

The reading and the writing, in accordance with the authors<sup>13</sup> of the research is a factor that interferes in the production of coherent stories, since the more the child is exposed to situations that involve texts, the more opportunities the child will have to produce various narrative abilities.

### ■ DISCUSSION

In accordance to the obtained results, similarities of performance between boys and girls were observed, both in the oral language and in the written language. Even though some authors<sup>9,10,14,15</sup>

report that the girls show better initial performance in the acquisition of reading and writing (in relation with oral language, hearing discrimination and visual-motor coordination), there was no significant difference between the groups on both proposed tasks. There was the predominance of the use of coordinated clauses both in the boys' and in the girls' group, fact observed in the oral speech and in the written speech. Therefore, one can verify that the syntactic resource used by eleven year old subjects, here analyzed, express the same complexity observed in the speech of six years old subjects. This below the expected performance, for the level of schooling, was also observed in various studies, which pointed, as hypothesis, practices of insufficient literacy, lack of school and family support, and the role of the teacher in this process<sup>7,16</sup>.

The use of subordination depends on the development of the superior capacity of mental organization and linguistic maturity<sup>2</sup>. In adolescence, there is an increase of the number of clauses in written speech, as well as a diversification of the syntactic forms already existent, allowing for the appearance of hypothetic forms (if, then). It is possible to observe, in the productions made, that some subjects made long phrases, as well as long texts; nonetheless, the use of the subordinates was inferior in relation to the coordinates. It was observed, in the oral production, that there was no positive correlation in almost none of the comparisons made (only in the comparison between MC and SC in both the groups and between AC and SC, CC and lines and CC and paragraphs in the girls' speech). However, in the written speech, one can note that almost all the correlations were positive, in both groups. These results suggest that, in writing, the growth of the coordinated productions allows the growth of the subordinated. Even though the work allows as hypothesis an improvement of the most superior syntactic relations, this performance was not observed. It was observed the predominance of additive and explicative coordinative conjunctions, as "and" and "why/therefore/because", also found in six years old child productions. At this age, the child does not use the connective to indicate specific semantic relations, but as a reflex of the derivational simplicity<sup>14</sup>.

The socio-linguistic factors may have influenced language abilities, and being adolescents and being in a transition period, the "telling" a story from a drawing may be considered socially as a childlike action and unattractive to them, while the writing, the construction of an essay, may be an exercise more often practiced at school<sup>16</sup>. Activities such as the discussion of current affairs and reports of real life facts may increase the students' interest in

developing more abstract reasoning and, as consequence, longer oral narratives with more complex syntactic elements, compatible with their cognitive level and schooling.

In relation to the students speech structure, it has been noticed a predominance, mainly in relation with the girls, of the level I, in the classification of speech<sup>13</sup>. This study has differentiated itself from other works<sup>13,14</sup> that did not verify better performances in the performance of children on the same age group (level 3). Concerning the analyzed topics (characters, topic, events and ending), it is noticeable the discordance of the present work with others that did not verify difficulties in the maintenance of the character in the narrative. These authors stated that the character is not a differentiator between the levels, once this is the starting point in the elaboration of any story, being the element that makes the episodes happen. There was an agreement among the works in relation with the ending. These presented a close relationship with the main event and the other indicators present in the story (characters, topics, events), which provided some more elaborated works, classified in the production of level 4 or simpler, of level 1. The endings represent the most difficult textual link in the production of a coherent story by children. Relating the ending of a story with the other indicators constitutes a rather complex cognitive and linguistic task, which suggests a cognitive immaturity, due to difficulty in more abstract reasoning and the use of simpler and less relational structures.

The authors<sup>13</sup> still mention schooling, in particular the process of reading and writing, as a decisive factor in the progression of coherence indicators. A longer period of exposure to formal teaching of reading and writing favors the process of construction of meaning in situations of production<sup>13,17</sup>. It is necessary that the child reaches a level of linguistic development in which he or she is able to write coherent stories in any circumstance<sup>18</sup>. The learning of reading and writing allows the child a longer contact with the texts, mainly narratives, found in child/youth literature. By reading and writing, the student is exposed to a higher number of diversities of opportunities and situations involving texts, fact that seems to be crucial to the production of more structured, cohesive and coherent stories, and to the development of different narrative abilities<sup>13,17</sup>.

The lack of homogeneity found among the levels presented by the students, of both sexes, may be explained by the process of changes in adolescence that influence their writing process. Other factors may be considered, such as motivation, in which not all the types of activities may be pleasant, and also the use of language below the level previously



acquired, which may lead to a false performance in relation to the knowledge already obtained<sup>5,17</sup>. In this respect, the author reports the importance of the teacher being alert to this kind of situation, stimulating those with ease to the elaboration of speech, and helping with the difficulties presented to all the students in formulating speech, taking in consideration the emotional, cognitive and motor aspects.

## ■ CONCLUSION

The performance of the 6<sup>th</sup> year students of the elementary school in oral and written production was below the expected for their level of schooling. The encouragement to reading either by parents or by the school is essential in the formulation of a coherent speech, with the syntactic structures and

adequate vocabulary to what is expected of the student in this age group.

The study here described focused on a group of students of a particular private school. One limitation is the possibility of the extension or generalization of the data here reported to other subjects of the same population of this study. Furthermore, it was noted that, producing narratives, either oral or written, from pictures, may have compromised the subjects' performance, due to linguistic or motivational issues. The results here reported establish important propositions to future researches. Describing and comparing the language complexity and different types of readers, may allow the confirmation or not of the existing relation between these two kinds of language regarding students of other schools and academic levels.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** caracterizar os aspectos sintáticos e discursivos da produção oral e escrita dos estudantes do 6º ano do ensino fundamental. **Métodos:** foram sujeitos da pesquisa treze estudantes que cursavam o 6º ano do ensino fundamental de uma escola particular. O material analisado foi constituído de uma produção oral, gravada e transcrita, e uma produção escrita, ambas obtidas a partir de figuras. Na análise dessas produções foram consideradas as estruturas sintáticas e componentes do discurso. **Resultados:** observou-se que a produção escrita das meninas apresentou uma extensão maior que a dos meninos, enquanto estes, na comunicação oral apresentaram um discurso mais longo. No discurso oral e escrito, todos os participantes priorizaram o uso da coordenação, o que está aquém do esperado para o nível de escolaridade dos estudantes. Com relação à análise do discurso, a maior parte das crianças apresentou nível 1, incompatível com a idade e o nível de escolaridade. **Conclusão:** o desempenho dos estudantes do 6º ano do ensino fundamental na produção oral e escrita foi abaixo do esperado para o nível de escolaridade que se encontram. Este desempenho pode ser explicado por algumas hipóteses, como a fase de transição em que os estudantes se encontram, falta de estratégias fornecidas pela escola para a produção de discursos e falta de estimulação tanto dos pais quanto da escola durante a fase do desenvolvimento da linguagem e processo de aprendizagem da leitura-escrita.

**DESCRIPTORIOS:** Linguagem; Adolescente; Fala

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