

GROUP FOR SUBJECTS WITH READING AND WRITING DIFFICULTIES: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Grupo para sujeitos com queixas de dificuldades de leitura e escrita: aspectos teórico-metodológicos

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: to present the theoretical and methodological assumptions underlying group speech language therapy focused on the development of written skills, based on the theory of enunciation and discourse and analyze their effectiveness. **Methods:** this article brings the theoretical and methodological criteria related to group formation and therapy focused on Bakhtin's notion of speech genres. To depict such procedures, this study provides dialogic episodes from therapeutic sessions conducted with five students, aged from 11 to 13, with reading and writing impairments, from public schools located in the city of Florianópolis, Brazil. **Results:** results suggest that practice grounded in the perspective of enunciation and discourse, in meaningful contexts of language use, enables subjects to engage in written language in its discursive, formal and textual aspects. Additionally, group composition provides, besides the exchange of information, a sense of belonging that raises self-esteem, favoring the learning process. **Conclusion:** this study highlights how group work can provide gains, within the theoretical perspective in focus. Subjects, who would reject activities of reading and writing early in speech language therapy, started to rethink their difficulty issues, after participating in social practices of language, and gradually became proficient writers and readers.

KEYWORDS: Child Language; Handwriting; Dyslexia

■ INTRODUCTION

In recent years, much has been said about theories of discourse genres, both at therapeutic as educational level. The National Curricular Parameters in Portuguese Language - PCNs (BRAZIL, 1997), for example, are pervaded with the concept of genres. This notion has gained greater expressiveness mainly from the 1990s, when researchers proposed a redefinition of teaching and learning methodologies. Strategies for developing reading and writing skills began to be analyzed from the perspective of language use: the language that

occurs in the genres, because we speak, read and write through discourse genres¹.

After nearly two decades of publication of PCNs, it is observed that the enunciative-discursive theory finds little resonance in classrooms, since educational conditions for teachers (basic, university and continuing education teachers) are often insufficient to offer them the necessary support to implement teaching practices in line with the official documents¹⁻³.

It is worth noting the PISA assessments (International Programme for Student Assessment) reveal that Brazilian students always figure among those at the lower end of the performance range in reading, science and math. Similarly, in 2011, the INAF (National Functional Literacy Index) showed that only 26% of Brazil's population is fully literate. At the expense of methodological complicating factors involved in data generation, national and

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international literacy indexes demonstrate an aspect of the reality and give cause for reflection on literacy conditions of Brazilian people. As a consequence of this scenario, the search for therapeutic care for individuals with reading and writing difficulties is impressively alarming²⁻⁴.

Regardless of the nomenclature used for the difficulties presented (reading and writing difficulties, reading and writing disorders, learning disorders, learning disorder, dyslexia, etc.), children may show *symptoms* and will often require speech therapy.

It should be highlighted that the adoption of an enunciative-discursive approach proposed in the present article is of a clinical nature, in the field of speech therapy. Avoiding all relativization regarding the “pedagogical” dimension implied in the assumed theoretical paradigm, it is important to remember that the therapeutic action projects another *mediation* and learning environment (differently from arranged formal contexts, for example, in the working groups focused on development of writing skills in school). In a therapeutic situation, the speech therapist has the task of treating the *symptom*, understood herein as the relationship between the suffering perceived by subjects with written language problems and their own condition of apprenticeship. Symptoms are often translated into “language barriers”, hampering, sometimes even preventing, advances in literacy conditions. To reframe the complaint, it is necessary to promote a significant therapeutic context for the appropriation and development of reading and writing skills that include, in addition to language issues, emotional and subjective aspects involved in learning. It is understood, therefore, that the construction of new meanings in experiences mediated by language leads to resizing of a subjectivity undermined by the stigma of reading and writing difficulties; it is in this sense that the work undertaken transcends the “educational” field and becomes therapeutic (speech therapy).

The clinical performance dedicated to the development of reading and writing skills can be performed both individually and in groups. The group approach geared towards children, adolescents and adults with reading and writing difficulties has been pointed out by researchers as relevant for the therapeutic process⁵⁻⁸. However, theoretical and methodological procedures of this methodology have been slightly described in the specialized literature⁹; a fact that justifies the production of this work.

It should be noted that the group approach is not merely considered a way to meet the demands, but a therapeutic resource of great value. It is understood that, through the exchange of intra-group knowledge and experiences, participants will be able to make progresses in their language writing skills⁶. The

appropriation of writing abilities is a process rendered concrete by means of the relationship with the other and, taking that into account, the therapeutic group is a learning enabler, as shared experiences around the object (reading, text production and revision) tend to impact positively and generate gains (proficiency, criticalness, discursivity, autonomy) for all group participants¹.

Additionally, it is in a group situation that subjects realize that their “problem” has a collective dimension, a fact that contributes to the destigmatization and strengthens self-esteem, promoting learning⁶. One can observe, therefore, the importance of teamwork for subjects who seek help from a speech therapy treatment. The group approach leads to a work under a enunciative-discursive perspective, since this theory comprises a conception of language that considers language as a concrete reality, and believes that knowledge is generated through social interaction¹. In this approach, the therapy turns to knowledge development around discourse genres.

Discourse genres are envisaged as texts sets with a certain regularity in common. In society, there are thousands of genres that mediate human interactions, such as plays, news, stories, novels, chronics, everyday conversations, e-mails, letters, notes, jokes, etc. During therapy, subjects are asked to read and produce genres and, therefore, the properties that make up these texts are part of the therapeutic process⁹. The apprentice learns, for example, to recognize, through the reading activity, or produce, through writing, a chronicle, a story, a tale, among other genres. And so different aspects (social, historical, ideological, discursive, interactional, etc.) that go beyond the immanence of language (structure) are addressed.

The speech therapist who intends to act in accordance to the group approach under an enunciative-discursive perspective needs to keep in mind some assumptions that may guide this action, the main ones being: (i) group formation and (ii) work with written language. Therefore, the professional needs to follow theoretical and methodological criteria.

The objective of this paper is to present, in compliance with the enunciative-discursive theory¹⁰, the theoretical and methodological assumptions that underpin speech therapy group focused on the development of written language skills and analyze its effectiveness.

■ METHODS

This qualitative research, based on sociointeractionist postulates, was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Santa

Catarina, under protocol number 132/09. All participants signed an Informed Consent Form.

This section is divided into four subsections. In the first, methodological assumptions involved in the formation of the therapy group are presented. Further, it discusses the method that supports the group therapy under an enunciative-discursive approach. Subsection 3 presents the methodological aspects that guided the group speech therapy activities, in conformity with the proposal that underlies this work. The last subsection, in its turn, presents the methodology geared towards a work with a specific genre: the speech genre synopsis.

Data presented in the "Results" section represent a study that aimed at analyzing the contribution of the discourse genres concept to speech therapy clinics¹. The research was carried out with a group of five adolescents (four boys and one girl), between 11 and 13 years old, 4th and 5th year elementary school students. The subjects had complaints, such as "I do not like to read", "Everything I write is wrong"; "Reading is boring"; "I cannot write"; "My teacher says I'm absent-minded"; "I sit back there and do nothing"; "I do not like my teacher, she asks me to read aloud and I'm shy"; "I leave the classroom all the time", etc.

Regarding teachers' complaints, they were essentially like: "Nobody wants to do group work with him/her"; "Intermittent attention, he/she daydreams"; "He/she does not seem to be upbeat"; "Significant differences between the healthiest and most communicative students"; "He/she asks to speak and when we give him/her the chance, he/she says that he/she forgot the point"; "He/she does not show a rhythmic reading"; "He/she speaks low and in an unconfident manner"; "Missing/Exchanging letters", "There are many pain complaints"; "He/she asks to go to the toilet several times", among others.

The therapy service was developed over a period of one year in weekly speech therapy sessions, each lasting an average of approximately 3 hours. The service took place in a Learning Disabilities Outpatient Clinic at the Children's Hospital in the city of Florianópolis, state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. Most of the services were offered to groups of subjects, with some individual sessions. Data were recorded on audio and field notes.

Inclusion criteria were the following: availability and interest in participating in the research and therapeutic process, affinities (common interests) between participants and age. The exclusion criteria, in turn, involved: sensory and/or intellectual disabilities associated, unwillingness to participate and unwillingness to attend weekly meetings during a whole afternoon. The adolescents were evaluated by a neurologist and two of them were diagnosed

with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Speech therapy acceptance occurred to reframe the complaint (symptom) and stimulate progress in the literacy skills of individuals.

In dialogic episodes, the subjects are represented by the initials of their names (L, M, ED, D and J). The researcher is represented by a "T", as the therapist.

The methodological procedures involved in group approach focused on written language are presented below.

Group formation

For the group formation, it was important to establish some criteria. It means, first, that every subject can be assisted in a group, however, it was necessary to consider the size of the group. Ideally, an assessment of literacy skills of each subject should be performed, in order to direct and form the group after that evaluation. Considering the effectiveness of care service and the individualized attention each group participant requires, this work only served five individuals per group. It is believed, however, that this is a variable criterion resulting from the possibilities of the speech therapist⁹.

The age bracket can also be an important aspect, not because it leads to a uniformity, which would contradict the perspective assumed in this work, but because it tends to bring together individuals with similar interests. Children and adolescents were grouped according to the following division: 6 to 7 years old; 8 to 10 years; 11 to 13 years; 14 and 17 years old, and this was a flexible criterion. The age criterion is related to literacy skills, so that two children aged 9 years old, for example, can be in distinct groups if their reading and writing knowledge are very different.

The meetings could take place on a weekly basis and lasted one to three hours. The duration is established by the therapist depending on the needs of the group. For example, many members and little time are frequently complicated because not everyone will have the opportunity to make a substantial contribution.

Group therapy with a enunciative-discursive approach: general aspects

After group formation, the next step comprised the analysis of the inclusion of subjects in literacy experiences (school, family, church, etc.), as this implies in reflecting on the way such experiences result in the formation of reading skills in the subject. Some questions may guide this understanding, for example: What do you mean by reading? What kind of reading you (do not) like? Do you usually buy or borrow books? What type of reading materials do

you have at home? How often do you take time to read? Do you like to write? What do you write? (*e-mail, Whatsapp, Facebook* were also considered in this part)⁹.

After the analysis of the literacy experience of subjects, the following step consisted in the selection of genres that would be addressed during the speech therapy. It was important to consider here the interests of group participants or, at least, stimulate them. In order to stimulate those interests, there needs to be a genre experimental period. For example, a group of children may mention they do not like theater, but when watching a play for the first time (or listening to an audio drama, joining a theater group), they may express the will to engage in reading and writing as social practices aimed at the appropriation of the genre theater (script elaboration). This was the case of the situation presented in the following section, that is, the interests were awakened in the process. L (one of the subjects participating in the research), for example, when writing about his experience with one of the genres addressed in the therapy, commented: "I fell in love with theater from the first test".

Regarding the specific work with written language, it was necessary to notice some parameters. In this approach, all language dimensions must be addressed, namely the broader discursive dimensions, text issues and the formal aspects. Speech issues involve the discursive genre (activities related to the appropriation of the genre). Therefore, it is suggested to organize a genre corpora collection, reading those texts and perform a linguistic-discursive analysis of the selected¹. These actions are necessary, so that group participants can apprehend genre forms concomitantly with language forms, as established by Bakhtin¹⁰. It is necessary to consider the genre support; for example, when working with the chronic genre, the chosen chronicles should be compiled in books, but also newspaper chronicles, as they are generally more updated. It should be noted that depending on the support substantial changes will be noted in the textual composition. An interesting example is the news genre. The same news (about politics) conveyed by a newspaper in favor of the current policy and also by a newspaper against the government shows that there is no neutral ground when it comes to language. Thus, the ideological aspects are brought to consciousness so that, through dialogue, one may help in the formation of more critical and participatory citizens. In addition to genre issues and production conditions, discursive aspects involve the intention of the speaker, the meaning production and the discursive project.

The formal aspects, punctuation, spelling, paragraphing, among others, under this view, are worked as elements that favor reader's sensory perception. Hence, in the example: "Oh não, é um rato" or "Oh, não é um rato" (in English: "Oh no, it's a rat" or "Oh, it's no rat"), the comma position transmits information on whether it is a rat or not^{1,11}.

With particular regard to spelling aspects, it is common that learners present writing difficulties in relation to nature of the Portuguese language, for example, a confusion between letters that are visually or aurally similar¹².

Consequently, by reviewing the written productions worked during the group therapy, it is common that participants, when reading each other's productions, realize, for example, problems involving the trace rotation. In a therapeutic situation, the mediation raises the awareness that, sometimes, misuse of this trace leads us to write a word differently from what was desired (e.g. *bolo/dolo* in Portuguese), which could affect the reader's perception. So when it comes to the substitution of similar letters, the linguistic knowledge of the Portuguese language speakers should be brought to the interlocution situation⁹.

Difficulties with aurally similar letters, in turn, result in the substitution of letters that have an opposite sonority (*p/b; t/d; f/v; c/g; s/z; x/j*) and leads to write non-existent Portuguese words or usual words that do not fit into the production context ("coloquei duas fatias de queijo no meu lanche", instead of "coloquei duas fatias de queijo no meu lanche"). During the shared readings of a group production, perception and discussion on this type of occurrence is quite common. If a group member wrote "cafalo" instead of "cavalo", it is possible that he did not notice the mistake, but his/her therapy colleague may notice it and help him/her with this perception, consequently rephrasing the written word. Thus, operating with and on the language through mediation with colleagues and therapist, each group member will apprehend the formal aspects of written language⁹.

Regarding multiple representation, this is the most common mistake among children during the skill acquisition phase¹³. Whereas a phoneme can represent different graphemes (*/s/ - "ss", "sc", "ç", "c", "s", "sç", "x"*), writing "pasado" instead of "passado"; "chícara" instead of "xícara"; or "sebola" instead of "cebola" are possible options, but far from the orthographic convention. In the text revision work group, speech therapists made use of a resource called "free-for-all"¹⁵. This resource consists of writing a word, e.g. "traçado", considering, with regard to the multiple representations, the various possibilities provided by the language

(trassado, trasado, traçado, traçado). After writing these various possibilities, participants can discuss using their knowledge (and lexical memory), which one is the correctly spelled word. It should be noted that the various hypotheses could be “valid”, but according to the standard norm, the conventional form is “traçado”. It was also possible to think about generative processes. For example, if “gelo” is a word written with “g”, possibly the derived words “gelado”, “geladeira”, “gelatina” and others, may also be.

Therefore, one can understand that it is possible, amidst the contextualized proposals for language use, to discuss and seek orthographic regularities. Hence, if while reading a text (written by themselves or a colleague), the subjects realize that a word is incorrectly spelled, they can work on the written object from their linguistic assumptions.

Another common writing problem is the inadequate correction. In speech therapy, group participants, when facing hypercorrected written words, in the case of purely arbitrary standards, the use of free-for-all is allowed, as described above. However, among subjects, some regularities can be perceived when they occur in certain conventions. For example, there is a marked confusion among children in relation to the termination u/l at the end of the word. Individuals can be lead to realize that words ending with a descreasing diphthong in the oral discourse (e.g. “sol”, “farol”, “mel”, “painei”) also end with “l”, while words ending with increasing diphthongs (e.g. “meu”, “seu”, “pintou”, “apareceu”) end with “u”. This rule is applied, except in accented words, because despite the fact they end with decreasing diphthongs, they end with “u” due to the graphic accent (“céu”, “chapéu”, “véu”). Thus, it is possible to reflect with the group members about conventions, but seeking some regularities present in Portuguese language. This and other “rules” can be constructed with the group, an aspect that makes the learning a productive task and, consequently, significant^{1,14}.

Still considering the notion of speech genres, oral marks may be present in writing, as there are written genres that practically represent the materialization of the spoken word, such as the informal e-mail. There are more formal genres, or genres that do not allow those marks. Thus, approach or detachment from the oral form in textual terms depends on the type of genre. The speech therapist must mediate the process that deals with formal issues considering the “adequacy” in the writing process (genre, the interlocutor, the formality of the context)⁹.

In relation to textual aspects, the referent introduction and resumption during writing production is quite frequent. Among learners, ambiguous

references appear very often as well as the resumption of a reference by a distant reader. Thus, when the child writes: “Mariana, Patricia and Sabrina came to my house to watch movies, but her mother said it could not be a horror movie, because she may sleep well at night. The other girls’ mothers did not say anything, it could be any movie”, one can notice the impossibility of resuming the reference (she, her, other, mother, mothers) and that is not possible to identify, for example, who/what is referred to “she”, “it”, “other”, or to Mariana, Patricia and Sabrina. In this case, group shared readings allow them to notice inadequacies, such as problems with referents and the consequent difficulty for establish the meaning.

Furthermore, some of the texts produced exhibit topical progression problems regarding ideas. It is necessary to make subjects pay attention to the text they write, as it will be read by others, and that the writing process, to be effective, needs to be accessible to other readers.

Children can also write texts lacking some important information (incomplete text). In this case, the speech therapy intervention takes place through questioning (questions/ considerations), so the subject can reflect on the possible difficulties faced by the reader to apprehend the meanings of the discourse.

One can note that working with genres leads the participant to constitute the subject/reader and author^{1,9}. Authorship herein is not understood as a mere production of the “new”, but as the use of written language resources with a particular speech expressiveness¹⁰.

Group therapy with a enunciative-discursive approach: discourse genres

The research presented here is a therapeutic procedure of a group performance. The work started with the proposal of reading a novel (the “Goosebumps” series) and its adaptation to a play (script elaboration). Aiming at publishing the script on the website “Recanto das Letras” and also at its staging (for children of the Children’s Hospital), a synopsis of the play and posters for disclosure were produced. Various activities related to appropriation of the drama genre were carried out, such as: studying the history of theater, interviewing a playwright, reading interviews with playwrights, watching a play, reading plays, performing linguistic-discursive analysis of the read plays so their features could be apprehended (aiming at elaborating the script), among others.

During the adaptation of the novel to the play, each participant was responsible for the adaptation of approximately six chapters of the work. After adapting each chapter, all manuscripts were

gathered in a large script. The therapist typed the text produced, respecting the original writing of each member. To read and review the entire script produced, each participant received a copy. Readings (aimed at script revision) were simultaneously carried out, i.e., each member read the script, whether they were the author of the chapter in question or not. Thus, the same version was read and rewritten by all group members (therapist and participants). It was agreed among group members when any inadequacy appeared, the reading would be interrupted with the word “stop” for a discussion between members.

It must be said that the subjects performed the necessary re-elaborations (formal, textual and discursive corrections) in the typed text. For this purpose, excerpts were left blank so the text could be rewritten. Regarding the punctuation, it was included in the typed text; words with spelling problems were crossed out and the correct form was overwritten. This procedure intended to prevent subjects from rewriting all the text, a task that would transform the activity into something exhaustive and time-consuming, given the script extension (17 pages).

It should be noted that, for reasons of space, this article only presents excerpts of interactions on the speech genre synopsis that took place during the sessions, and dialogues in which subjects took part in order to review the drama script.

Working with the speech genre synopsis

To carry out the specific work with synopsis, five sessions of therapy were performed; the first four focused on the readings and reflective analysis of a corpus of selected texts. Synopses were worked in groups, some of them, shown in São Paulo, were obtained from the website <www.sampaonline.com.br>: “*A vingança de Milongaaaa!*”, “*Honey*”, “*Milkshake*”, “*O primo Basílio*”, “*Trair e coçar é só começar*”, “*De artista e louco todo mundo tem um pouco*”. From printed publications, a synopsis of the play “Peter Pan and Wendy”, published in the magazine *Educar*, was read, as well as novels and movies synopses published in the newspaper *Diário Catarinense* and showing in cinema. DVD Novels and films synopses were also included in the composition. Synopses of the novels “Clarissa”, “Twilight” and “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix” were read and analyzed. The last two books (Twilight and Harry Potter) films were also provided so that participants could watch them at home after reading the synopses. The goal of this activity was to substantiate the discursive function of this speech genre. Other films were also offered: “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull” and

“Mr. Magorium’s Wonder Emporium”. To introduce the functional aspects of the critical synopsis to the participants, two magazines, *Veja* and *Carta Capital*, were presented in one of the sessions, and the following synopses of books and movies were read: “30 Days of Night”; “The Apartment”; “In my father’s court”; “Mr. Proust and Other Stories”. The text selection included, therefore, different media: DVD, magazine, internet, novel and newspaper. In the case of magazines and newspaper, features of the critical synopsis were also worked.

One of the first activities focusing genre was the reading of movie and novel “Twilight” synopses, as the plot was in the participants’ interest. They had also seen the movie and read the novel excerpts. In order to promote reflection about the features of this genre among group members, a few questions were elaborated and brought up:

In which part [support] is the first synopsis and in which part is the second? 2) The fact that the first synopsis is in the book and the second in the movie produces any major changes in the written content? 3) What is the purpose of a synopsis? What is a written synopsis for? 4) What information do the texts present in relation to the story? 5) What is the theme? What is the story about? Is it possible tell just by reading the synopsis? 6) Find textual passages that are intended to convince the reader/viewer to read/watch the book/movie. 7) Can you identify the outcome of the story just by reading the synopsis? Justify. 8) What is the target audience for this story? Justify. 9) Who is the possible author of the synopsis? 10) In the book “Twilight” the story is told in the past tense, the movie takes place in the present tense, but in both synopses (book and movie) use the present tense. Can you formulate a response that justifies the prevalence of the present tense?

The questions above also guided reflective readings on other synopses of the *corpus*. After reading sessions, a session dedicated to write the synopsis of the produced play was held.

This last session (held at individual schedules), aimed at the writing process was as follows: each adolescent, together with the therapist, produced a synopsis and different versions. Before publishing the script of the play on the internet, the therapist constructed with the subjects a single synopsis, considering all synopses done, to avoid giving one of the texts priority over the others.

Episodes extracted from the work developed are presented below.

■ RESULTS

Dialogic episode 1: reflexions on the synopsis genre

After the first survey, with regard to the participants' previous knowledge about the genre in question, the therapist provided an explanation about the synopsis, describing its main goal, which is to disclose, in general, the core content of the plot, at the same time it intends to create in the reader/ (tele)viewer consuming desire towards the object in question. To begin with this stage, synopses of the novel and the movie *Twilight* were presented:

When Isabella Swan moves to the gloomy town of Forks and meets the mysterious and attractive Edward Cullen, her life takes a thrilling and terrifying turn. With an athletic body, golden eyes, mesmerizing voice, and supernatural gifts, Edward is, at the same time, irresistible and impenetrable. So far, he has managed to hide his true identity, but Bella is determined to uncover his dark secret. What Bella does not realize is that the more she gets close to him, the greater the hazard to themselves and those around her. And it may be too late to go back...

[Synopsis of the novel *Twilight*]...

Isabella Swan is a teenage girl who moves with her father to a new city after his mother decides to marry again. In high school, she becomes fascinated by Edward Cullen, a boy who hides a dark secret. They fall in love, but Edward knows that the deeper they go, the more he puts Bella and those around her in danger.

[*Twilight* movie synopsis].

In relation to the question "find textual passages that are intended to convince the reader/viewer to read/watch the book/movie", J was excited about reading and said that if she had not seen the movie, she would be convinced to watch it due to the description of the main character, "irresistible, impenetrable, has supernatural gifts, golden eyes...". M and L, in turn, disagreed and disclosed the reason in the following episode:

(01) [Interaction between participants]

M: There are several things that makes you want to catch...but I think when it talks about the secret...here, at the end, I think people would want to know the secret...what was that secret.

L: That's right. The secret.

T: Anything else?

(Silence)

After reading and analyzing the synopses in different media, in another reading session, copies of *Veja* and *CartaCapital* magazines were brought, so that participants could handle them and read the critical synopses. The synopses presented highlight the magazines' more critical stance, which recommends or not the consumption of certain cultural product (book/movie/show). It should be noted that, unlike the synopses aimed at inducing the consumer (which had been analyzed until then date), they may (or may not) act in the opposite direction. The first synopsis was read (the "Bravo!" section of *CartaCapital* magazine) then it was possible to start a reflexion on some aspects. Let's take an example:

Premiere of "Short Stories" movie, playing at the movies from Friday 11th, the filmmaker from Minas Gerais, Helvécio Ratton, revisits the childhood subject. If in "The Nutty Boy" (1994), the filmmaker relies on an inventive character, here he unfolds the universe of imagination in different stories. His purpose is to produce a "family film" and resume the tales told in whispers. The warmth and sincerity that he uses to address the stories are evident. But some stories sound too naive and the spoken magic is not always reflected in the images. The wise move is the funny episode *Zé Buraldo*, with Gero Camillo [...].

[Critical synopsis, *CartaCapital*, 2009]

(02) [Interaction between participants after reading the text above]

M: There is a good thing and a bad thing.

T: That's right. Do you think this synopsis... when this movie will be released on DVD format... this synopsis could be presented like that on a DVD?

D: No.

T: Why not?

M: Because there (on DVD) they cannot say anything bad, just good things.

T: Otherwise?

M: Good things have to be there, otherwise people may not want to take it.

T: The objective there is to make people take it. So there is another purpose. That's why I told you, it's important to know where the text is placed to also know something about its function, right?

Dialogic episode 2: writing in the genre after synopses reading sessions

For reasons of space, only the writing process of one of the participants will be shown below. L listened to the therapist guidelines (resumption of genre properties) and started to write the first version of his synopsis:

(03) [Synopsis written by L - first version]

Valente found something under the sink, then Kat began to have bad luck. Kat buried Grool, threw him in the trash, passed over him with her bike and he remained alive bringing bad luck. Everyone around him got hurt.

The therapist discussed with L the positive aspects of its text production and together they reflected on what could be improved in the rewriting process:

(04) [L interacts with the therapist]

T: Tell me, should the verbs be in the past?

L: Gee, I forgot ...

T: You put here (reads): "Valente found something under the sink, then Kat began to have bad luck"...you can cast a doubt... you know the story, okay, me too, but who will read might not know...Why Valente finds the thing and Kat is the one who has bad luck? (...) And Valente? Who is Valente?

L: Kat's dog ...

T: Kat's dog... The dog was only hers? Or was it the family's dog? Well, you have to explain that it is her dog, that she took the sponge from it... And who gets the sponge...

L: The owner is the one who has bad luck...

T: Yes. The owner... Kat is the owner and who is close to her also has bad luck ... Here you put (read): "Everyone around him got hurt". Why did everybody around him get hurt?

L: Because they are close to Kat.

T: So I think you can place this part over here when you say that Kat has bad luck... Kat and everyone close to her have bad luck...what do you think?

L: I think so...

T: One last thing: we will try to create an atmosphere of suspense, make people want to read, see the play...

After reflecting on the text produced, L left to rewrite it. This action resulted in the second version of the synopsis, shown below:

(05) [Synopsis written by L - final version]

Valente found under the kitchen sink an evil sponge. Kat, Valente's owner, gets the sponge and then all around her begin to have bad luck. Kat tries to destroy the Grool, throw him in the trash, pass over him with the bike, dump him, but it did not work out as he always comes back...

Episode 3 – Revision of the drama script produced by the group

Below is an episode that reveals reflections on the formal aspects of the written language:

(06) [Interaction between the participants - reading of the script produced]

L: (reading a part written by J) [...] *Stop!* "Enxergando" (= seeing) is with the letter "x"... (they correct). (L continues reading) [...] but sponges do not 'respi..rão' (= breathe, incorrectly spelled), isn't it? (he/she took a break before reading "respirão" and correctly read "respiram").

M: Yeah, it's strange...is it "respirão"? Isn't it "respiram"? I forgot again.

T: Does anyone want to talk about this difference?

M: "Respirão" is that they will breathe...

L: That they will breathe, not yet...

T: (works the difference also stressing the position of the tonic syllable)

L: (continue reading)... not "diser" (= to say, incorrectly spelled) to "ninguei" (= nobody, incorrectly spelled) that you are my brother? *Stop, stop!*

D: I am not going to tell anybody that you are my brother ...

M: "Diser" is with letter "z"!

J: I know!

T: Yeah, and how do you write "ninguém" (= nobody, correctly spelled)?

(D writes down "ningem"; J writes "ningeim" and L "ninguém"; M does not write anything)

Here is another episode that addresses the reflections established together:

(07) [Interaction between participants]

J was reading Chapter 4 re-enunciation, written by M, when he/she reached a point in the text when was interrupted by L.

[...]

L: *Stop!* "Aconteceu" (= happened, correctly spelled) is not written that way. [Reads: "MOTHER – What "acomtecel" (incorrectly spelled)? Who "gritol" (= shouted, incorrectly spelled)?]

T: Let's write ...

(L wrote "aconteceu", D wrote "acomteceu", M wrote "acomteceu" and J wrote "aconteceu").

T: People, we've already worked that here... when we use letter "m"... when we use letter "n"... Who remembers?

L: I do! We use "m"...when here is "p", if there is a "b" we use "m" [indicating the word "aconteceu"], if it is written another way, we use "n".

T: That's right. (the therapist works a little bit more the difference between m/n in the contexts of words) [...] Okay, here's rule, an easy rule of thumb... if we know this, a lot of problems with written words are solved, because in our language is very common to find words with "m" and "n", right?... but "o", "u" and the letter "l"... well, that's more difficult... [...]

M: But you know a rule, that rule of the "sol" (=sun, ending with letter "l", correctly spelled).

T: The rule of the "sol"? Oh, that one we talked about that day?

M: Yeah.

T: [...] We were looking at a few words to see if could find a regularity, a rule of thumb... D'you remember?

M: I forgot. "Sol", "farol" (= beacon) were written with letter "l", and when it was not written with letter "l"?

T: Okay, so you didn't forget...People, I discussed with M words ending with a shorter sound...*seu* (=your), *aconteceu* (=happened), *apareceu* (= appeared), *machucou* (=hurt), *cantou* (= sang) end with letter "u"...and words ending with a longer sound, such as *farol*, *sol*, *rouxinol* (= nightingale), *caracol* (= snail)... what else, M?... It's...*painel* (= panel)...*mel* (= honey)...they usually end with letter "l"...

[...]

T: But there's something like *céu* (= heaven)... *chapéu* (=hat)...*véu* (=veil)...when it is open, but has a graphic accent, then it is written with letter "u", really.

Continuing the analysis on the script review, below is an episode marked by an intense dialogue between group participants, especially L, about the observed aspects:

(08) [Interaction between participants]

D:(readingaparthehimselfhadwritten)...”pulls the sponge closer to the teacher’s nose [incorrectly spelled “provesora”], it’s wrong... I know ... but I do not know where...

L: It is “professora” with f, f as it is written in “faca” (=knife), *faca*, *ff...aca*

D: Oh, okay...boring guy... always giving me a cue...

T: [...] That's what I've talked about...Look at the word and see if it exists. Does “provesora” exists?

D: No.

T: Go on, D.

[...]

D: (reading)...”*screaming* in pain”... [in the text, the word is incorrectly spelled: “critando”, instead of “gritando”].

L: It is not “CRI”, but “GRI”, “gritando”[...]

T: Guys, look here (shows a part of the text that was studied before), the correct for is *vá... se...sentar* (= take a seat)...the words are not written together...there are three parts. Does “vasesentar” exist? Is that a single word? “Vasesentar” (speaks and writes).

[...]

D: (reading)... “everyone *semachuca* (= to get hurt, incorrectly spelled, the correct form is “se machuca”) around me”...

T: Yeah... “se machuca” is it written that way? Is “Semachuca” a word?

(Silence)

T: “Eu *semachuco*”, the girl “*semachuca*” her finger, Juliana “*semachucou*” her foot...

[...]

D: (continues reading)... “Kat, Kat, breathlessly shouts”... [incorrectly written “crita”, instead of “grita”]

L: Look...once again... “gri”, “gri”, not “cri”.

D: L is boring today.

[...]

L: What am I doing?

T: We have to think that everybody's arranging the script to publish it. Then [...] we're here to, together with our classmates, prepare the script, which belongs to everyone, and upload it into the website. And you, D [...], you think that your classmate L observes too many things in the text... You're also noticing things throughout the chapters written by other classmates, right?

■ DISCUSSION

The discussions below summarize the previously mentioned objectives of the work group.

In episode 1, one can observe the inclusion of the group to analyze the speech genre synopsis: the secret, curiosity, the desire to find out that secret brought up in the synopsis, could possibly encourage many people to unravel the mystery.

It was mentioned that the mystery was linked to Edward's identity, as the text cited, "So far, he has managed to hide his true identity". The group agreed with J that the description of the character could influence readers. However, some aspects that they did not observe were highlighted, such as the dangerous aspect surrounding the relationship between characters: What Bella does not realize is that the more she gets close to him, the greater the hazard to themselves and those around her". This threaten was another key term, whose purpose, in the text, was to create expectation. By reading and participating in various readings focusing on this genre, the group started to get analyze the linguistic and discursive properties of the text in order to effectively produce a written discourse of this genre.

In episode 2, L is in the writing process of the speech genre synopsis. The act of writing and rewriting this genre assigned L the role of author and gave him/her a reflective work about the language. By imagining an interlocutor to his/her text, he/she rearranged the writing composition not only to suit the genre *stricto sensu*, but also to create a text in which the reader could build the meanings the author expected. It was observed that the participant's synopsis was appropriate to the genre, as it had the intrinsic purposes and characteristics. L included in the final version of the the issues that were discussed in the analysis of the previous version: it was not clearly specified that Valente was a dog, but explained that Kat was Valente's owner, implying that it was an animal. L also made clear that Kat takes the sponge and, therefore, she and everyone around her began to have bad luck. It is believed that the text has fulfilled the purpose of expressing important aspects of the plot in a short space and also it stimulates reader's interest. The final excerpt including the sentence "the Grool always comes back..." creates an atmosphere of suspense around the plot, a suspense that the reader should unveil.

Episode 3 highlights the importance of working with formal aspects of language. Focusing the appropriation of written language through the text is justified by the speech therapist's concern to show the therapy participants significant situations that, through language use, i.e., the interaction processes, they can effectively learn. Thus, in terms of appropriation of the social uses of writing, especially during the therapeutic process, in which subjects present some *traumas* in relation to the learning of writing skills, it would not be productive, for example, to discuss if the word "dizer" is written with "s" or "z", or if "enxergando" is with "x" or "ch". This discussion, if detached from the social and interactional character intrinsic to language, is not only useless as it also ratifies the rejection of the subject when confronted

with the language and, consequently, the therapeutic process becomes ineffective. But when such considerations are introduced into a significant situation of effective use of written language, from a textual revision to the staging and publication of a produced piece, *lifeworld* is brought into the clinic. And thus, conceiving the language in its concrete reality, it is possible that the writing is addressed in all dimensions that constitute it.

Episode 3 (excerpt 07) shows also an important trend regarding the apprehension of all skills worked during therapy.

The distinction between "u" and "l" at the end of the words is resumed, a subject that had already been discussed with the group and more emphatically with M (due to his writing difficulty), and it becomes clear that he remembered a specific part that was mentioned before, including naming an alleged rule, *regra do sol*.

It is believed that words spelling, especially the most common words in language usage, is also assimilated during the reading activity. Thus, by reading the word in several different contexts, the individual usually (using the language) learns the correct spelling of the words. However, explaining some basic rules of orthography, as was done with the letters "m" and "n", which were assimilated by L (and he shared his knowledge with classmates), or even make them think of possible regularities in certain words can be helpful to mitigate one-off problems, a breakthrough in terms of what society expects in relation to the use of writing conventions. Furthermore, the joint reflection carried out on the notational aspects was quite relevant, it is intrinsic to text revision, part of the writing process. In other words, when dealing with formal aspects as was performed in the present study, i.e., with defined objectives with specific social function and hence considering language functionality, significant progresses towards developing individuals who also develop themselves in/through language^{15,16}.

Following this step, the excerpt 08 shows an interlocution marked by intense dialogue between group participants, especially between L and D. It is observed that the discussion generated was only a passing thing and, at certain moments, the situation returned to normal. L became aware of his role in the group, that is to say, co-author, developer, and not a corrector, in the strict sense, that only pinpoints mistakes. It is observed, therefore, that in group situations, sometimes, conflicts between subjects may happen, when a group member is contradicted by another participant, he may feel *corrected* by a colleague. The therapist should thus mediate this situation, to create and maintain a sense of solidarity within the group. Keeping this feeling means that,

when interaction conflicts take place, it is necessary to destabilize this tension through the resumption of common goals, with the help of group participants.

Furthermore, in view of this situation, the therapist can also show the group member that written language is built through the interaction with other people and that therefore, in some cases, “the other” may indicate the inadequacies as well as a better alternative, at other times, he will be the one to mediate a learning situation with another person.

Also, the therapist can make the guys realize that much of the knowledge they possess are different from others knowledge, and that richness of a group interaction lies in the exchange of that knowledge. This strategy can be an interesting asset, as it raises people’s awareness of the role they play and needs of others.

This episode also shows how to address the substitutions of graphemes that are opposite in their sonority trace and are often present in the writings of patients presenting difficulties with this aspect of the language. It is believed that the reading “exercise” is crucial to apprehend the correct spelling, and it is through this exercise/use one can see several possibilities that can help patients to assimilate the correct spelling of words. Hence, resuming their linguistic knowledge during text production is to make this process an interactive activity, and consequently, effective. Drawing the attention of group members for the presence or absence of words is searching the linguistic knowledge already internalized, considering that a user of Portuguese written language usually know the frequent words in their language and can discern the appropriateness of the use of a particular word. Besides, even if a grapheme substitution produces another word that exists in the language (*vaca/faca; pato/bato; queijo/queixo*, etc.), the individual, when using the language, will realize through the semantic context, the *impossibility* of such use.

It is frequently observed, in relation to some schools, that children are not stimulated to read a text, at best, they are concerned with the decodification of the reading material. Thus, many students tend not to realize the contexts of use, considering that, in a decontextualized practice, they do not make use of language, and in this lack of use, the meaning of a word does not matter, because the student is not conducted to adopt a reading attitude; in other words, a person who reads seeking to establish significance to the texts. If reading practice aims at just decoding, it is expected that students will present reading and writing difficulties. Working with language discursive dimension, seeking the meaning of words through the language skills of the individual, encourage them to overcome the missing

letters problem. In addition, it changes to the status from “bad writer” and “bad reader” to “proficient author and reader”.

In short, speech therapy taken as an example in the present study showed how teamwork is effective, as it allows the joint construction of knowledge. In the work group, a teaching-mediation-learning space is created. In this space, the roles may be initially distributed as follows: the therapist is the mediator, the one who asks questions that generate development, the one that leads subjects to reflect on the language and, at the same time, creates situations gives opportunity so that experiences are exchanged between group members. But these roles are not fixed, because teaching and learning functions are shared with every group member, i.e., all participants, including the therapist, are now instructors, and sometimes apprentices. It must be said that even the subjects/patients in a speech therapy situation (due to their written language difficulties) can be apprentices and *instructors*, as in a group interaction they develop and share knowledge and experiences. Therefore, they all teach and learn from each other. This responsibility/commitment to the other, learning from each other, can be understood as responsibility and commitment to themselves¹. This *partnership* with the group raises, among other reasons, from previous experiences; the other, the therapy colleague is someone who has also undergone different situations involving exclusion and stigma; as if conviviality could form a state of mutual acceptance. As if each one could be mirrored in the other and therefore the other’s success represents their own¹.

Thus, the function of therapy goes beyond the creation of a *locus* for written language appropriation, as it includes a therapeutic space where the subject feel included, feel necessary to the group’s functioning; in other words, it represents a way to foster the sense of belonging¹⁷. It must be said that the situation of social exclusion experienced in many schools and reflected in the speeches of families, teachers and children themselves, should be reversed in an inclusive situation, since exclusion generates symptoms that tend to keep children away from writing activities. Destigmatization is essential to the progress of the therapy. And the therapist, as he stimulates the subject/patient, as he assigns this patient functions within the group, as he understands and interprets the patient’s language actions, contributes to redefine the self-image that was compromised within the school context¹.

■ CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to present the theoretical and methodological aspects of the group approach focused on an enunciative-discursive perspective and analyze their effectiveness. Briefly, the procedures involve: therapy group formation; analysis of literate experiences and attracting individuals attention; selection of genres addressed in therapy; corpus collection comprising texts belonging to the selected genres; text reading and linguistic-discursive analysis; textual production within the genre in question; review of written texts (formal and discursive aspects) and publication of the material produced.

In the beginning, individuals participating in this study rejected the reading and writing activities, but when they started taking part of language social practices, not only accepted, but also actively committed themselves in these activities. In other words, group members that initially were in a position of “linguistic inability”, changed their status to co-constructors of knowledge about the language and became co-authors of texts produced by the group. All study participants appropriated the genres addressed in therapy and showed significant progress in the formal, textual and discursive aspects of written language. Three of them (J, M and L) were discharged from speech therapy at the end of the survey. ED gave up the therapeutic process when he was at an advanced stage. D, in turn, continued the treatment for another six months.

RESUMO

Objetivo: apresentar, em conformidade à teoria enunciativo-discursiva, os pressupostos teórico-metodológicos que sustentam a terapia fonoaudiológica em grupo voltada ao desenvolvimento de competências em linguagem escrita e analisar sua eficácia. **Métodos:** apresentam-se neste artigo os critérios teórico-metodológicos relacionados à formação do grupo e à terapia centrada na noção bakhtiniana de gêneros do discurso. A fim de ilustrar os procedimentos, são analisados episódios dialógicos gerados em sessões terapêuticas destinadas a cinco adolescentes com queixas de dificuldades de leitura e de escrita, alunos entre 11 e 13 anos de idade da rede pública de Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil. **Resultados:** os resultados levam a entender que a prática embasada na perspectiva enunciativo-discursiva possibilita aos sujeitos se apropriarem da linguagem escrita em seus aspectos discursivos, formais e textuais. Adicionalmente, a constituição do grupo proporciona, além das trocas de conhecimentos, um sentimento de pertença que eleva a autoestima, favorecendo os processos de aprendizagem. **Conclusão:** este trabalho evidencia os ganhos do atendimento em grupo na perspectiva teórica assumida. Os sujeitos, que no início do atendimento fonoaudiológico rejeitavam as atividades de leitura e escrita, na medida em que participavam de práticas sociais de linguagem, foram ressignificando a queixa da *dificuldade*, constituindo-se, gradativamente, em autores e leitores proficientes.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Linguagem Infantil; Escrita Manual; Dislexia

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