

MORPHOSYNTACTIC ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE IN CHILDREN WITH ASD IN A BILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT: LEARNING EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE

ASPECTOS MORFOSSINTÁTICOS DA LINGUAGEM DA CRIANÇA COM TEA EM AMBIENTE BILÍNGUE: APRENDIZAGEM DO PORTUGUÊS EUROPEU

ASPECTOS MORFOSINTÁCTICOS DEL LENGUAJE DE NIÑOS CON TEA EN UN ENTORNO BILÍNGÜE: APRENDIZAJE DEL PORTUGUÉS EUROPEO



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ABSTRACT: The research aims to present important aspects of language acquisition and development at the morphosyntactic level of a Brazilian child, eight years old, male, diagnosed with ASD and inserted in the bilingual context of learning European Portuguese. We rely on Silva's (2009) enunciative acquisition perspective, which, anchored in Émile Benveniste's theory, highlights the singular mode of enunciations based on the constitution of the subject in/through language. The methodology used was a case study, with data collected in a naturalistic way through home recordings. The results were analyzed after describing the videos, enabling the discussion of empirical data and we concluded that, although we found changes in the child's enunciative productions (subversions, omissions and morphosyntactic additions) each enunciative act reveals the subject's movement between slips in the language in the process of acquisition from Brazilian and European Portuguese, contradicting the ASD literature that highlights the rigidity in the language.

KEYWORDS: Language. Autism. Morphosyntax. Enunciation. Bilingualism.

RESUMO: A pesquisa tem como objetivo investigar os aspectos importantes da linguagem à nível morfosintático de uma criança brasileira, residente em Portugal, oito anos, que para além dos desafios enfrentados pelo transtorno de linguagem secundário ao TEA, constitui-se como sujeito. Apoiamo-nos na perspectiva aquisicional enunciativa de Silva (2009), que ancorada na teoria de Émile Benveniste, põe em relevo o modo singular das enunciações a partir da constituição do sujeito na/pela língua(gem). A metodologia utilizada foi estudo de caso, sendo os dados coletados de forma naturalística através de gravações domiciliares. Os resultados foram analisados após descrição dos vídeos possibilitando a discussão dos dados empíricos e concluímos que, embora encontremos alterações nas produções enunciativas da criança, cada ato enunciativo revela o movimento do sujeito entre deslizes na linguagem em processo de aquisição do português brasileiro e europeu, contradizendo a literatura do TEA que destaca a rigidez na linguagem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Linguagem. Autismo. Morfosintaxe. Enunciação. Bilinguismo.

RESUMEN: La investigación tiene como objetivo presentar aspectos importantes de la adquisición y desarrollo del lenguaje en el nivel morfosintático de un niño brasileño, de ocho años, varón, diagnosticado con TEA e insertado en el contexto bilingüe del aprendizaje del portugués europeo. Nos basamos en la perspectiva de adquisición enunciativa de Silva (2009), que, anclada en la teoría de Émile Benveniste, destaca el modo singular de las enunciaciones basadas en la constitución del sujeto en/a través del lenguaje. La metodología utilizada fue un estudio de caso, con datos recolectados de forma naturalista a través de grabaciones domiciliarias. Los resultados fueron analizados luego de describir los videos, permitiendo la discusión de datos empíricos y concluimos que, si bien encontramos cambios en las producciones enunciativas del niño (subversiones, omisiones y adiciones morfosintáticas) cada acto enunciativo revela el movimiento del sujeto entre deslices en el lenguaje en el proceso de adquisición del portugués brasileño y europeo, contradiciendo la literatura sobre TEA que destaca la rigidez del idioma.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Idioma. Autismo. Morfosintaxis. Enunciación. Bilingüismo.

Introduction

This article aims to focus on issues that reveal nuances at the morphosyntactic level in the process of language acquisition and development of a subject diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). From the perspective of normative grammar, such phenomena may be considered errors—manifesting as omissions, subversions, or inversions of elements—but they inevitably come to mark the subject's movement within language, influenced by immersion in a bilingual environment.

The methodology adopted is a case study and presents excerpts from the enunciation of a Brazilian child in the process of learning a second language—European Portuguese. The child is an eight-year-old male, diagnosed with ASD, residing with his family in a city in northern Portugal. The child's immersion in an environment in which European Portuguese is the official language had begun just over six months prior to the moment under analysis, when the speaker encounters the present and unrepeatable moment of enunciation, simultaneously calling and being called within the here-and-now instance of discourse. The bilingual context—in which the parents enunciate in Brazilian Portuguese and the other inhabitants of the city in European Portuguese—marked the subject's constitution in and through languages in a heterogeneous manner, permeated by estrangement.

The analysis of the collected material was conducted through video transcriptions using the NVivo software, following methodological procedures grounded in the principles proposed by Silva (2009), who introduced the enunciative acquisitional perspective in the field of language acquisition. The child's establishment in language, under the author's conception, is grounded in the work of Émile Benveniste, who, throughout his extensive bibliography, theorized language as both plural and singular, as are the child's spoken and written enunciations. Benvenistean enunciation theory foregrounds the constitutive role of intersubjectivity in language.

As proposed by Silva (2009), this study adheres to the two core commitments of the field of language acquisition: the theoretical commitment (internal to the research) and the empirical commitment (the child's speech). Both are considered fundamental for addressing questions of meaning articulated with the very notion of the linguistic sign.

According to Benveniste, enunciation offers human beings experience through the symbolic—beyond the concrete—while language is the means that gives form to the content of thought (Benveniste, 2005, p. 69). Following Benveniste (2006), we adopt the notion of

enunciation as the individual, singular, and unrepeatable act of using language, which directs our interest toward the process of updating the linguistic system in use, rather than solely its product. As an ephemeral act that quickly fades, enunciation depends on a specific space and time.

According to Barros (2011a), studies on language in ASD were influenced by the earliest descriptions of the disorder—dating back to 1943—in which language was perceived exclusively as a communicative act. However, in line with Benveniste (2005), we understand that language is intrinsic to human nature. The reality of communication takes place through the word in the service of language.

The singular manner of autistic enunciation helps to reshape the clinical perspective in multidisciplinary treatments of these subjects, since the way they relate to language and to language use reveals the particularities of linguistic movement in autism. In this sense, we agree with Barros (2011b), who argues that it is untenable to claim that autistic individuals are outside language, even acknowledging the difficulties they may face in communication. The discourse of specialized literature must therefore be relativized.

Our central problematization concerns whether it is, in fact, possible to identify a singular morphosyntactic structure in the process of language acquisition in autism, as well as the need to problematize the displacements, encounters, and mismatches within and across Brazilian and European Portuguese. We draw on the considerations of Barros and Nóbrega (2016), who suggest the existence of probable rigidity along the syntagmatic axis of language, characterized by a structure intrinsic to the autistic linguistic system. Such rigidity would confine the subject to a perseverative and rigid discursive structure, governing difficulties in shifting along the associative axis of language.

In the first part of this study, we present the child diagnosed with ASD as an enunciative subject and subsequently address language acquisition. These sections underpin our discussions on the morphosyntactic organization of the linguistic system manifested in the child's utterances.

The enunciating subject

In this section, we address the linguistic enunciative subject in order to reflect on the autistic subject who enunciates and is enunciated in and through language. This is not the psychoanalytic subject, but rather the subject constituted in language and in the relationship between an I and a you, becoming an effect—most often—within the discourse of the other.

From an anthropological perspective on language, Benveniste asserts that we do not encounter human beings without language, nor do we ever see them creating it. He advances the project of stripping language of its role as a mere tool for communication, situating it instead within human nature and as constitutive of the subject. Flores (2019) highlights Benveniste's notion that the essence of human language lies in the fact that we speak to others who speak—in dialogical situations—leading to the Benvenistean idea that what we encounter in the world is one human being speaking to another.

The subject of enunciation is cultural because they are born and raised within a particular society. By culture, Benveniste understands a set of values, habits, prescriptions, and interventions that govern linguistic uses and human relations within a social group. In addition to being cultural, this subject is also dialogical or allocutive, as they constitute and are constituted in dialogue and addressivity. Before calling upon the other, the subject is called by the other to enunciate, which constitutes the condition for the subject's establishment in language.

Still from an anthropological perspective, Flores (2019) aligns with Humboldt's principles (1982) in asserting that language is shared by its speakers, yet each speaker mobilizes it in a singular way within society. Although the question of the influence of relations between individuals and society is longstanding—and philosophers and sociologists have contributed to this debate for centuries—downplaying the role of the subject of enunciation amounts to neglecting what escapes control in language. It is essential to acknowledge that speaking always presupposes the other. When the speaker speaks, they address the addressee, who is immersed in the same system: language. This relationship is only possible because human beings are in language, activating it through speech directed toward the other.

Therefore, to consider the subject of enunciation marked by the atypical peculiarity of ASD is to circumscribe the place occupied by the autistic subject—if not outside language, since linguistic signs are present in autistic utterances, even if in fragmented form—making their use so individual that it has come to characterize a disorder. At times, the singularity of

autistic speech excludes the interlocutor who does not understand what is said. However, enunciation is not founded on comprehension, but on the subjectivity of language.

For Benveniste (2005), language exists because each speaker presents themselves as a subject every time they take the floor and address an interlocutor. In the dialectical reality between I and you lies the foundation of subjectivity. This Benvenistean perspective leads us to the relationship established in language acquisition, in which there is one who speaks and another who recognizes, accepts, and validates the utterance—even when “incomplete”—as part of the language, thereby elevating the child to the status of subject. Taking the subject as a speaker is fundamental, regardless of how speech is manifested.

Language acquisition and the foundational relations of the child in languages

In general terms, the child’s entry into language occurs within what is considered an intersubjective relationship. The commitment assumed by the enunciative acquisitional perspective on language mobilizes two key analytical lenses to explain the phenomenon of acquisition: one focused on the subject and the other on language. Together, they refer to the singularity of the child’s saying, as opposed to the regularities that, while absent, permeate traditional theories of language acquisition that attempt to measure and homogenize a process that concerns and constitutes the child-subject (Silva, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2018).

The trajectory of language acquisition makes clear the child’s relationship with language without prioritizing form, but rather the transformations that both subject and language undergo throughout acquisition. The subject of acquisition is linguistic and enunciative, since it is through language that the child constitutes themselves as a subject in relation to the other and to the world. When the child begins to use language, according to Silva (2009), they are already immersed in a named world, which nonetheless must be recreated so that the child can display their position as a subject within a defined space and time. This reconstructive activity is carried out in each act—the notion of the subject of enunciation through the experience of a reversible relationship between speaker and interlocutor. For Silva, language provides speakers with a system of personal references, which each individual appropriates through the act of language, making each instance of its use unique (Lorandi, 2008).

The condition of intersubjectivity is what makes linguistic communication possible (Benveniste, 2005). The three instances of intersubjectivity involve: a cultural relationship among human beings situated within a given culture and society; a dialogical or allocutive

relationship between speaker and addressee—the dialogical structure; and a linguistic-enunciative relationship among forms that materialize the presence of speaker and addressee (I and you). These instances of intersubjectivity are unfolded by Silva (2009) into two groups—dyadic relations (between two terms) and triadic relations (between three terms)—to explain the phenomenon of language acquisition.

The first foundational dyadic relation in the child’s acquisition is the I–you relationship, which concerns the child–other conjunction. Initially, the child is closely bound to the other, a condition that psychoanalysis terms alienation. According to Silva (2009), the child first forms a constitutive unity in which “I” and “you” are defined by a relation of conjunction; the child depends on the other to enunciate and to become a subject of acquisition. In this relationship, the other takes the child’s saying—even when irregular and heterogeneous in relation to the constituted language—as a bearer of meaning, attributing sense to the child’s emissions even before a systematized language can be recognized.

Thus, what was previously irregular becomes regular through the meaning attributed by the other to the child’s enunciations; what belongs to the singular comes to belong to the general from the child’s earliest encounters with language. The child’s entire body is engaged in enunciation from the very beginning of their relationship with language, and by attributing meaning to the child’s gestures and/or vocalizations, the other grants them a place of enunciation. This is the foundational role of intersubjectivity as a condition for subjectivity. The “you” makes present in the child what is still absent in them: language.

In the acquisition of language in its vocal/phonic realization, the child, in relation to the other and to the world, experiences the symbolic dimension of language, which enables abstraction—through vocal manipulation of phonic forms—regarding the configuration of the linguistic system, based on the recognition of the sign in the form of the word (Silva; Oliveira; Diedrich, 2020).

The second dyadic relationship is the child–other disjunction, which psychoanalysis refers to as separation. The child must separate from the other in order to become a subject; within this relationship, the child begins to enunciate on their own, breaking the constitutive I–you unity. Even in an embryonic manner, the child instantiates themselves in enunciation—albeit through sounds not yet recognized as language—but begins to engage in their own saying, no longer entirely dependent on the other’s speech.

The third and final dyadic relationship proposed by Silva (2009) is the (I–you)/he relationship. The discourse persons “I” and “you” are distinguished from the non-person “he”

by a temporal imbrication. As Silva (2009) argues, since intersubjectivity is established through the present of enunciation, discourse is instantiated in the world, producing references and meanings within the instance of discourse.

In the first trinitarian relationship (I–you/he), the interdependence between person (I and you) and non-person (he) becomes central; this is the condition of the connection between presence and absence, and it is at this point that language fully emerges in the child’s speech. This new triadic configuration emphasizes the distinction between person and non-person and makes possible a space for symbolization, which ensures the social bond. Therefore, in symptomatic cases of delayed language acquisition and development, the social bond is fragmented; the child with autism has difficulty symbolizing and establishing relationships with the other and with the world. This trinitarian relationship is key to the child’s inscription in the order of language, because by connecting with the “he,” the child gains access to symbolization, which underpins conceptual functions—concept formation, abstraction, narration, comparison, figures of speech, among others—thus opening all possibilities through enunciated language, language in use.

Enunciative relations and instances of subjectivity result in the notion of two forms of alterity, which, according to Silva (2009), are alterity with the other of address (you) and with the other of culture (He). Thus, within the figurative framework of enunciation—the structure of dialogue—“I” and “you” designate the speaker and the addressee; “he” designates language in act; and “He” represents culture. Although “He” is not linguistically represented in the linearity of discourse, it is constitutive and foundational in the child’s relationship with the addressee and with language.

Through these instances of intersubjectivity, enunciative relations, and dual alterity, the (I–you/he)–He dispositif is formed, which reserves a place for addressees, as well as for language and culture, to be instantiated in enunciation. Finally, we agree with Silva (2009) that the constitution of the subject of language occurs through dyadic and trinitarian relations that enable the child to recognize themselves as speaker and the other as addressee in dialogue, while also updating their discourse through the conversion of meaning into word—the semiotic dimension of language.

The autistic child: a view on the morphosyntax of language

In language disorders—or, more precisely, in pathological forms of language—the two faculties of recognizing and understanding are often dissociated (Benveniste, 2006). Considering the clinical context of language disorders, we argue that there is a gap separating the semiotic and the semantic. We start from the premise that language disorders are characterized by a peculiar dissociation of the form–meaning isomorphism. The breakdown of this isomorphism, in such cases, has a specific nature, linked to the concepts of recognition and comprehension of linguistic units, which constitute the locus of subjectivity.

Thus, in symptomatic speech—regardless of the type of impairment involved—it is language use that is under scrutiny, reflecting either a problem in sign recognition, a difficulty in understanding the idea, or the compromise of both aspects. Within the therapeutic setting, there is a constant need for the clinician to construct meaning by seeking the relationship between signified and signifier. Clues and traces in patients’ speech are ubiquitous, and phonetic traces are one such clue, though not always decipherable.

At every moment in which a child—whether or not diagnosed with ASD—enunciates, there is inevitably an exposure of their appropriation of the linguistic system in their own way. Barros (2011b) argues that the subject is constituted in and through language. We agree with the author that the child projects themselves by using language through speech or through signs, asserting their presence and becoming an effect of language itself. In this same line of reasoning, Barros (2011b) suggests that in autism there is a movement of entrapment between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes: language tends to be fixed on the syntagmatic axis (echolalia) and, at times, freer on the paradigmatic axis (neologisms or random vocalizations). This fixation on one of the axes, according to the author, may correspond to the autistic individual’s aversion to change—disruptions of routine—manifested in language.

Among studies concerned with autism, there is consensus that language in these children presents a diversity of symptoms, including delayed language acquisition; difficulties in reception and expression—characterized by omissions, substitutions, and phonetic distortions; echolalia; use of holophrases; short utterances; inappropriate pauses and hesitations; frequent interjections, among others. These “errors” reveal that linguistic performance is governed by rules and that, in many cases, the grammatical rules of a language constrain or monitor actual speech production. Such phenomena are investigated in order to reveal the phonological reality

of units and rules, as well as the relationship between competence and performance (Fromkin, 1971).

A slip is defined as an unintentional linguistic innovation; however, the central issue is not classification, but understanding how “errors” can shed light on underlying units of linguistic performance and discourse. There are discrete units at certain levels of performance that can be substituted, omitted, transposed, or added. Language has its own internal order, and during acquisition the child experiences these arrangements in their own way in order to arrive at this order—within the regularity of the system and the conventionality of the relationship with the other—thus constituting reference in discourse.

In considering the child with ASD, we understand that access to culture (He) and to the other occurs in a wholly unexpected manner—often through a language other than the mother tongue, through music, or through other semiotic routes. If culture is accessed only through the relationship with the other, this highlights how singular such access is in autism. The idea that language can be abstracted by the child is revealed in the way language offers an infinite range of manipulations of already given units—units that are inherent to the language and that are renewed and singular—characterizing the displacement between language and system, and between language and discourse.

It is not sufficient to merely describe the data; it is necessary to explain what takes place in the process of the child’s changes and movements within language. The child’s new productions challenge us to further unfold theoretical questions. In Table 1 below, we present an excerpt from the child’s enunciative scene—here referred to as Paulo—in order to observe the movements involved in the constitution of this subject in languages and in language, at the morphosyntactic level of Brazilian and European Portuguese.

Table 1 – Excerpt from the enunciative scene

Kid ²		Interlocutor	Enunciative Scene
1	Um pôco tossento	Hello, how are you, Paulo?	The child exhibits episodes of throat clearing.
2	Ra-Ró-To, Rato. Eu estou a querer o rato.	Look here, Paulo! Do I want?	The child was at home playing with his Brazilian aunt, who had come to visit. Sitting around the table, they played with images and words to expand the narrative.

² Since the sentences would not have the same meaning in English, we decided to leave them in Portuguese. However, the child has difficulty pronouncing the names of some words, namely: rat, owl, cat, macaroni, and water.

3	Eu quero falar a palavra rá tê ró.	Do I want to say the word?	
4	Rato Rato	Ah, the mouse. I want the word <i>mouse</i> .	
5	Coluja cor lu ja	And now? Do I want the word?	
6	Cu tu txa Cutuxa molenguenta	I want the word <i>owl</i> .	The child makes an expression of disgust.
7	Ca to Miaaaau. Ca to	And now? Do I want? You didn't say "I want."	The aunt removes the picture from the child's field of vision. The child points to the card with the image of a cat.
8	Eu quello, Acarrão quello.	That's it! Very good.	Picture of macaroni.
9	Au- u- rá Quelo aurra	And now, Paulo? Me? Hmm, very good!	Picture of a glass of water.
10	Acabou mano? Qué não! O que você está encontrando?	I'm still looking.	The aunt searches for a picture inside the bag.
11	Cabô mano?	Paulo? Later you can play; let's go over there.	Silence.
12	Oi, meu nome é Alemanha russiânica!	This is the Atlantic Ocean. Which country is this?	The child moves to the world map and points. The child holds a sticker from the World Cup album showing a player wearing the German national team jersey.
13	Vêdi	Let's go over there, then you can play. What color is this?	The aunt takes the child by the arm to another part of the room to begin a different activity.
14	Carra ni um nininu	Sing.	The child sings and dances to a forró song. Song lyrics: Por causa de um menino.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Through the act of enunciation, speaker and addressee establish a discursive relationship in which fragmented structures carry meaning for the one who speaks, but not always for the one who listens, since the child's interlocutor often shifts toward the grammatical sense of the utterance. In Table 1, we observe instances of intersubjectivity: the child and the other in an allocutive or dialogical relationship, as they alternate the roles of speaker and addressee in the materiality of discourse, generating references and co-references around a theme and establishing intersubjective communication—for example, the animal figure presented to the child during therapy (Line 5, Interlocutor: "And now?" / Paulo: Awl).

In line 2, we observe the interlocutor's prominent role in calling the child into the enunciative scene and prompting them to assume their enunciative position ("Look here, Paulo!"). We can also observe morphosyntactic structures adjusting toward the expected

linguistic pattern of European Portuguese in the utterance “Eu estou a querer o rato (I am wanting the mouse)”. This syntagmatic construction is typical of European Portuguese, which tends to conjugate using “a” + infinitive verb, whereas in Brazilian Portuguese the expected form would be “eu quero o rato (I want the mouse)”. However, the interlocutor responds in Brazilian Portuguese as a way of contesting the sentential formation used outside the pattern established in the home environment.

This last group is organized in the utterance of the other: *coruja* (owl) — line 6. Beyond what is expressed by the child, we observe both participants mobilizing vocalization, updating the discourse reference, and assigning meaning to forms within interlocutory relations. The linguistic-enunciative relationship between the child and the speaker is perceived through linguistic forms and functions, establishing a cultural and dialogic bond between the subject and the speaker in the utterance “*Ca to. Miaaaaau. Ca to*” (line 7). Therefore, we reaffirm agreement with Silva (2009), who argues that the constitution of the language subject occurs through dyadic and triadic relations, enabling the child to recognize themselves as speaker and to recognize the other as addressee within the dialogue.

In lines 8 and 9, there is a noticeable disorganization of morphosyntactic structures, characterized by omissions or excesses — *eu quello, eu quello, eu quello a carrão; au- u- rá; quello aurra* — which do not hinder the child’s engagement with language and capacity to self-express. We also see discourse persons in a disjunctive *I* and *you* relation; the child is not only summoned by the other but begins to establish themselves as speaker and enunciative subject, arising from interaction with the other (line 10): “*Acabou! Ana: Acabou mano? Qué não!*” In this line, there is also a temporal inversion of the question’s meaning. The child uses a resultative verb, anticipates the answer, and accelerates content similarly to virtual environments. This subversion between action and result reveals a subject who manifests in the brevity of facts. The current tendency to simplify or rapidly conclude matters—as seen in virtual worlds through videos and mobile games—may influence the syntagmatic order of the phrase.

However, behind what appears simple, many intertwined issues proliferate, requiring careful consideration. Additionally, we perceive the cultural and social influence of other linguistic realities in the child’s utterance in line 10 with the use of “*mano*,” a typical expression from speakers in southeastern Brazil and neighboring regions. We also note the growing exposure to vlog content where YouTubers comment on children’s virtual games such as Roblox, Starcraft, FIFA, Minecraft, etc.

Speakers tend to associate verbs with base meaning, but linguistic units are not always so straightforward. Beyond the gap between form and meaning, Benveniste highlights pathological forms where there is a dissociation between the semiotic and semantic. It is, therefore, within the realm of language and clinical practice that this notion operates effectively.

In line 12, “*Oi, meu nome é Alemanha russiânica!*” we find an interesting subversion where the neologism *russiânica* is a compound adjective created for the country “Alemanha” (Germany), borrowing the suffix *-ânica* from the interlocutor’s utterance “*oceano atlântico*.” This is not mere repetition; there is gender agreement with “Alemanha.” We analyze this production following Benveniste (2005, p. 66), who states that a symbol “does not configure the data of experience, in the sense that there is no necessary relation between objective reference and linguistic form,” meaning language does not label the world but creates and recreates it, revealing the human capacity to express anything.

In line 14, the phrase “*carra ni um nininu*” falls into a void, reflecting the other’s inability to engage in the child’s spontaneous movement toward language acquisition. The interlocutor dismisses this attention to the expected speech pattern. Vocalizations are rearranged into verbal turns that carry a unique prosody as significant as any word. Every intersubjective exchange—whether through gestures, looks, vocalizations, facial expressions, or body posture from speaker to interlocutor—prioritizes the content intended for expression, marking the child’s presence in language (Lazinik; Cohen, 2011).

The vocal element integrates linguistic forms and functions in the syntagmatization of discourse, endowing them with meaning and actualizing them through relation to the other. Vocal arrangements unify forms and functions, exerting a strong influence in establishing meaning within syntactic relations, which children mobilize early in their discourse. This underscores the foundational role of intersubjectivity for subjectivity: the properly constituted language subject.

Final Considerations

From the enunciative acquisition perspective, we observe the transition from “lack” to “presence” manifested through “failures” during the child’s relationship with language. The autistic child’s linguistic movement is marked by morphosyntactic alterations characterized by subversions (line 7 — *Acarrão quello*), suppressions (line 9 — *Qué não*), or morphological and

syntactic inversions (line 9 — *O que você está encontrando?*), and repetition of utterances (lines 1 and 2 — *rá tê ró*), which denote “ungrammaticality” but reveal the subject’s singularity. It is crucial to consider the child’s utterance as a productive and appropriative movement, distancing from a pathologizing view. It is not mere repetition but the child’s imprint within their own linguistic order as they navigate a bilingual environment learning European Portuguese.

The Benvenistean enunciative perspective allows understanding of this transition from silence to speech—regardless of the language of identification—in which the subject is constituted within the particularity of linguistic wandering. Therefore, recognizing distortions as unique aspects of the autistic subject’s language acquisition and development is essential to elevate symptomatic studies to a linguistic descriptive level. Repetition of another’s speech—whether conscious or unconscious, directed or not to the subject—reveals much about the autistic individual’s linguistic particularities across any linguistic environment.

The importance of the “other” in discourse is evident, suggesting that the interlocutor’s position is fundamental for the autistic child to address their utterance and advance toward mastery of the native or immersion language, attempting to escape the syntagmatic axis and conflict within the associative chain. Although syntactic construction is clearly underway, fully formed phrases in terms of syntagmatization are not yet evident.

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