

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SPEECH THERAPY STUDENTS WITH READING AND WRITING AFTER A LITERACY WORKSHOP

A RELAÇÃO DE ALUNOS DE FONAUDIOLOGIA COM A LEITURA E ESCRITA A PARTIR DE UMA OFICINA DE LETRAMENTO

LA RELACIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE FONAUDIOLOGÍA CON LA LECTURA Y ESCRITURA DE UM TALLER DE LETRAS

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ABSTRACT: Current research explain that literacy activities developed inside the university can expand reading and writing possibilities of individuals in their academic environment. This study aimed to comprehend the relationship that students from a HEI establish with written language after their participation in a literacy workshop. Six students from an undergraduate Speech Therapy course, who participated in a literacy promotion workshop, were the subjects in this study. The results are organized in 2 axes: “Reading and writing difficulties presented by students at the university” and “Effects of the literacy workshop on their subjective position”. The literacy workshop allowed these participants to assume different positions about their supposed writing difficulties, enabling the expansion of their autonomy, authorship and a reduction of their negative feelings about written language.

KEYWORDS: Literacy. Academic literacy. University education. Group activities.

RESUMO: Pesquisas atuais apontam que atividades de letramento na universidade podem ampliar as possibilidades de relação dos sujeitos frente ao uso da leitura e escrita no ambiente acadêmico. Frente a tal compromisso, este estudo objetivou compreender a relação que discentes de uma IES estabelecem com a linguagem escrita após sua participação em uma oficina de letramento. Seis alunas de um curso de graduação em Fonoaudiologia que fizeram parte de uma oficina de promoção do letramento participaram deste estudo. Os resultados estão organizados em 2 eixos que retratam as “Dificuldades de leitura e escrita apresentadas pelos estudantes na universidade” e os “Efeitos da oficina de letramento na posição subjetiva dos mesmos”. O espaço de oficina do letramento pode permitir que seus participantes assumam outras posições frente as suas supostas dificuldades, possibilitando a

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ampliação de sua autonomia, autoria e uma diminuição de suas angústias e sofrimentos frente à linguagem escrita.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Letramento. Letramento acadêmico. Ensino superior. Atividades grupais.*

RESUMEN: *Las investigaciones actuales apuntan que las actividades de alfabetización en la universidad pueden ampliar las posibilidades de la relación de los sujetos con respecto al uso de la lectura y la escritura en el entorno académico. Frente a tal compromiso, este estudio tuvo como objetivo comprender la relación que los estudiantes de una IES establecen con el lenguaje escrito, desde la perspectiva de los propios estudiantes desde su participación en un taller de letras. Seis estudiantes de un curso de pregrado en Logopedia que formaron parte de un taller de promoción de la alfabetización participaron en este estudio. Los resultados se organizan en 2 ejes que retratan las "dificultades de lectura y escritura presentadas por los estudiantes en la universidad" y los "efectos del taller de alfabetización sobre su posición subjetiva". El espacio del taller de alfabetización puede permitir a sus participantes asumir otras posiciones frente a sus supuestas dificultades, permitiendo la expansión de su autonomía, autoría y una reducción de su angustia y sufrimiento frente al lenguaje escrito.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Alfabetización. Alfabetización académica. Enseñanza superior. Actividades grupales.*

Introduction

Since the end of the 20th century, Brazil has been marked by a process of democratization in teaching, especially with regard to access to Higher Education (HE). Statistics from the last Higher Education Census, held in 2018, point to a 6.8% growth in the number of new entrants, compared to the previous year. In addition, in 2018 8.5 million students enrolled in HE, which corresponds to an increase of 44.8%, compared to 2008.

However, although statistical data indicate a significant increase in the number of students entering Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), it is prudent to point out that a significant portion of these students do not complete their education, largely due to the limited literacy conditions they present (DONIDA; SANTANA, 2019). In this sense, it is necessary to consider some factors involved in this conjuncture, avoiding a superficial analysis of the situation, which leads in a simplistic way to causal explanations that sometimes may fall on the student, on his family, on the notion of normality constituted from the equivalence behavior, values, knowledge, producing a discourse that strengthens the normalization of acting and thinking (CANGUILHEM, 2007). Giroto *et al.* (2019, p.809), in this regard, explain that from this concept there is no space for what is unique, thus, the different modes of knowledge appropriation are, in the field of education, often understood “as symptoms of

diseases, in a process of naturalization of differences and individualization of issues that permeate the appropriation of written language”. It is necessary to consider, according to the authors, that many of the speeches on this subject produced in the field of education should not be reduced to individual and organic aspects, since it has a direct relationship with other social, political, ideological, economic, cultural factors and produces the social differences. This notion of normality, by transforming non-medical issues, of social, political, ideological origin, into medical and individual issues, produces medicalization, that is, it treats social issues as if they were biological, equating the world of life with the world of nature (MOYSÉS; COLLARES, 2013).

Marquesin and Benevides (2011) and Winiarski (2018) explain that many of the reading and writing difficulties manifested by HE students occur due to gaps in the basic education system itself. Because, in the authors' view, schoolwork has not been sufficiently able to lead students to make significant use of language in their daily lives through social practices, thus, many schools often end up using mechanical and decontextualized practices, such as copies, dictation and activities that emphasize only the normative dimension of the language to the detriment of textual and discursive issues.

Still, regarding the literacy conditions of HE students, studies by Moretto (2017) and Souza and Bassetto (2014) show a distance between the teachers' expectations, the proposed academic practices and the reading and writing conditions of the students. Researches by Abramundo (2014) and INAF (2016) reveal that incoming students, in HE, have insufficient literacy levels to operate, significantly, with the diverse academic genres that mediate their education. In this sense, HEIs, which, in theory, should provide access to knowledge production, the exercise of citizenship and argumentative positioning, in practice, often cannot handle these activities (KERSCH; SANTOS, 2017; MARTINS, 2017; WINIARSKI, 2018).

To reverse this situation, discussions about the effective use of reading and writing have demonstrated the influence that such activities have on the permanence and academic performance of HE students, insofar as they can recognize their active and responsive position (WINIARSKI, 2018 ; DONIDA; SANTANA, 2019). Martins (2017) and Kersh and Santos (2017) emphasize that the strict conditions of literacy in HE should be considered and faced by the HEIs. Because it is from this confrontation that, moving away from a medicalizing vision, they can propose policies and programs to guarantee formation that, in addition to supplying the labor market, allows students, through language, to elaborate and organize, with criticality, knowledge of issues relevant to professional performance.

Almeida and Pan (2017) state that actions aimed at working with language are important in the university environment. According to the authors, the university, by choosing the written language of the academic genre as the only possibility of verbal production, ends up silencing the students' history, subjugating the social practices that constituted it before entering the academy.

In this sense, it is worth emphasizing the role of language in promoting literacy, as it is from the dialogic activity, typical of language, in the terms of Bakhtin (2003; 2006), that students can effectively participate in the social relations relevant to the university environment. With this understanding, the aim of this study is to understand, from the perspective of students from an HEI, the relationship they establish with written language from their participation in a literacy workshop.

Methodological path

The research report presented here was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee, number 69021617.9.000.804. It is a study that is configured as a research-intervention, in that it unites research with action/practice and, in the interlocutive process, allows the researcher to assume a position of non-neutrality. This type of research highlights the importance of jointly building a space for the reframing of opinions, assuming an active and transforming character of reality. It is based on a dialogical perspective of discourse, made explicit by Bakhtin (2003; 2006), and which has dialogism as its central axis. Thus, it is considered that the research space is seen as a place to produce discursive practices, which provide both the resignification of the past and the opening of a future. In this sense, the present study assumes an intervention bias, seeking to understand data from reality from the relationships it establishes with the subjects participating in the study. Thus, this research based on the principle of otherness perceives the relationship between the researcher and the participants as an essential condition for their development and assumes that all knowledge is produced historically and socially shared (MASSI *et al.*, 2018).

Six students of the Speech Therapy course at a university located in the South of Brazil participated in this study, who were part of an extension activity organized by two speech therapists, teachers of a Master's and Doctorate Program in Communication Disorders and of the Postgraduate Program in Speech Therapy. It is worth clarifying that students from all periods of undergraduate studies in Speech Therapy were invited to participate in this extension activity, called the Literacy Workshop in Higher Education. The objective of this

Workshop was to promote a space for dialogue, listening and expanding the experiences of reading and writing lived in the academic context. The activity: Literacy Workshop was developed in weekly meetings, lasting 90 minutes, during the academic years from 2017 to 2019. All participants signed the free and informed consent form.

The participants in this research are six speech therapy students, recognized by the following fictitious names:

Beatriz: 37 years old, seventh period of the undergraduate course, from public basic education. She participated in the workshop for 1 year and a half. Before entering university she explains that she did not have a good understanding of what she read and wrote, she used to just copy without question.

Vânia: 38 years old, seventh period of the Speech Therapy course. She attended public basic education (elementary I and II) and high school in the private system. She participated in the workshop for 1 year and a half. Before entering university, she recalls that despite enjoying reading and writing, she had difficulties in this language modality.

Ana: 33 years old, seventh period of the undergraduate course, from public basic education. She participated in the literacy workshop for a year and a half. Before attending higher education, she remembers that she was questioned by teachers due to her lack of attention to read and lack of concentration to write.

Fernanda: 23 years old, seventh period of graduation, from public basic education. She participated in the literacy workshop for a year and a half. Before entering university she recalls that she had difficulties with reading and writing.

Luana: 29 years old, seventh period period of graduation, from public basic education. She participated in the literacy workshop for a year and a half. She reports that she had some difficulties in using written language before entering university.

Claudia: 44 years old, sixth period of graduation, from public basic education. She participated in the literacy workshop for 2 years. She reports that before attending university she had difficulties to go to school, because of this, a large part of her schoolwork had "errors".

For each meeting, at the Workshop, a planning was carried out that considered the objective of the work, counting on the active and creative participation of the students, who reflected on the reading and writing practices in their academic context. The main activities

developed during the meetings were based on the significant use of written language, among which we can highlight: conversation circles, textual productions and collective readings.

At the end of the first semester of 2019, after participating in the workshop for at least a year and a half, six students of the Speech Therapy course responded orally and individually to a semi-structured interview. The interviews took place with a scheduled date and time and lasted approximately 25 minutes. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed, in full, by one of the responsible researchers. Such interview, understood as an enunciative device, capable of encouraging students to produce texts, was composed of questions that aimed to understand the students' relationship with this language modality and the effects of their participation in the workshops and their subjective position towards reading and the writing. Thus, in view of this understanding, with the intention of explaining the enunciative context in which the interview took place, the guiding questions and the answers prepared by the students are presented below.

Results and discussions

The discursive productions elaborated by the students are organized in two axes. The first axis, recognized as “Relations with the written language at the university”, contemplates the students' understanding of the use they make of this language modality in higher education, as well as the causes attributed to the said difficulties in this use. The second, named “Effects of the literacy workshop on the subjective position of the participants”, presents discursive productions related to the vision of each participant about their reading and writing productions after participating in the literacy workshop.

First Axis: Relations with reading and writing at the university

To understand the participants' view of the relationships established with reading and writing at the university, each student was asked about their relationship with the written language. Part of the participants' responses is presented below.

Reading and not understanding; writing and not understanding, normative question (a little) (Beatriz).

Reading many times and not understanding, not being able to write clearly. I can't get my ideas out. In writing, it is always the textual genre, the

organization. In writing I know the idea, the order, the normative, but the elaboration is very difficult (Vânia).

Understanding and normative difficulties. I always need to resume what I read and write in some way, often I need someone else to help me (Ana).

I have difficulty understanding both what I read and what I write (Fernanda).

I have no difficulties with this modality, there are some fears, like, interpreting and understanding correctly (Luana).

My reading and writing difficulties are varied, comprehension. To make me understand and interpretation are the ones that bother me the most. (Cláudia) (our translation).

Following the students' discursive productions, it is possible to affirm that the majority mentions difficulties to read and write, which are justified by normative questions of the language, the lack of textual understanding and organization. A similar relationship established between students and the written language was also considered in the study by Fuza, Fiad and Gomes (2015), who realized that university students tend to value normative aspects of the language with the concern to adapt to the linguistic and formal norms that characterize each gender.

Some students also demonstrate that, in their view, writing is the simple reproduction of knowledge, which consists of a set of normative rules, far from discursive practices, in which statements are historically constructed from two different forces. One of them, verifiable with each construction of meaning, tends to differentiate and the other tends to reiterate, insofar as the same expressions are used in different situations. The study by Signor (2011) announces that writing is not a system of inert linguistic units, therefore, it cannot be taken as a code to be reproduced, based on a set of norms. It is necessary to understand that writing is an open systematization and dependent on joint constructions of meanings.

Distanced from this relationship with language, some students mention difficulties in understanding texts and presenting clarity in what they write - *I have difficulty understanding both what I read and what I write*. A reductionist perspective of written language, centered on competences, especially normative, seems to prevail in the statements considered above, to the detriment of the understanding of writing as a social discursive practice, whose appropriation occurs in/through human relations based on social practices (GIROTO; ARAUJO; VITTA, 2019).

Only one student when talking about her relationship with the written language spoke of textual genres - *In writing, it is always the textual genre, the organization* -, despite this, it

is not evident, in the report, whether the student has the understanding that they have their own characteristics and structural, discursive and pragmatic peculiarities. According to Bakhtin (2003), discursive genres are diverse and have infinite possibilities since they are compositions of human activities and these in themselves are inexhaustible. Fiorin (2016) points out that discursive genres only make sense in relation to their form and activity, so they are not isolated in a given sphere of action, but they are ways of learning reality. For the author, such genres, although presenting a compositional structure, are mutable, transformed by the action of man on the language.

In line with Bakhtinian studies, Almeida and Pan (2017) announce that discursive genres are social practices specific to a given discursive sphere, and that these vary according to their context of use and complexity; thus, the genres that circulate in the university also have their own forms of communication, different complexities and interpenetrations, that is, they vary according to the subject, the theoretical network, the requirements of each professor, etc. In view of this, the authors argue that students' inexperience in the use of academic genres should be seen as a characteristic of their own, not as a deficit to be remedied with compensatory measures offered to university students who have alleged difficulties in using the language.

It can be inferred from these reports that the university has demanded from students a scientific production, but little guides them towards the construction of academic genres, which agrees with Souza and Basseto (2014), when they state that in the university environment the demand to produce academic genres is not always accompanied by the preparation for it to be successful.

The study by Marquesin and Benevides (2011) explains that the use of reading and writing at the university will only favor students when it allows them to have an active and responsive role about themselves, about others and about certain genres. It is agreed with Geraldi (2013) when he clarifies that teachers should mediate the students' relationship with the language, so that they have more autonomy over its use.

Regarding the cause of the difficulties Beatriz, Vânia and Claudia explain that these are related to their relationship with the school:

Relationship with the school, something was missing, perhaps a basis to advance me in relation to these modalities (Beatriz).

My relationship with school issues, I always had difficulties since elementary school (Vânia).

Because of the fragmented teaching that I had, I couldn't always attend the school, so something was started and I always grasp only part of the contents (Claudia) (our translation).

Ana and Fernanda clarify that the causes of their difficulties are related to their lack of dedication:

Look, I can't say the reasons well, but I know that there is a lot of my lack of dedication in school processes (Ana).

To the school issue I did not dedicate myself much and my parents did not closely monitor my school performance (Fernanda) (our translation).

Regarding the difficulties with this language modality, it is possible to observe that some participants link their causes to a school environment that little favored a more effective use of this language, such as, for example, the lack of access to quality education and fragmented education. Almeida and Pan (2017) call attention to the reading and writing practices in our education system, which, in general, are based on a perspective that perceives the written language as a mere act of encoding and decoding abstract and closed signs between themselves, that is, the school works with reading and writing based on mechanical and decontextualized activities, based only on the normative structure of the language.

Some participants also explained that their difficulties are related to lack of dedication, inappropriate behaviors or lack of family support for issues related to school. Thus, there seems to be a space for blame involving the process of language appropriation, which, according to Donida and Santana (2019), causes emotional suffering, negatively influencing the permanence of these subjects in HE and destabilizing their well-being. Recent studies (PAN; LITENSKI, 2018; DONIDA; SANTANA, 2019) point out that the subjects' suffering related to the use of writing distances them from the position of responsive authors of their oral and written productions, making it impossible to develop a more critical and reflective of their role in the community in which they operate.

The participants' statements seem to indicate a medicalizing logic that naturalizes social, cultural and historical phenomena in medical or biological issues, through an isolated and reductionist analysis of the factors related to the process of language appropriation. Such logic, according to Moysés and Collares (2013), consolidates pathologization at all levels of education. In this sense, Almeida and Pan (2017) warn of the fact that the success and failure of students are explained, in a reductionist way, from the development of individual skills, producing, in the school routine, relationships of suffering between students, teachers and the production of knowledge itself. Signor *et al.* (2017) clarify that the written language and its

appropriation occur from a dialogical space, in which the language cannot be transmitted, explain that people do not receive the language ready to be used; but they penetrate the current of verbal communication, which allows consciousness to awaken and begin to operate.

The statements produced by the participants constitute an arena of social voices, in which there is a clash of different lines (of the family, of the school) and ideological positions; thus, it is understood that people's speeches are always permeated by other speeches that make up a continuous dialogic network (SOBRAL; GUIMARÃES, 2015).

Franco and Molinari (2013) point out that for the student to recognize the dialogical function of reading and writing practices, it is necessary to participate in significant activities with this language modality, which allow people to reflect on their relations with language writing.

The second axis concerns the “Effects of the Literacy Workshop on the subjective position of the participants”; it is worth noting that this is based on the understanding of each participant about their reading and writing productions after participating in the literacy workshop.

Students' views on their reading and writing production after participating in the Literacy Workshop

In relation to writing, it helped a lot, mainly in the more appropriate and safe use of words, it helped me to think and reflect more about my conditions, it also helped me to distance myself from the use of writing as something only textual/normative. The workshop made an impact, mainly in the way I started to see written productions and readings at the University (Beatriz).

It changed a lot and mainly it changed by the action of the other on my productions. In the workshop, the interlocutor was introduced to me, things started to make sense when it came to using speech, reading and writing, this action matured my relationship with the different speeches. It was at the workshop that my writing started to have a meaning in my life, I now see myself as an appropriate person, without guilt, in the process of appropriation (Vânia).

I started to see myself able to use these modalities in my daily life. The workshop helped me to understand that many complaints I had, related to reading and writing do not belong to me, but to a system, a collective, part of a social discourse (Ana).

I started to feel calmer with the request to produce something written, I no longer have anguish when I need to improve, change (...) I started to assume my authorship. (...) Today I understand that these modalities require practices and that all the difficulties that I presented and still present, are hypotheses created in the process of appropriation of these modalities (Fernanda).

Today I face reading and writing practices far from relationship of suffering. The Workshop changed my view of me, which was very negative, full of anguish and suffering. Today it is a pleasure to be able to reflect on my practices (Luana).

The workshop showed me that these conditions are not just mine and this so-called “problem” was not my problem, but a system that gets sick and makes people blame themselves. I started to see myself as capable, the workshop presented me with a world of possibilities and desire in relation to reading and writing, something that the school took away from me (Cláudia) (our translation).

Effects of the workshop on the subjective position regarding the use of reading and writing

For me it's as if the relationship between me, writing and reading has improved. My activities became more significant about these modalities (Beatriz).

The workshop made me realize and change my position as a subject, it gave me more proactivity and responsibility, I came into existence. (...) Today, I understand that these are created in an environment of an elitist and inaccessible education system (Vânia).

Although I still have things to work on, the workshop showed me that we have a problem, and I am not the problem. It is no longer difficult to read more than once, I have devised strategies to resolve myself and deal with these issues (Ana).

I saw myself as a suffering, incapable subject. Today I am the author responsible for my written productions (Fernanda).

Today I see myself as a good reader, curious and I started to see my conditions in different ways. They are no longer seen as difficulties that incapacitate me or impossibilities (Luana).

The workshop gave me wings to fly, that has always been my desire. With my entry, I started to feel capable, I started to see myself with possibilities, including possibilities to face the conditions that appeared and appear during my stay at the University. Literacy created a bridge between me and the abyss that was in front of me when I entered the undergraduate course (Cláudia) (our translation).

Regarding the students' view of their reading and writing production after participating in the Literacy Workshop, the statements made by the participants indicate that in the workshop there was a change in relation to their reading and writing practices, thus, they were able to value their history and their knowledge, overcoming limiting daily situations and participating more widely in the academic community. In addition, there is an apology for the “complaints”, as in the following report - *Well, the workshop showed me that these conditions are not just mine and this so-called “problem” was not my problem, but a system that gets sick and makes people blame themselves.* It is noteworthy, in this axis, that after participating in a work with and about language, based on a dialogical perspective, there was an expansion of the students' reflections on the use of written language. It is noticed in several reports

presented that the students started to present a more responsive discursive position regarding their conditions of appropriation of the genres circulating in the university environment. An example can be seen in the following excerpt - *The workshop made an impact, mainly in the way I started to see the written productions and readings at the University. In my view, these practices started to have a meaning, a recipient, an interlocutor, that bridges the self and the other that is absent.*

The statements presented indicate that the workshop brought positive effects for the participants, who began to reflect on their dialogical positions, on the responsive place they can occupy and the possibility of having a more autonomous position in the academic writing process, as in the following statement - *I saw myself as a suffering, incapable subject. Today I am the author responsible for my written productions.* There is also an expansion of the view on reading and writing practices, based on its discursive and not just normative dimension. In addition, it is possible to highlight the positive impact that the Literacy Promotion Workshop had on the possibility of talking about themselves, and on the way in which each of those involved felt in relation to their choices and the way of acting at the university.

The participants, who previously referred to a negative relationship with the written language, based on suffering and anguish, came to understand that their condition was not unique, and that the Brazilian educational system, in general, works with the language, especially from its structure, to the detriment of its discursive aspects. Some reports are in line with data pointed out in the study by Pan and Litenski (2018), which indicate that, in the HE environment, reading and writing are activities that guarantee appropriation of the genres that circulate there, responsible for their own professional formation. According to the authors, there is a need to discuss negative experiences regarding reading and writing in a space such as literacy workshops, which help in the process of deconstructing the speeches that individualize reading and writing complaints. Thus, it is possible to affirm that when proposing significant activities from oral and written texts, the Literacy Workshop had an impact in relation to the authorship, autonomy and responsiveness of the participants, enabling positive changes in the relationship they establish with the reading and writing of different genres, among them the academic.

In this sense, Vânia, a research participant, stated that, in the Workshop, she came into being, as she realized her responsive position. Ana also reported that she understood that her supposed difficulties were not individual, and Claudia referred that the effective work with reading and writing created a bridge capable of leading her to perceive herself as an integral part of her own academic formation. These statements show that the Literacy Workshop is a

space that promotes significant activities with written language, positively altering the possibility of participating in university life.

Final considerations

Through this research report, it was possible to show that many students have a negative view of their academic histories regarding their authorship and autonomy, in addition to suffering from reading and writing practices. Thus, they reproduce social discourses that blame only themselves, going against homogenizing and normalizing discourses, which do not take into account the history of each subject.

Based on a work to promote literacy in the university environment, it is possible to discuss the importance of dialoguing about this theme in a space that can contribute to the denaturalization of students' difficulties as individuals, as well as the realization of dialogical activities that enable a positive effect on the subjects' subjective position. Such a space, taking into account the social, cultural and historical context in which each person is inserted, can allow its participants to assume other positions in the face of their supposed difficulties, enabling the expansion of their autonomy, authorship and a reduction of their anguish and suffering in front of the written language.

Thus, it is necessary to emphasize the relevance of studies at the university that consider dialogical practices and assume a commitment, from a position contrary to the pathological medicalizing discourses that blame the student for his academic failure, in offering students the possibility to act in a different way. more responsive in the social contexts in which they operate.

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