



The language of adolescents on socio-educational context

Linguagem de adolescentes sob medidas socioeducativas em meio aberto

Lenguaje de adolescentes bajo medidas socioeducativas en medio abierto

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to raise aspects of language, especially adolescent speeches under socioeducational actions in an open environment to problematize pathological notions and/or social disqualification arising from eventual singularities of the repertoire and the enunciation forms of these people. It was held at CEDECA-Madalena. The people were nine adolescents who comply with measures in the institution, aged between 15 and 18 years. Data collection was performed through three complementary strategies: a) semi-structured interviews with adolescents; B) application of the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE) with adolescents; C) an open interview with employees. The results pointed to peculiar aspects of adolescents' language and speech, according to their living conditions and sociability. The results of the MMSE did not show signs of language disorders in that group of research, with exception of one adolescent, who scored slightly below his educational level, but without discursive alteration. Adolescents were critical of their ways of speaking, assigning negative value to the use of slang and metalanguage proper to social groups (including marginality), as if these uses of language were inferior and, therefore, have forbidden them from moving in other social spheres. It could be concluded that adolescents in compliance with socio-educational actions in the open environment may present low self-image in relation to their ways of speaking and/or writing, referring to them as not acceptable in society in general, which would generate obstacles to the circulation and social integration.

Keywords: Language arts; Adolescent; Juvenile delinquency; Socio-educational context.

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Authors' contributions:

IBGA: Study design; Methodology; Data collection; Study draft; Critical review.

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Resumo

O objetivo desta pesquisa foi levantar aspectos da linguagem, sobretudo dos discursos de adolescentes sob medida socioeducativa em meio aberto para problematizar noções patologizantes e/ou de desqualificação social advindas de eventuais singularidades do repertório e das formas de enunciação desses sujeitos. Foi realizada no CEDECA-Madalena. Os sujeitos foram nove adolescentes que cumprem medidas na instituição, com idades entre 15 e 18 anos. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de três estratégias complementares: a) entrevistas semiestruturadas com os adolescentes; b) aplicação do Mini Exame do Estado Mental (MEEM) com os adolescentes; c) entrevista aberta com os funcionários. Os resultados apontaram para aspectos peculiares na linguagem e no discurso dos adolescentes, em acordo com suas condições de vida e de sociabilidades. Os resultados do MEEM não apontaram indícios de distúrbios de linguagem nos sujeitos da pesquisa, com exceção de um adolescente, que teve pontuação levemente abaixo de seu grau de escolaridade, mas sem alteração discursiva. Os adolescentes foram críticos em relação aos seus modos de falar, atribuindo valor negativo ao uso de gírias e de metalinguagem própria aos grupos de convívio (inclusive na marginalidade), como se esses usos da linguagem fossem inferiores e, por isso, os impedisse de transitar em outras esferas sociais. Pôde-se concluir que adolescentes em cumprimento de medidas socioeducativas em meio aberto podem apresentar autoimagem rebaixada em relação aos seus modos de falar e/ou escrever, referindo-se a eles como não aceitáveis na sociedade em geral, o que geraria empecilhos à circulação e à inserção social mais ampla.

Palavras-chave: Estudos de linguagem; Adolescente; Delinquência juvenil; Medidas socioeducativas em meio aberto.

Resumen

El objetivo de la investigación fue levantar aspectos del lenguaje, sobretudo de los discursos de adolescentes bajo medida socioeducativa en medio abierto para problematizar nociones patologizantes y/o de descalificación social advenidas de eventuales singularidades del repertorio y de las formas de enunciación de esos sujetos. Fue realizada en el CEDECA-Madalena. Los sujetos fueron nueve adolescentes que cumplen medidas en la institución, con edades entre 15 y 18 años. La colecta de datos fue realizada por medio de tres estrategias complementarias: a) entrevistas semiestruturadas con los adolescentes; b) aplicación del Mini Exámen del Estado Mental (MEEM) c) entrevista abierta con los funcionarios. Los resultados apuntan para aspectos peculiares en el lenguaje y en el discurso de los adolescentes, en acuerdo con sus condiciones de vida y de sociabilidad. Los resultados del MEEM no apuntaron indícios de desorden del lenguaje en los sujetos de la investigación, con excepción de uno, que tuvo puntuación levemente abajo de su grado de escolaridad, pero sin alteración discursiva. Los adolescentes fueron críticos con relación a su modo de hablar, atribuyendo valor negativo al uso de jergas y de metalenguaje propio a los grupos de convivencia (incluso en la marginalidad), como si esos usos del lenguaje fuesen inferiores y, por eso, les impidiese de transitar en otras esferas sociales. Puede concluirse que adolescentes en cumplimiento de medidas socioeducativas en medio abierto pueden presentar auto imagen rebajada a respecto de sus modos de hablar y/o escribir, refiriéndose a ellos como no aceptables en la sociedad en general y que generarían impedimentos en la circulación y inserción social más amplia.

Palabras clave: Estudios del Lenguaje; Adolescente; Delincuencia juvenil; medida socioeducativa en medio abierto.

Introduction

The following report was part of a survey¹ conducted on young Brazilians with personal experiences in “criminal life”. This adolescent was interviewed in 2002, when he was 15 years old. The report is about a situation in which a drug dealer was arrested following the indictment of an informer. Then, when the drug dealer found out who was the informer, he murdered him. To get rid of the body, the murder asked to the adolescent to quarter it. Given the background, here is the report:

Then I was told to quarter the Neto's body. But I didn't know how to tear an arm apart [...], I tore both legs off and the other teenager, who was with me, tore the head off. Then we placed the body parts into bags and we threw it away. And that's all, this was the first and only time that I did something wrong. But after that, never again, thank God! You can ask anyone about my behavior. I'm pure and I'm a good guy, I didn't need to be in this criminal life. All I wanted was the love of an aunt, or the love of a mother. I never had the love of a family, which would be there to **talk** to when I needed, or which would **talk** to me spontaneously. However, I never had it. If I had a family to **talk to**, I'm sure I wouldn't be in this life. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to cry. Don't film me crying, don't film it. (p. 134-9)¹ [bold added by authors]

The report of the adolescent reveals something in addition to the barbarism: a desire for dialogue, as well as for a healthy and structuring conversation, which could be a potential antidote to crime. We chose this report to start the reflection about the oral language of adolescents in criminal cases. Since it is relevant to mention the language from the otherness, that is, the relation with others, as a constituent of our condition as individuals; a condition that operates *on* and *by* language. It seemed that the adolescent knew it, even though without any conceptual refinement.

A scientific review study of Brazilian journals' publications from 2002 to 2012 focusing on health care of adolescent serving socio-educational measures sentences, showed that some researches^{2,3,4,5} discuss the violence of adolescents using pathological and medical notions. However, some authors⁶ refute such premises and the consequent behavior standardization resulting from this assumption: the treatment of non-existent diseases and the social and psychic medicalization that, according to them,

are more useful to the disease industry than to the health of the people⁶.

That's precisely what we want to focus here: to denaturalize and discuss pathological and criminal labels assigned to adolescents serving socio-educational measures sentences, in issues and perceptions that, directly or indirectly, involve oral communication and the subjective-discursive positions and behaviors of these individuals.

As so, language will be discussed in terms of its discursive and interdiscursive condition,⁷ extracted from Bakhtin's conception of language as a conceptual operator for the analysis, highlighting the *content of the speech* of the adolescents studied and also *how* these contents relate to the real life conditions and modes, in addition to possible limitations in terms of formal linguistic repertoire; limitations related to the difficulties of access to cultural and educational goods, due to situations related to vulnerability and social precariousness.⁸

In this case, we intend to discuss the perception, on its own language, of a group of adolescents in supervised freedom and serving socio-educational measures sentences in a Support Center for Children and Adolescents (CEDECA) at São Paulo.

Some studies^{9,10} that associate infractions with school, cognitive and language difficulties in children and adolescents, indicate that it is possible to associate the delinquent's behavior with some language-related learning difficulties. Therefore, the reading and writing difficulties could isolate or stigmatize students who sometimes may tend to overcome their linguistic limitations with aggressive, rebellious or violent behaviors⁸.

From our perspective, it is not unusual the occurrence of situations such as those mentioned above; however, the problem seems to be in its pure individualization and pathologization, as if they were sufficient reasons for the conditions of the adolescents associated to criminal offenses. There is a reductionism associated to the assignment of any learning, cognitive and language difficulties of adolescents to their personal behavior: the constraints of social conditions involved in their production and preservation are not included.

Furthermore, this trend confirms the so-called health care and individual behavior medicalization. There are authors¹¹ who discuss how the psychiatry and medicalization process, which occurs mainly in the interface with justice systems, classifies children and adolescents as sick persons when in

situations of social vulnerability. This is a consequence of a perspective that reduces the subjects to organisms, disregarding the multiple factors which constitute a person.

Although the medicalization notion raises controversy and has a number of implications, perspectives, and developments in sociological^{12,13,14} and public health¹⁵ studies, we only want to define medicalization as the act of describing a process whereby non-medical or health problems are defined and treated as such and, as so, are often transformed into diseases or disorders.¹⁶

If this is so, and without neglecting any individual problems, there should be another perspective in our opinion: contexts and social phenomena are not linear, nor do they respond to a single causal factor, in contrast, they are multicausal, complex and procedurally generated. They can only be minimally understood in the combination of elements and dimensions that are part of them: life stories, social contexts (family, school, neighborhood, work, etc.) and material and subjective conditions that circumvent the lives of adolescents associated to criminal offenses.¹⁷

In the suburbs, adolescents have to deal with the lack of real opportunities, as well as with the absence of public policies that could favor them, and that could direct them to study, sports, leisure, professional training and culture¹⁸. The black and poor young boy image is an emblematic example; he is often seen as “marginal” and “dangerous” in the mass media, which strengthens the stigma and links poverty and ethnicity to crime¹⁹.

Contrary to this perception, several social movements in the urban suburbs, such as hip-hop, soirees, the black and homeless movement, among others, develop actions and groups that favor reflection on social, political and cultural issues, creating a creative and citizen culture. Young people are protagonists in these movements and they are able to reiterate the thesis that social vulnerability is not a cause, nor is it synonymous for moral distortion.²⁰

Ways of speaking and writing of these young people - including slangs, statements and even peculiar syntaxes - should not be construed as “mistakes” in the face of language conventions, even if there are restrictions in the understanding of “cultural norms”, these can be easily explained due to limitations of access and stay in the educational system. We also must realize that the alleged “mistakes” of those young people (in school activities,

conversations, music, graffiti, even on their tattoos, etc.) can also be seen as acts of transgression and resistance to the *status quo* and to the forms of oppression that, historically, falls over them^{21,22,23}.

As for the speech of young people involved in criminal offenses who are part of this marginalized population, Destro and Souza⁸ understand the offensive behavior as a speech that:

attempts to establish forms of group- and self-statement of the adolescent offender, who is trying to be heard and to be included. More than that, the offensive behavior is also a speech insofar as the person is asking for help in the face of desperation and of personal and social situations beyond their control (p. 1026).

However, if part of the suburban and poor youth is able to aestheticize the discrimination and prejudice, by using it as raw material of the organization, fight and the social and political emancipation, another part of these children and youth in situation of social vulnerability is likely to be co-opted by several types of violence and crime: child prostitution, drug trafficking, etc.²⁰.

The intention of our research, albeit modestly, is to contribute to discuss the idea that adolescents in supervised freedom, due to criminal offenses, may have oral and/or writing language difficulty or disorders, and that these issues, to some extent, are among the causes which determine the infractions.

From the hypothesis that, in the event of language difficulties or disorders, there is no necessary relationship between them and the infractions by adolescents who participated in the study. The research was structured and developed to test our hypothesis, and thus we interviewed adolescents in supervised freedom and we monitored their cognitive and language conditions by checking if there was any indication of individual disturbance in such domains and if so, we wanted to check whether particular cognitive and functional aspects with respect to the language use would or not affect the enunciative/discursive production and understanding conditions of the responders.

Although, sometimes, in dialogue with conceptions arising from language perspectives, the study of language as human ability or aptitude responsible for the production of sense, subjectivity and of (social and personal) modes of existence is corroborated in certain philosophical, anthropological, psychological and psychoanalytical schools.

Since it would not be the case to analyze these manifestations in this study, we chose to take only one of these possibilities that inspires or interacts with several others.

It is a formulation of Bakhtin,⁷ a philosopher of language, for whom the sign will have as many meanings as concrete and historically determined situations in which they will be used by individuals.

That is, according to Bakhtin,⁷ signs must be understood from the statements, which are singular, unrepeatable and whose composition produces the speeches. The study of human functioning in language becomes possible in the enunciative/discursive level. In fact, language theoretical and conventional model is very different from its uses (in speech and writing) by concrete subjects in variable and procedural contexts of life, in which meanings are created and/or vary in time and in terms of the many situations in which they are included in communicative interactions.

These brief theoretical considerations about language give rise to a distinction that was relevant in our research. Strictly speaking, speech therapy work focuses on both domains mentioned: discursive and interdiscursive conditions. Listening and interpretation of social and (inter) subjective aspects, which influence and/or derive from enunciative/discursive production, are decisive factors for speech therapy clinical practices of language, since it is through them that it becomes possible to develop strategies for elaboration and discursive circulation along with the subjects who use the speech therapy care.

In this way, the purpose of this research was to raise aspects of language of adolescent serving socio-educational measures sentences in an open environment to discuss pathological and/or social disqualification notions arising from eventual singularities of the repertoire and the enunciation forms of these people.

Method

The research was conducted in a Support Center for Children and Adolescents – CEDECA Madalena, which is located in Parque Santa Madalena, in São Paulo, and it was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee under the number: 1,409,953 at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. The research is qualitative with a case study design.

Selection criteria for adolescents were the following: - must be in compliance with the socio-educational measure in the institution and must agree to participate in the study (resulting, therefore, in the agreement with the Term of Consent and of Free and Informed Term of Consent by adolescents over the age of 18 and by those responsible for minors). All ethical requirements of research with humans were strictly complied with.

The casuistry of adolescents for the study was obtained through a saturation strategy, that is, we conducted interviews with attendants of the institution until there was no significant variation in the responses. There were 51 adolescents between 12 and 18 years of age in the activities monitored by the researcher. There was no significant variation in the responses by adolescents from the 9th interview on. As so, nine adolescents were selected in total (the first nine interviews). The ages of the adolescents selected ranged from 15 and 18 years old.

The data were collected by means of two complementary strategies:

- a) semi-structured interviews, according to the following previously defined script: i) memories and remarkable situations in family, school, institution and in the streets; ii) most frequent partners and topics on conversations; III) any difficulties in communication relations with partners of the same age or older; iv) how they see themselves and how they believe that they are seen by others, such as family, teachers, friends and society in general; v) school and professional expectations, as well as about the future.
- b) application of the Mini-Mental State examination (MMSE) to assess possible indications of language and/or cognition disorders. The MMSE was used with adolescents soon after their interviews. The MMSE is an instrument to monitor symptoms and/or indications of cognitive and language changes, and it is designed to be a clinical practice evaluation of cognitive state change in adult and literate patients. It is widely employed currently to ensure scientific character to researches, although discursive nature studies and qualitative analysis, as the one presented here, could be developed without using it.

Results

The results of the MMSE are presented below, while the results answered by the adolescents dur-

ing the interviews will be presented in the discussion item, since their statements qualify and assign specific meanings to the conceptual references with

which we work in testing the hypothesis of our research and in the analysis conducted during the discussion and completion of the text.

Chart 1. Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE)

	Adolescents									Maximum Score
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Orientation ¹	9	9	7	7	8	7	7	7	9	10
Memory ²	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3
Attention and Calculation ³	5	5	2	0	5	4	5	5	0	5
Evocation ⁴	3	1	3	0	0	3	2	3	3	5
Language, Appointment, Repetition and Verbal Command ⁵	8	7	7	5	7	6	7	8	8	8
Construction Skills ⁶	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Total Score	29	25	23	14	24	24	24	27	24	

Legend:

To assess short-term memory, attention ability and temporomandibular orientation.

To assess attention ability and short-term memory.

To assess the calculation and attention ability and operational and short-term memory.

To assess the short-term memory (secondary).

To assess the spontaneous speech; listening comprehension; repetition and appointment.

To assess the visuospatial orientation.

It is considered a cognitive change: Illiterate ≤15 points; 1 to 11 years of education ≤ 2 points; more than 11 years of education ≤27 points

Discussion

The data obtained from the MMSE with adolescents of the research show that there is no evidence of cognitive or language changes. Although an adolescent (4) achieved a score slightly below expectations for their education degree, the conversations and the interview conducted with him do not suggest any kind of disorder, but a troubled school process, with consequent low educational performance. Strictly speaking, there was no particular highlight to any oral language disorders in any of the research participants, both in understanding and in the emission of the statements. Therefore, it was not necessary to perform speech therapy evaluation or to submit the responders to any clinical treatment.

In the interviews of the adolescents, several “other institutional” (family, school, *Fundação Casa* and Health Care field) are strongly present, so it is possible to wonder: in which senses” such institutions are in their speeches.

The family, as the first institution in which the individual is attached, is extremely important in the

composition of the subjectivity. Speaking specifically of the families of adolescents in supervised freedom, the studies point to evidence of family dynamics that, potentially, could encourage the involvement with the criminal world, for example: parents that have little or no participation in the life of their children and/or parents who are very unstable in the care of their children, especially in childhood; parents and/or relatives who commit recurring offenses; no notion of rights and duties in the family environment; lack of planning for the future; harsh punishment and physical abuse on the part of parents^{24,25}.

The statements of the adolescents clearly show how important the family bond is:

“Family is everything to me. If I have any problem, I can talk to them and they will help me. I really missed my family when I was in the Fundação Casa. After I was arrested After I was arrested, some neighborhoods started to look away from me. My father stood up for me. On the other hand, my aunt used to go to my home. After I was arrested, she doesn't go anymore. She does not greet me when we meet each other on the streets. C'mon! She's

my aunt” I get embarrassed. She and my uncle use to fight due to this. He says: “Why don’t you like him?” And she answers: “I think he is too angry, very aggressive.” (...) I’m trying to leave criminal life. (...) I want to grow, to get a job, to stay in the school.” (Adolescent #3)

Despite the social and family problems reported, the family appears as a structuring environment according to the Adolescent #3, as well as a support and comfort zone, and a safe haven. At least in part, it seems to be one of the motivations to plan the future and to continue studying.

However, it does not apply to the Adolescent #5, who says that his mother is a junkie, and his stepfather beats him, and he also tries to deal with the absence of his father. In his testimony, his family doesn’t seem to be related to a support zone, on the contrary, the family appears as belonging field, but, at the same time, as the place of conflicts, resentments and anger. In addition to the time when he was at *Fundação Casa*, this adolescent also lived in various shelters and even on the street. Currently, even though he lives with his mother and his stepfather, he faces difficulties in establishing dialogue and in living with them:

“When I was in my mother’s belly she took all kind of drugs: cocaine, crack, poppers, everything! One day, my mother was in “stoned” for pills abuse; her eye was so small I couldn’t even see the pupil. All I know is that I threw a knife on her but it didn’t hit her. (...) Until today, we are not ok. But we talk to each other from time to time. When we want to fight, we just do it again. Violence is always there. We keep teaching violence to each other. And we’ve had a lot of fights. I’ve tried to kill my mother and stepfather. But I didn’t succeed in it. (...) I’ve tried to kill him because I don’t like him. He swears my mother and also beats her. (...) I don’t want anything. I just don’t make any investment in my future. Instead, I spend my money on drugs. And it’s really hard to leave it. If I try to leave it, or if I don’t want to take it anymore, there’s always someone to give it to me” (Adolescent #5)

The family represents an “other”, which is always vital, nuclear, either as a structuring dimension, or as the opposite of it. This is not associated with the economic situation: Adolescent #3 does not belong to a family with good financial conditions, but he has a place in which he is accepted and protected and, as so, he is allowed to plan a

future. On the other hand, Adolescent #5 does not enjoy the same conditions, and he shows a great difficulty in imagining another kind of relationship with his mother, and so he seems to understand it as natural, and, in a sense, he takes it to the other relationships, which also seems to influence his pessimistic and fatalistic position on life and future.

Despite the centrality of the family in the composition of subjectivity, it is not the only other-institutional of adolescents. The fact that Adolescent #5 belongs to a family with little to offer to him (not only in financial resources) does not mean that he is doomed to live an impoverished life in terms of affection and dignity, but it’s reasonable to assume that the subjective barriers to overcome gain complexity and non-negligible difficulties in such cases.

In *Fundação Casa*, an institution that is presented as a possibility of care, with respect to socio-educational measures for prisoners, the report of the adolescents project an image of an institution that refuses them as subjects of law, disqualifying them and silencing them through fear and/or through the lack of listening to their issues and stories. The disqualification goes beyond the relations with professionals, even though they often may have oppressive attitudes. Adolescent #4 says that the professionals wanted to help him, saying good things about him to the judge. In doing so, in an attempt to help him, the employees are reproducing the disqualification, and reaffirming the model that disqualifies Adolescent #4 as subject and citizen. Although they do not intend to, they keep him as incapable to stand on his own, and of being listened by the juvenile court; the boy feels inferior, as if he depended on the good deed of someone who is in a superior position.

However, we cannot reduce this unequal relationship only to the adolescent-employee dyad, since there are indications of oppression also in the architecture of the inpatient units, which is similar to the prisons, and keeps the adolescents locked up and under prison discipline. Adolescent #4 also says: *“If we see the teacher and we do not say “excuse me, sir”, “excuse me, ma’am”, they could even beat on us. All the time I am required to walk with my hands behind my back.”*

Despite significant changes in the transition from *FEBEM* to *Fundação CASA*, we can notice from the report of Adolescent #4 that a disciplinary and isolationist regime seems to persist, albeit

attenuated. In addition, the institution is often projecting an image of adolescents as criminals, inappropriate and unworthy of social conviviality^{26,27}.

The intensification of violence by young people corresponds to one of the effects of a society that produces and reproduces several iniquities and inequalities. Therefore, it is pointless to apply disciplinary and repressive means to adolescent offenders, as it would only strengthen the disqualification, from which they are treated as lives that are devoid of value and that could be discarded. It is not by chance that rebellion and transgression are a margin of freedom to these adolescents, in which they create groups to exist or subsist, as well as to resist oppression and to gain visibility and voice.

In turn, the school should be a space for plurality, according to the Salamanca Statement²⁸. School environment should welcome everyone, regardless of their physical, language, emotional and *social* conditions. Therefore, school would be essential in the socio-educational measures process, in order to move away the stereotypes assigned to these adolescents, as thugs, delinquents and criminals.

However, it is known that the education in Brazil had and has several difficulties, including when dealing with differences and social diversity.

In the reports, some adolescents reported positive experiences *in* and *with* school. They also emphasized the welcoming of teachers and of the school management, and even highlighted the dialogue as a mean used by the school to welcome them.

Adolescents #3 and #4 reported positive experiences with respect to school. They also emphasized the welcoming of teachers and of the school management, and even highlighted the dialogue as a mean used by the school to welcome them. Therefore, they have a positive view with respect to the school, and then, they indicate a strong discrepancy in relation to *Fundação CASA*, as follows:

School is better than *Fundação CASA*. That's different: teachers and inspectors talk to us. (Adolescent #3)

School is cool, isn't? (...) That's due to the way that teachers talk to us, and how they explain lessons. Teachers are very helpful. I sit next to the teacher. (Adolescent #4)

However, when this interaction is negative, then the school resembles the experiences reported

on the *Fundação Casa*, since it confirms the exclusion and disqualification of those young people.

Now we're going to highlight the Health field, with emphasis on an experience with speech therapy. Some of the adolescents in this study seem to refuse to be labeled as "sick", and one of them asks for help from speech therapy to meet his needs: "I just want you to help us to have a better communication with people" (Adolescent #4). He wants to be supported in order to communicate better, although he does not have language disorders or changes.

To understand the character of this need for speech therapy, it is helpful to resume the language dimension presented earlier. We adopted the study of language as discursively oriented production. Thus, the clinical hearing of the speech therapist should not be restricted to the plan of regularities of the language, as it must contemplate the meaning communication/production conditions of the subjects. The need expressed by Adolescent #4 is not related to follow or not conventional language patterns, it is in the enunciative/discursive plane, in which the subject, as such, is expressed: his request to the speech therapist informs existing barriers in his interdiscursive relations. And that's what he's talking about, he asks for the speech-language support in order to face this problematic.

Therefore, to analyze the reports of a certain group we should understand the conditions in which they were produced and who are they, that is, the singularities of the individuals, as well as their health (physical and mental) conditions, their stories and experiences, which combination is always unique.

The adolescents who participated in the research demonstrate that they are able to navigate the language level with ease, yet there is a need to listen to the personal and social plots that generate difficulties in school, in the workplace and also in interpersonal communication. So, in the context in which they live, in the uses they make of language, this does not only mean to expand the interlocution possibilities, it means surviving. It seems to be a good indication to strengthen them discursively to guide the care that they demand in speech language therapy.

Thinking that the possible communication difficulties of these adolescents begin with the infractions is reducing the situation to the relation of the adolescent with criminal acts. However, in fact,

the question is not so simple, since the silencing of these adolescents does not happen, only or mainly, because they are offenders, but because of their class extraction, from our point of view. Offenses work as a sort of confirmatory argument for values and expectations of privileged social classes, which understand that the offenses and/or infractions of certain segments and social classes are supposed to be “proofs” of their character, instead of a wicked and socially determined production.

If professionals and health policies, where speech therapy is naturally included, do not understand this structure and also if they are not willing to act on it in their respective contexts, respectively, of professional action and health policy formulation, only a little progress can be made in the care provided to these populations.

It is necessary and urgent to assume that not everything is a disease or disorder, or strictly organic and individual characteristics. More than that, we need to understand the fact that, even in the presence of diseases or disorders, the social burden that constitutes them and/or maintains them is very strong, in general. In this way, it is not possible to disengage one dimension from the other, since we would risk producing ineffective and almost non-conclusive health actions.

Conclusion

On the one hand, observations and conversations with adolescents serving socio-educational measures sentences and with professionals from the Support Center for Children and Adolescents – CEDECA Madalena suggest a complex and devastating context in terms of adequate and sufficient support from society and the Government for the inclusion as citizen of these young people to society: there is a whole structure of values, norms and culture that impose barriers to the care provided in the Statute of the Child and Adolescent in Brazil.²⁹ There is no recipe for success, or a possibility to solve this kind of social issue overnight.

However, at the level of concrete actions, within the institutions responsible for these adolescents, each professional and manager can make a difference, by denaturalizing the rejection and silencing situation that still dominates the culture and institutional logic in this field, thus opening spaces to welcome these adolescents, and for their social and personal development.

The research that gave rise to this article, in a very modest way, formulated the hypothesis that there is no necessary relationship between communication disorders and the offenses committed by adolescents who participated in the study.

One hypothesis has been confirmed: it was checked that dialectical variations, slangs, and metalanguage that they use in certain social circles do not even constitute language or communication disorders. However, these issues may hinder integration, school performance and professional integration. As so, on the one hand, they conflict with the linguistic conventions taught and valued by the school and the market; and, on the other hand, they generate estrangement and prejudice, since they bring to school and professional environment certain problems expressed by behaviors, attitudes and statements that society rejects or prefers to avoid. Therefore society avoids to be seen as a producer and co-responsible for the situation of this social segment.

Finally, even though this presents a challenge, the pungency of the experience presented while conducting the research indicates that we must begin to instigate the speech therapy to understand it and maybe to create conditions to face it.

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