

Different utterative possibilities in speech and language therapy for an autistic individual

Diferentes possibilidades enunciativas no atendimento fonoaudiológico de um sujeito autista

Diferentes posibilidades de enunciación en la atención fonoaudiológica de un sujeto autístico

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Abstract

Introduction: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has been almost uniquely described in the health sciences literature as a pathology. However, it could also be described as a condition that results in a profoundly different identity. **Objective:** This research aims to understand the role verbal and non-verbal utterative possibilities play in the speech language therapy of an autistic individual who would traditionally be described as non-verbal. **Methods:** A qualitative and explanatory case study that analyzes the speech and language therapy of an adolescent at the clinical school of a public university. **Clinical case presentation:** We begin with a dialogical approach based on the theory of the Bakhtin Circle, which understands that dialogue is not restricted to what can be verbalized at the moment of utterance, but rather is a continuous and uninterrupted process constituted of language responsively reflected by interlocutors. Through this approach, we reflect on autistic individuals who use little speech, but live intensely in a verbal world, using different utterative possibilities to obtain their meaning. In the case studied here, the use of digital resources, writing, music and gestures is notably meaningful and dialogic. **Final considerations:** Finally, we seek to expand the view of ASD, revealing singularities and potential not limited to this individual, but which focus on therapeutic approaches and the structuring of the Speech, Language and Hearing clinical space.

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Authors' contributions:

LP: Study design; Methodology; Data collection; Article outline; Critical review.

MVB: Study design; Methodology; Data collection; Article outline; Critical review; Supervision.

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Resumo

Introdução: O Transtorno do Espectro do Autismo (TEA) tem sido historicamente descrito, dentro da literatura das ciências da saúde, quase que unicamente como uma patologia. No entanto, este também pode ser encarado como uma condição que resulta em uma identidade profundamente diferente. **Objetivo:** Esta pesquisa visa compreender o papel das diferentes possibilidades enunciativas, tanto verbais quanto não verbais, no atendimento fonoaudiológico de um sujeito autista. **Método:** Trata-se de um estudo de caso de natureza qualitativa, de cunho explicativo, referente à análise do atendimento fonoaudiológico de um adolescente numa clínica escola de uma universidade pública. **Apresentação do caso clínico:** Partimos de uma abordagem dialógica fundamentada no pensamento do Círculo de Bakhtin, que compreende que o diálogo não se restringe somente àquilo que pode ser verbalizado no momento presente da enunciação, mas se trata de um processo contínuo e ininterrupto constituído pela linguagem ecoando responsivamente nos interlocutores. Por meio dessa abordagem, refletimos sobre os sujeitos autistas que pouco utilizam a fala, mas que vivem intensamente em um mundo verbal, utilizando diferentes possibilidades enunciativas para atingir o seu querer dizer. Neste caso estudado, destaca-se o uso de recursos digitais, da escrita, música e gestos como meios significativos e dialógicos. **Considerações Finais:** Por fim, buscamos contribuir para a ampliação do olhar sobre o TEA, revelando singularidades e potencialidades que não se encerram no sujeito estudado, mas incidem sobre as abordagens terapêuticas e a estruturação do espaço clínico fonoaudiológico.

Palavras-chave: Fonoaudiologia; Desenvolvimento de Linguagem; Transtorno do Espectro Autista.

Resumen

Introducción: El trastorno del espectro autista (TEA) se ha descrito, dentro de la literatura de ciencias de la salud, casi exclusivamente como una patología. Sin embargo, esto también puede verse como una condición que da como resultado una identidad profundamente diferente. **Objetivo:** Esta investigación tiene como objetivo comprender el papel de diferentes posibilidades enunciativas, tanto verbales como no verbales, en la logopedia de un sujeto autista. **Metodos:** Es un estudio de caso de naturaleza cualitativa, de cunho explicativo, que se refiere al análisis del servicio logopedico de un adolescente en una clínica escolar de una Universidad pública. **Presentación del caso clínico:** Partimos de un enfoque dialógico basado en el pensamiento del Círculo de Bakhtin, que entiende que el diálogo no se limita solo a lo que se puede verbalizar en el momento presente de la enunciaci3n, sino que es un proceso continuo e ininterrumpido constituido por el lenguaje que resuena receptivamente en los interlocutores. A través de este enfoque, reflexionamos sobre sujetos autistas que usan poco habla, pero que viven intensamente en un mundo verbal, utilizando diferentes posibilidades enunciativas para lograr su significado. En este caso de estudio destaca el uso de recursos digitales, escritura, música y gestos como medios significativos y dialógicos. **Consideraciones finales:** Buscamos contribuir a la ampliación de la vision sobre TEA, revelando singularidades y potencialidades que no terminan con el tema estudiado, sino que se centran en enfoques terapéuticos y la estructuraci3n del espacio clínico de la terapia logopedica.

Palabras clave: Fonoaudiología; Desarrollo del Lenguaje; Trastorno del Espectro Autista

Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is described¹ as belonging to the category of neurodevelopmental disorders, characterized by persistent deficits in social communication, and restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour. According to the DSM-V, “the ways the disorder manifests vary greatly, depending on severity of autistic condition, developmental level and chronological age; hence the use of the term spectrum”.

However, although in one dimension autism may be seen as a pathological clinical condition, it can also be viewed as a condition that results in profoundly diverse identities, as has been demonstrated in movements organized by autistic people². We note, however, that the notion of a spectrum, in other words of a set of similar characteristics that locate individuals within the same group, should not erase each individual’s history and singularity, their specificities and their ways of being in the world. In this work, we consider that:

[...] each one is unique, heterogeneous in what their history reveals about having been born in a certain place in the world, the child of these people who circulate within a particular culture. In the end, we believe these specificities cannot be erased in favour of standardization – either of the individual, or of childhood autism – given that childhood autism is “measured” precisely by what each individual presents as “interactive”, manifesting their organic, linguistic, psychological and social nature³.

Language impairments in autistic individuals may be described by significant delays in, or the total absence of, language development⁴. In childhood autism diagnostic manuals, autistic individuals are described as repetitive, echolalic, restricted in their social interactions and using stereotyped and repetitive language. For Bordin, the Speech, Language and Hearing (SLH) Sciences anchor language diagnosis in Medicine, as is seen in autistic children’s SLH assessments and in the way language is subordinate to cognitive development. In both cases, for Bordin, the SLH Sciences should have more to say about language functioning in the autistic individual⁵.

The traditional literature about ASD, in both websites and specialized articles, frequently categorizes autistic individuals into verbal and non-verbal. However, measuring what may be

considered “non-verbal” or “minimally verbal” is not simple, given inconsistency in measurements and in the definitions of what may be described as non-verbal. Some works define “non-verbal” through the number of words within a certain age group, others by non-functional speech, or even indeterminately⁵. Even without these definitions, some works specify their inclusion criteria as “non-verbal”⁶, while others consider a medical report to be a valid parameter for this grouping⁷.

Despite their specific characteristics, what we may call verbal or non-verbal are not antagonistic modes of meaning. On the contrary, there is an increasingly clear need to reflect on the role that non-verbal elements play in communication through words, as well as the role the verbal sign plays when it is not used as a first resource, but rather as an element that participates in signification⁸. As we will see, the relationship between verbal and non-verbal signs cannot be reduced to the demarcation of an identity category for autistic individuals, since it does not contemplate the possibility that they comprehend and address the verbal world intensely, as is true for the case studied here.

In this sense, in line with Bordin, we critically position ourselves within this dimension of autism study, which tracks autistic people’s language difficulties, particularly on the formal plane of language. Based on the Bakhtinian perspective, we consider that language takes place in effective situations of joint effort, in which the “other” is essential^{9, 10}. If we consider autism and the entire intricate universe that surrounds it, it is important to study the potential and difficulties in the social circles that the autistic person inhabits.

This paper therefore aims to reflect on the different utterative, verbal and non-verbal possibilities in speech and language therapy for an autistic individual, who makes little use of speech, understood here as textual-discursive oral production¹¹, but who uses other semiosis to obtain his meaning, including gestures, music, digital tools and writing.

This research is inspired by works that follow the theoretical perspective of Discursive Neurolinguistics. As Bordin and Freire¹² note, in contrast to a biomedical view, the perspective of the discursive nature of language is allied to a theoretical and methodological reflection that occurs through the longitudinal monitoring of individuals, and maintains a close and important relationship with the clinical practice of speech and language therapy

guided by the relationships between “individual, brain and language (speech, *langue*¹, discourse)”. Although, with the work of Courdy in the 1980s, Discursive Neurolinguistics was initially dedicated to studies of aphasia, over the last ten years its relationship to childhood^{13,14} has become central and some works that address autism from this perspective already exist^{13,15}.

In line with this approach, we based our theoretical suppositions on the Bakhtin Circle, referencing the works of Novaes Pinto^{16,17} regarding the contribution of Bakhtinian concepts (*utterance, finalization, meaning, responsive understanding* and others) to describe and analyze the utterances of aphasic individuals. In this way, from a qualitative point of view, our choice of the Bakhtinian framework comes about through the possibility of conducting analyses and discussions based on utterances for the effective use of language, which consist of links in a dialogical chain^{9,10}, in the wake of other works that seek to counterpoint a pathologizing view of autism^{15,18,19}.

Given that there are few studies in SLH Sciences that maintain a dialogical approach to discussions on this theme, and that most of the works in this area utilize quantitative methodology, we reassert the importance of contributing to a critical reflection of practices based purely on an organicist perspective and guided by diagnostic manuals. Furthermore, we based our work on the case study of a user of a SLH clinical school, where it was possible to reflect beyond the studied individual, on therapeutic approaches and on how this clinical space was structured.

Methods

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the public university in which the research took place, under opinion number 2.669.649. The research participant started speech and language therapy at this university’s SLH clinical school in August 2016 and was discharged in September 2017, when he was 14 years old. The participant had an ASD diagnosis and was chosen because he made little use of speech, utilizing different modalities to obtain his meaning.

1. In line with Saussure and others, here we take *langue* to mean the structure and organization of the socially shared language system.

It is important to locate the reader in terms of the rules of the clinical school in which the individual received their speech and language therapy. Given that the clinical space is also an arena for SLH graduate training, interviews were conducted each semester, language assessments took place at the beginning and end of this period, and the conduct and direction of treatment were defined. Each academic semester, a new therapist accompanied the case and was monitored by three therapists throughout the clinical school’s therapeutic process.

Furthermore, precisely because this is an arena for SLH therapist training and service to the community, excessive failures to attend or late arrivals may impact on both student learning and patient progress. The clinic therefore has a rule that, in the event of two non-justified consecutive failures to attend or a total of three failures per academic semester, sessions are suspended. Late arrivals constitute another factor which can result in treatment being discontinued; these cannot exceed 15 minutes after the scheduled time. When there are frequent difficulties in attending, the patient’s treatment is discontinued.

The patient’s records were used as a data source. Data collection involved reading records that contained documents such as the initial interview, assessment reports, video recordings and transcriptions of assessments and speech and language therapy sessions, used as a device for the production of information to structure this research.

Our unit of analysis was based on records of utterances and we were guided by the therapeutic possibilities observed as the patient progressed. The research data therefore consists of excerpts of dialogical situations recorded on video during speech and language therapy sessions with the final therapist at the clinical school; these occurred once a week over 13 months, in sessions that lasted from about 30 to 50 minutes. The dialogical excerpts were selected due to their proximity to the theme of this research: the individual’s utterative language possibilities, in written and other signification possibilities, such as gestures, body language and moments when orality was used. The data was transcribed and analysed according to the theoretical and methodological outlook that underpins this research.

Clinical case presentation and discussion

Davi's² therapeutic journey at the clinical school began in 2016, when he started speech and language therapy. In an interview with the therapist, his mother reported that there "were no complications during pregnancy" (sic), despite having suffered gestational diabetes and post-partum haemorrhage.

Davi was diagnosed with autism when he was four years old, at which point multidisciplinary treatment began including speech and language therapy, psychology and occupational therapy, although he did not remain in treatment for very long. His mother also reported that her son used Risperidone 1 mg "which makes him calm and concentrated" (sic).

In 2015, Davi attended a public school for his first year of primary education, accompanied by his 18-year-old sister, since, according to the therapist, no therapeutic assistance was available. Furthermore, there were no patient records, school reports, or information in the records regarding contact between the therapists and the school.

In the first semester of 2017, Davi began to attend the "Language and the individual with ASD" extension project at the clinical school, supervised by the same professional who supervised his appointments in the first and second semester of 2016. When he participated in a new interview with the therapist, Davi's father said that his son was no longer attending school, because the teacher in charge of his class had had to leave their post. It is important to reflect on the reality of who Davi was - a black autistic adolescent, living in vulnerable social conditions, who was no longer served by his school - and how these variables impacted on him.

Unfortunately, during the first half of 2017, Davi's treatment was discontinued because of the excessive number of failures to attend and late arrivals over the semester. The decision to discontinue Davi's treatment was not an easy one for his final therapist and their supervisor, since they had noted progress during the therapeutic process. On the one hand, the complex social, cultural, historical

and political environment in which the interlocutors were immersed was taken into consideration and the difficulties that the family probably experienced in attending the service were understood. On the other hand, the fact that the clinical school is a training location and the extensive demand of patients on its waiting list were decisive.

Davi's conduct in speech and language therapy was also conditioned by other factors. It is important to note that, since this is a clinical school, service was often interrupted because of holiday periods, changes in therapists/interns and the therapeutic approaches used. In the case of Davi, we noted a change in the therapists' views over the therapeutic process - the first therapists worked with him more traditionally, using an organicist approach, and barely noticed his dialogical potential, while the later therapists saw him differently. In our view, this allowed David to progress in therapy that was characterized by greater dialogical interaction with peers. Looking at Davi's case study leads us to reflect on the therapeutic process, which, because it was influenced by dialogical theoretical approaches, revealed his greater potential for dialogue.

It is also important to situate the reader in terms of the structure of Davi's sessions during his last period at the clinic. The sessions took place in the presence of the responsible therapist, accompanied by two or three more student observers, who also sometimes interacted with him. We note that this research was conducted by one of the student observers and the supervisor.

We chose to analyse scenes which presented diverse utterative possibilities, in accordance with our dialogical approach. We therefore initially discuss how music was presented as an utterative possibility and how, within the dialogical process, this was addressed in the speech and language therapy sessions. As we will explore later, the analyses presented here are dialogically oriented, in line with Bakhtinian thought. In summary, this means trying to understand the factors that enable the dialogue to be not only a conversation between two people, but also a concrete act that "may not be only explained by the conditions of the speaking individual, but neither can it occur without him"¹⁶.

We will therefore start with an analysis of the first excerpt:

2. We believe that, rather than, initials, using a fictitious name to safeguard the research participant's anonymity avoids the distancing suggested by initials. The participant has therefore been given the fictitious name of Davi.

Chart 1. Transcription of utterative scene.

Date: 24/07/2017. **Utterative scene:** The individual (D) is sitting in front of the computer doing some research, next to him are the therapist (T) and other interns.

Individual	Turn	Utterances	Contextual information
D	9		Types "called" in the YouTube search bar and deletes it, "Ivete Sangalo" [singer] and deletes it, "Paula Fernandes [singer] sem você [name of song]" and searches.
T	10	Paula Fernandes?	
D	11		Chooses one of the videos and presses play.
T	12	Do you like this one? Oh, this is such a beautiful song...	
D	13	"Braço" ['brace]	When Paula Fernandes sings the words "eu tô carente desse teu abraço" [I need your embrace] and the video begins to show an image a couple embracing.
T	14	Abraço...[embrace]	
D	15		Forwards the video to the chorus.
D	16		Skips bits of the song until it repeats the beginning when the drums come in.
D	17		Types "revelação [band] velocidade da luz [name of song]" in the YouTube search bar, searches and plays a video. In the meantime, looks at the description of the video which contains all the lyrics of the song.
T	18	Lyrics for us ...	

In this utterative scene, we initially note one of the main aspects Davi demonstrated in the sessions - his relationship with music. This was always present and understood as a therapeutic device, given that the dialogue was not restricted to something that could be verbalized orally and the utterative dialogical process was uninterrupted and did not only resonate in speech that could be verbalized and seen by others, but was also responsively reflected by the interlocutors.

Through music, Davi established relationships with melody, with rhythm and even with the pitch of musical notes. Sometimes he repeated passages of music at the point that a musical instrument entered, as we can see at conversational turn number 16 or during the more high-pitched parts of the melody, something which puzzled his interlocutors, since it is not conventional, but which subsequently led them to conceive of Davi as a DJ.

We note proximity with contemporary musical genres in the way Davi used repetition as an element of composition. Further, in certain moments he would put on the music and seek approval on the faces of people in the treatment room and those who observed the treatment outside it.

It is worth noting that when these video recordings were made, Davi's sessions were mostly undertaken using a computer, technology with which he was familiar and had mastered. In terms of the ambience, he usually preferred to do the sessions with the lights in the room switched off.

The use of technology in clinical practice, particularly in Davi's case, led us to the concept of multiliteracies²⁰:

[...] multiliteracies - a word we chose to describe two important arguments we might have with the emerging cultural, institutional, and global order: the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Given that we are dealing with contemporary society, supported by a multiplicity of media and consequently producing cultural and linguistic diversity, we consider multiliteracies to constitute a practice of contemporary literacy that involves:

[...] The multiplicity of languages, semiosis and media involved in the creation of signification for multimodal contemporary texts and, on the other

hand, the cultural plurality and diversity contemporary authors/readers bring to this creation of signification²¹.

We can see the familiarity Davi had with the technology used in the sessions, the computer that he mastered and the relationship he established with this object in his searches. Turns numbers 9 and 17 give us an approximate sense of the speed with which he handled and researched various themes.

Rojo asserts that diversity in the contemporary world produces fragmentations, meaning that the local sphere is simultaneously constituted of juxtaposition and shock between divergent “life-worlds”. One way out, therefore, is “to provoke cohesion-through-diversity [...] which certainly involves critical literacies”. From here come the situated literacy practices, arising from the reframing of traditional school practices by attributing meaning in extra-school situations and the written forms present in the school²¹.

The author states that using technology, such as the computer, has changed the relationship between reading and writing, which occur at the same time and “shape the utterances/texts in their multi-semiosis or in the multiplicity of ways of signifying”²¹. To read a text is also to position it in relation to the various signs that come from various modalities of language, which, to some extent, are intertwined.

These changes to the relationship between reading and writing are based on hyper-textual possibilities, which allow us to move “from one text to another and from one exit point to multiple docking ports, by inserting linkages provided in the digital environment”²¹.

We can observe this relationship in Davi’s activities in turn 13, in which we can see how

the intersection of modalities (sound, vision and textural) are intertwined, when Davi says “*braço*” (‘brace’) at the same time as a visual image appears of a couple embracing (*abraçado*) and in a passage of music in which he talks of an embrace (*abraço*). Although this conversational turn demonstrates this relationship specifically, in general, we believe that the functioning of Davi’s language was constituted of the overlapping of these different modalities in a unique way.

Another possibility for linkages is seen in turn 9, in which Davi undertakes certain searches that are linked to each other in some way, until he finds what he is looking for. We can also see this relationship in turn 18, when Davi brings up the music lyrics so the other interlocutors can accompany the song, not because they asked him to do so, but because he remembers that they have frequently made this request in other sessions. These events show us the dialogical depth of these sessions, since they demonstrate how previous utterances reverberate in the choice of utterances during the session.

In addition to the linkage described in the previous paragraph, others were established by Davi when, for example, there was an intersection between searches undertaken during the sessions and continuity with something done the previous week, as happened in one particular week when one of the interns asked Davi to play music from the band KLB and he did it the following week, even though the intern was not present. We should note that this is only one example of many taken from linkages that reveal the opening up of present interactions in dialogue with previous sessions.

At certain times this dialogical opening was more expansive, providing us with intersections that could only be revealed through mutual knowledge, as we can see below:

Chart 2. Transcription of utterative scene.

Date: 10/07/2017. **Utterative scene:** The individual (D) sitting in front of the computer, searching for Panificadora e Mercearia Cristal (Crystal Bakery and Grocer's), next to him are his therapist (T) and the other interns including (OLU).

Individual	Turn	Utterances	Contextual information
D	106	Pa-quis-tá... Pa-quis-tá...	Opens a new tab and searches for "PANIFICADORA E MERCEARIA CRISTAL".
D	107		Adds the term "MULHER" [WOMAN] to the search and then deletes it.
OLU	108	It must be in his neighbourhood...	
T	109	Ah, it's in Pau Miúdo...	
D	110	Pa-pa-raquis-tá	Pointing to the phrase he typed.
OLU	111	Ah, Mercearia cristal [Crystal grocer]... Very good!	
OLU	112	T knows already, show us what you buy there...	
D	113		Opens Google Maps, searches for the bakery and shows them a photograph of the front of the building.
T	114	It's near your home, right? Where's your house then?	
D	115		Browses through Maps showing them a little of the surrounding area.

We agree with Nascimento and Oliveira¹⁹ that the notion of dialogue from the Bakhtinian perspective is not restricted to a meeting between two individuals who converse with one another, nor should it be interpreted as appeasement, in the common sense. The notion of dialogue goes beyond simple communicative exchange and alternation, beyond the limits of temporality restricted to the moment of dialogue²².

We also note the joint, shared nature of an utterance. In this case, as well as in others in the excerpts here, it is necessary to consider the role of the rejoinder (both of Davi and the interns) which demarcates the utterance through the alternation of individuals in the conversation. According to Bakhtin⁹, "each rejoinder, regardless of how brief and abrupt, has a specific quality of completion that expresses a particular position of the speaker, to which one may respond or may assume, with respect to it, a responsive position".

For Bakhtin, taking concrete utterances as a unit of analysis is only possible when the role of the other is not limited to that of recipient, as seen in certain formal models of linguistic study, which he calls science fiction⁹. For Bakhtin, the concrete nature of the utterance is "part of an uninterrupted communication process"¹⁰. We can see this in both the interns' rejoinders, in turns 108, 109, 111, 112, and in Davi's responses – note that the responsive

action presented in turn 113 is an utterative possibility.

We also note that in turns 106 and 110, Davi utters the syllables which, to some extent, refer to the "“*Panificadora e Mercearia Cristal*” (Crystal Bakery and Grocer's). We can work on the hypothesis that Davi is saying the beginning of the word *panificadora* [pa] and that [kis'ta] is *cristal*. Davi provides strong impressions of the sounds of words that he presents through digital writing.

In this sense, we agree with Marcuschi, and conceive of the spoken and the written as mutually constructed, not opposite poles through which one exercises supremacy over the other, but rather understanding that the differences between the spoken and the written "take place within a typological continuum of the social practices of textual production"¹¹.

In some of the sessions, through the *Panificadora e Mercearia Cristal*, Davi was seeking something that could, to some extent, arouse the curiosity of his interlocutors, since it was not an establishment close to his current home, but for him assumed some meaning that the interlocutors did not know about. We will return to this theme of shared knowledge in our analysis of the next excerpt.

The data once again confirms Davi's mastery over the technology used in the therapy, which



represented an important resource for dialogue with others. In turn 113, we saw Davi refining his search in a responsive attitude to something one of the interns asked him, when he located the bakery on Google Maps. The same thing happened in turn 115, when he explored the surrounding area, when his therapist asked if this was an establishment close to his home.

The speed with which Davi acted gives us a sense of the peculiar way his language functions, something which resonates in the therapist’s resumption of dialogue or even when trying to attribute meaning to Davi and his searches. We have attempted to describe this speed in the following fragment:

Chart 3. Transcription of utterative scene.

Date: 14/08/2017. Utterative scene: The individual (D) is sitting in front of the computer doing several searches rapidly, next to him are his therapist (T) and the other interns.			
Individual	Turn	Utterances	Contextual information
D	128	Ummmmm...	Types "segundo xou da Xuxa 07" [name of song] in the search bar and searches. Plays the music.
T	129	A Xuxa [singer] show, hey?	
D	130		Opens another tab, types "memória Gl" [Gl memory] and deletes it, "Logo" [logo] and deletes it, "2015*" and deletes it, "logo" and deletes it, "2018*" and deletes it, "propaganda BATV" [BATV advertising] deletes the BATV and types "O Boticário [name of a beauty store] 2011" and searches. Closes the Xuxa video. Deletes the previous term with Boticário advertising and types "propaganda Itaú [advertising + name of a bank] 2011" and deletes it and types "PROPAGANDA BRADESCO [advertising + name of a bank] 2011", searches and plays the video.

In this utterative scene, we principally note the unique way in which Davi’s utterances are presented as we watch his search for various themes, such as music, advertising, television programmes, or even in his search for certain locations, logos or food.

In the section above, we discussed the role of the alternation of individuals in the composition of the utterance. In order to analyse this data we need to go beyond this, since, according to Bakhtin:

Utterance, understood as a rejoinder in social dialogue, is the basic unit of language, it is interior (dialogue with oneself) or exterior dialogue. Its nature is social, therefore ideological. It does not exist outside a social context, since each interlocutor has a "social horizon". There is always an interlocutor, at least a potential one¹⁰.

In this sense, even with the intern’s rejoinder to Davi’s writing in turn 129, or at other times when

a rejoinder is only made in its presence, we would assert that the receiver of the word is affected from the outset of the dialogue. Not only in terms of content and organization, but also in terms of the form itself - syntax, intonation, context, etc²².

In turn 130, we can see the remarkable speed of writing, typing words very rapidly in the browser, deleting and typing other words at the same time. The speed with which he writes and rewrites on the computer leads us to reflect on how, to some extent, each researched term may be semiotically linked to other terms and how this is reflected in Davi’s cognitive-linguistic functioning.

In turn 130, Davi undertakes several rapid searches, in some of which he does not even write a complete phrase, such as the terms "memória Gl" which refers to the terms *Memória Globo* (Globo Memory) which he had researched in other sessions and which are from the Globo broadcaster’s portal, which has a number of files. This kind of research

always aroused a great deal of curiosity in those present, since he often searched for very specific data (e.g. BaTv, 23 Fev. de 1991) from several television programmes.

However, what these searches mean remains enigmatic, since we are unaware of any link between the searches and what they reveal. We could say that the degree of dialogical opening of these utterances does not allow us to conventionally signify them. We believe that these are potentially very rich pathways for work within the arena of speech and language therapy, but depend on greater mutual knowledge between interns and patients, or the presence of other interlocutors. We could justify our understanding of this as based on necessary assumptions from the extra-verbal context, on

a lack of knowledge and common understanding of the situation¹⁰.

In many cases, particularly those where there are significant shared experiences with the individual, intimacy with the data and facts may provide rejoinders that are fundamental to the context, which, in the case of autism, we believe has expanded. In this sense, it is our opinion that the construction of mutual knowledge and the sharing of experiences in the clinical context are not only desirable, but must be actively sought by the therapist.

Other utterative possibilities observed during the sessions occurred through non-verbal gesture and sounds which were present in their utterances, as we will demonstrate in the following utterative scene:

Chart 4. Transcription of utterative scene.

Date: 19/06/2017. Utterative scene: The individual (D) is doing research on the computer, while he folds the supermarket fliers brought to the therapy session, next to him are his therapist (T) and the other interns, including (OLU).			
Individual	Turn	Utterances	Contextual information
D	65		Plays a video of Ivete Sangalo [singer].
T	66	I like this music... The moon that I gave you to shine [song lyrics]...	Begins to sing the words of the song.
T	67	Do you like this one? I like it too.	
D	68		Stands up and turns off the treatment room light.
T	69	With the light off, eh? That'll be great!	
D	70	Ummm... ummm, ummm ...	Swings his body back and forth, trying to get nearer to the computer with his chair.
T	71	Where else are you going?	
OLU	72	Sing to us...	
D	73		Looks at OLU as if he wants to see her reaction.
D	74	Ummmmm...	
T	75	Look at all the people out there... looking at you...	
D	76		Smiles.
OLU and T	77		Sing the song.
D	78		With a smile on his face, he appears to be dancing.
D	79		Looks at the two-way mirror.

In this excerpt, we emphasize the responsive movements in the gestures, physical movements and non-verbal sounds presented by Davi. To this end, we agree with Fontana that:

The organism's every gesture or process [...] acquires a semiotic value in social relations in which

each individual learns their own corporeality and expressiveness through/in the mediation of the corporeality and expressive possibility of the other, recognizing themselves as a human being and as a unique person and recognizing the other as similar and as different²³.

We understand that, as an inseparable part of the dialogue, Davi's movements in turns 68, 73, 76, 78 and 79, with his body and with smiles, are dialogically interpreted by the interlocutors in the treatment room. The sound "ummm" Davi emits in turns 70 and 74 takes on various meanings in the very varied ways he uses it, either with the intention to regulate the dialogue, to express indignation or at moments of joy.

With this excerpt, we cannot fail to discuss the point at which the traditional SLH literature has classified and subdivided autistic individuals into verbal and non-verbal individuals. When we refer to the "The Treatise on Specialities in SLH Sciences" we find a strong trend to traditionally assess language according to degree of skill or function, as can be seen in the citation below:

We consider that the delineation of an individual profile of skills and inabilities, as a foundation for the delineation of therapeutic processes, is the best alternative for diagnostic understanding in SLH Sciences in respect to the communication of children with ASD²⁴.

Through this way of constituting communication skills, it becomes possible to divide autistic individuals into verbal and non-verbal and, based on the difficulties they present in assessment procedures, arrive at the conclusion that non-verbal autistic children produce less communicative acts than verbal ones⁷.

We note that the categorization of autistic individuals into verbal and non-verbal is almost exclusively based on an analysis of the individual's speech performance, ignoring the above arguments about the constitutive nature of utterance. Further, speech performance only provides signals of what is considered to be verbal in the utterance, without assessing the individual's cognitive-linguistic functioning in concrete and utterative situations, still less an understanding of the singularities of signification processes which, despite being categorized as "non-verbal", do, in their own way, constitute verbal signs.

We can therefore assert that meaning itself is permeated by both verbal and non-verbal aspects involved in the constitution of the individual him/herself and, because of its ideological nature, is modified according to the social, historical and cultural context in which it is situated. We understand here that the constitutive features of both

verbal and non-verbal signification only exist in relation to something else, and it is evident that non-verbal language plays a constitutive role in signification²⁵, including when we consider the possibility that non-verbal semiosis (gestures, body, looks, relationships between objects) are linked to verbal signification in the discursive functioning of language²⁶.

To conclude this discussion, we should not fail to mention certain obstacles that sometimes hinder the dynamic of speech and language therapy, but which also suggest therapeutic possibilities. Some of these moments occur when therapeutic proposals do not favour activities on the computer or when there is an internet connection failure. By modifying the clinical care standard with other materials, Davi appeared to be resistant, thus setting up a difficulty for the therapist to conduct activities outside their routine.

It is important to note that transcribing data for an academic text for the purposes of research and analysis may give the illusion of organization and sequencing in stages that do not truly translate the SLH experience. This is not only true for this case, but if we focus on that here, we note that there were frequent moments of dissent and obstacles that arose precisely because of the nature of these sessions, in which one of the main difficulties was located in the consistent establishment of dialogical situations.

Final considerations

Beyond the traditional point of view from which autism has been studied, through an utterative and dialogical perspective, based on the studies of the Bakhtin Circle and allied to work in Discursive Neurolinguistics, this research sought to expand the view of ASD based on a case study capable of revealing the individual's utterative singularities and potential. This work with alterity in analysing a case study led us to reflect on the notion of singularity, while also considering what could be called the "autism spectrum".

When we reflected on the case, we recognized that there were certain limitations within the individual's clinical pathway. To start with, the clinic is aimed exclusively at speech and language therapy and does not include other professionals for multidisciplinary work. The multidisciplinary approach is considered to be the best way of treating these

individuals, principally by providing a holistic intervention plan²⁷.

In addition, when studying the interview reports in the individual's records, we found varied views from the family members living with him, suggesting the urgent need to extend our work as therapists to Davi's family, in order to reframe our views about the adolescent and promote the sharing of support to assist Davi in his appropriation of language.

In view of this, the clinic had established norms to deliver services that outline therapeutic conduct for cases, but these did not encompass the complexity of care in more complex cases such as Davi's, in which several factors are involved in his ASD and in his relationships as a citizen of the world. In addressing Davi's case, there is also a need for the service to have better links with primary care, in order, for example, to organize activities with the family health centre to monitor and gather information out about his family, community and territory. Another possible link is with the school, in order to understand his direction as a pupil and to jointly organize measures so that Davi and his specific characteristics were not overlooked.

Davi's treatment provided significant reflections. Working with the support of the computer opened up an unprecedented dialogical window in which it was possible to establish various relationships and reflect on the peculiar way in which he communicated. Given this, the last six months of Davi's treatment made it possible to take a new look at him, to see the different utterative possibilities through which it was possible to reflect on the dialogical relationships he established.

Finally, we conclude that support from a Bakhtinian-oriented clinical practice allowed the individual to be seen through a contextualized lens, within the social, cultural and historical spheres, against other, more organicist, views that only see the individual as tied to his symptoms. We note that few studies seek to understand autistic individuals who utilize little speech, but rather make use of different modes of utterance.

When focusing on studies of ASD, it is essential to consider the social and historical context in which the individual is located, as well as the unique experiences that arise from it. In this context, it is necessary to rethink the therapeutic pathways to mediate this process, given how difficult it may be to address not only obstacles and dissent, but also the potentiality contained in each utterance.

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