



Speech therapy language therapeutic group: an integrative literature review

Grupo terapêutico fonoaudiológico de
linguagem: revisão de literatura integrativa

Terapia del lenguaje en grupo: revisión
integradora de la literatura

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Abstract

Purpose: this study aims to investigate the effects of the Group therapy in language described in Brazilian studies. Research strategies: the search was performed in the electronic databases Virtual Health Library - (VHL Regional Portal) and SciELO. **Inclusion criteria:** group intervention studies in language; studies available in full and in Portuguese; target population comprising preschoolers, schoolchildren, adults and the elderly; studies published from 1980 to January 2018; direct therapy studies. **Exclusion criteria:** literature review studies; studies duplicated between electronic databases studies involving individual therapies or indirect therapy. As a result, ten studies were incorporated into the review. The studies' descriptive analysis was performed based on the following items: year of publication, study's objective, sampling, pre- and post-intervention evaluation method, session's structure, theoretical framework and main results. **Results:** the objectives, the profile of the participants and the structure of the services were diversified. The theoretical framework for group formation was described in 40% studies, 70% described the evaluation instruments. There was a scarcity of studies exploring the effects of speech and language therapy. **Conclusion:** there is a need for greater investments

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CPS and TF: participated in the data collection, analysis, data interpretation and writing of the article.

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in the development and structuring of speech and language therapy in group and the dissemination of this information.

Keywords: Language Therapy; Group Practice; Review; Review Literature as Topic.

Resumo

Objetivo: investigar os efeitos do grupo terapêutico em linguagem descritos em estudos brasileiros. Estratégia de pesquisa: a pesquisa foi realizada nas bases eletrônicas Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde (BVS – Bireme) e SciELO. **Crítérios de seleção:** artigos de intervenção em linguagem, realizados em grupo; artigos disponíveis na íntegra e em língua portuguesa; população-alvo abrangendo pré-escolares, escolares, adultos e idosos; artigos publicados no período de 1980 a janeiro 2018; artigos de terapia direta. **Crítérios de exclusão:** artigos de revisão de literatura; artigos repetidos entre as bases eletrônicas; artigos envolvendo terapias individuais ou terapia indireta. A partir dos critérios de inclusão e exclusão, dez estudos foram considerados e analisados. Foram realizadas análises descritivas dos estudos, considerando: ano de publicação, objetivo do estudo, amostragem, método de avaliação pré- e pós-intervenção, estruturação das sessões terapêuticas, referencial teórico e principais resultados. **Resultados:** verificou-se diversidade de objetivos terapêuticos, de estruturação dos atendimentos e faixa etária dos participantes, 40% dos autores descreveram o referencial teórico. Os instrumentos de avaliação foram relatados em 70% dos estudos. Portanto, constatou-se escassez de estudos que exploram os efeitos da terapia coletiva de linguagem. **Conclusão:** destaca-se a necessidade de maiores investimentos na realização e estruturação das terapias fonoaudiológicas em grupo e a divulgação dessas informações.

Palavras-chave: Terapia da Linguagem; Prática de grupo; Revisão; Literatura de revisão como assunto.

Resumen

Objetivo: investigar los efectos del grupo terapéutico en el lenguaje descrito en estudios brasileños. Estrategia de investigación: la investigación fue hecha utilizando la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud (BVS - Bireme) y las bases de datos electrónicas SciELO. **Criterios de selección:** artículos de intervención del lenguaje, realizados en grupo; artículos disponibles en su totalidad y en portugués; población objetivo que comprende preescolares, escolares, adultos y ancianos; artículos publicados desde 1980 hasta enero de 2018; artículos de terapia directa. **Criterios de exclusión:** artículos de revisión de literatura; artículos repetidos entre bases electrónicas; artículos relacionados con terapias individuales o terapia indirecta. A partir de los criterios de inclusión y exclusión, se consideraron y analizaron diez estudios. Se realizaron análisis descriptivos de los estudios, considerando: año de publicación, objetivo del estudio, muestreo, método de evaluación antes y después de la intervención, estructuración de sesiones terapéuticas, referencial teórico y resultados principales. **Resultados:** hubo una diversidad de objetivos terapéuticos, de como estructurar la atención y el grupo de edad de los participantes. 40% describieron el referencial teórico e 70% los instrumentos de evaluación. Por lo tanto, hubo una escasez de estudios que exploren los efectos de la terapia colectiva del lenguaje. **Conclusión:** existe la necesidad de mayores inversiones en la realización y estructuración de la terapia del lenguaje en grupo y la difusión de esta información.

Palabras clave: Terapia del Lenguaje; Práctica de Grupo; Revisión; Literatura de Revisión como Asunto.

Introduction

Since the emergence of Speech and Language Therapy, individual treatment has been prioritized as a therapeutic option. However, since the 1980s, some initiatives have aimed at group work approach, mainly in public health institutions. The first initiatives conducted in groups arose from the need to reduce the service's waiting time due to increased patient demand¹.

The formation of groups generally considers the profile of homogeneity or heterogeneity of individuals. In homogenous groups, the age group and/or similar pathology are considered; the intention is to group the participants with related characteristics. In heterogeneous groups, individuals may present diagnostic and age discrepancies. In addition to these characteristics, some studies report theoretical frameworks that support the development and conduct of groups².

The theoretical framework adopted in the evaluation of language therapy is related to the evaluator's theoretical conception; therefore, there are varied practices and theoretical perspectives². Most professionals who choose a group work approach adopt a social-interactionist perspective. They believe that language is established and is evident in social interaction and in the exchange of dialogue between interlocutors in an environment where the phenomenon of language is intrinsically present^{2,3}.

Social-interactionist and interactionist, positive psychology, historical-cultural and authors who derive from these principles can be cited as theoretical references. There are, however, authors who do not clarify the theory on which they base themselves⁴.

Currently, many professionals consider group work approach beneficial. It can promote cost reduction, strengthen the relationship among participants, and provide an exchange of experiences, collaborative construction of knowledge, respect for differences, and support in other people's experience, among other positive aspects. In a comparative study, the costs of four types of interventions were analyzed. Indirect group therapy was found to be the least costly, followed by direct group therapy; individual therapies were the most costly⁵.

Regarding language evaluation methods, the literature describes that most professionals conduct individual evaluations before starting group con-

sultations, relying on individual evaluation instruments; a small percentage does not perform specific speech and language evaluations⁶. There is a lack of instruments to evaluate language collectively, which may justify the preference for individual evaluations. However, individual evaluations receive some criticisms, especially when conducted with young children. Authors claim that the children may become shy and insecure when facing an unknown evaluator, which can interfere with the observed results. Based on this assumption, some initiatives use the speech and language therapy group to evaluate language in the participants³.

Therapeutic relationships have been studied in the literature. The speech therapist plays several roles in a group work approach: coordinator, participant-coordinator, mediator, agent, active interlocutor, demonstrating to be the holder of knowledge².

The group work approach is being developed with children, adolescents, adults, the elderly, parents and teachers in several areas of Speech and Language Therapy. Of those groups, the ones related to Language represent the largest number of publications^{4,7}.

Objective

The present study aimed to conduct a data survey to verify the effects of group therapy in Language described in Brazilian studies.

Methods

Search strategies

This study is an integrative review of Brazilian studies addressing the subject: speech and language therapy groups in language. The search process was conducted by two researchers, who followed the same methodology: independent search of the studies, blinded assessment (researchers were unaware of the author's name, institution and journal of publication), screening of the title and abstract of the studies yielded from the combination between the descriptors and keywords, and checking eligibility according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. When the title and abstract were not clear, the entire study was read. The studies selected by each researcher that met the review's objective were compared and critically analyzed

by the examiners, who reexamined the eligibility according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The disagreements that occurred were resolved by consensus.

The search was conducted in two electronic databases, the Virtual Health Library (VHL Regional Portal) and the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), which were chosen for being databases with open access to scientific and technical health information. The Virtual Health Library (VHL) promotes access to health information in Latin America and the Caribbean (LA&C); its informa-

tion sources are composed of data produced by the VHL Network, composed of indexes and catalogs as LILACS and Medline. The Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) is an electronic library that covers a selected collection of Brazilian scientific journals. Only full-text studies, accessed through the Virtual Private Network (VPN) of a public higher education institution, were included in the research. This study's search strategies were combinations between terms registered in the Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS) and keywords in Brazilian Portuguese, described in Table 1.

Table 1. Search strategy used in the databases

Original search strategies in Brazilian Portuguese	Search strategies in English
"Fonoaudiologia" AND "Terapia da linguagem"	"Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences" AND "Language Therapy"
"Fonoaudiologia" AND "Processos grupais"	"Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences" AND "Group processes"
"Fonoaudiologia" AND "Oficina de linguagem"	"Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences" AND "Language Workshop"
"Fonoaudiologia" AND "Prática de grupo"	Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences" AND "Group Practice"
"Grupo terapêutico em fonoaudiologia"	"Therapy group in speech therapy"
"Oficinas de linguagem"	"Language workshops"
"Oficina de linguagem" AND "Prática de grupo"	"Language workshop" AND "Group practice"
"Oficina de linguagem" AND "Processos grupais"	"Language workshop" AND "Group processes"
"Terapia da linguagem" AND "Processos grupais"	"Language therapy" AND "Group processes"
"Terapia da linguagem" AND "Prática de grupo"	"Language therapy" AND "Group practice"

Selection criteria

The studies were selected according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were: group intervention studies in language; studies available in full and in Portuguese; target population comprising preschoolers, schoolchildren, adults and the elderly; studies published from 1980 to January 2018; direct therapy studies, in which techniques and approaches are directed to the individual. The exclusion criteria were: lit-

erature review studies; studies duplicated between electronic bases; studies involving individual therapies or indirect therapy, in which participate the individual and family members.

The search strategy yielded 179 studies from the databases (Figure 1). Of these, only 49 were related to Speech and Language Therapy. After checking for eligibility according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, ten studies were included in this review (Table 2).

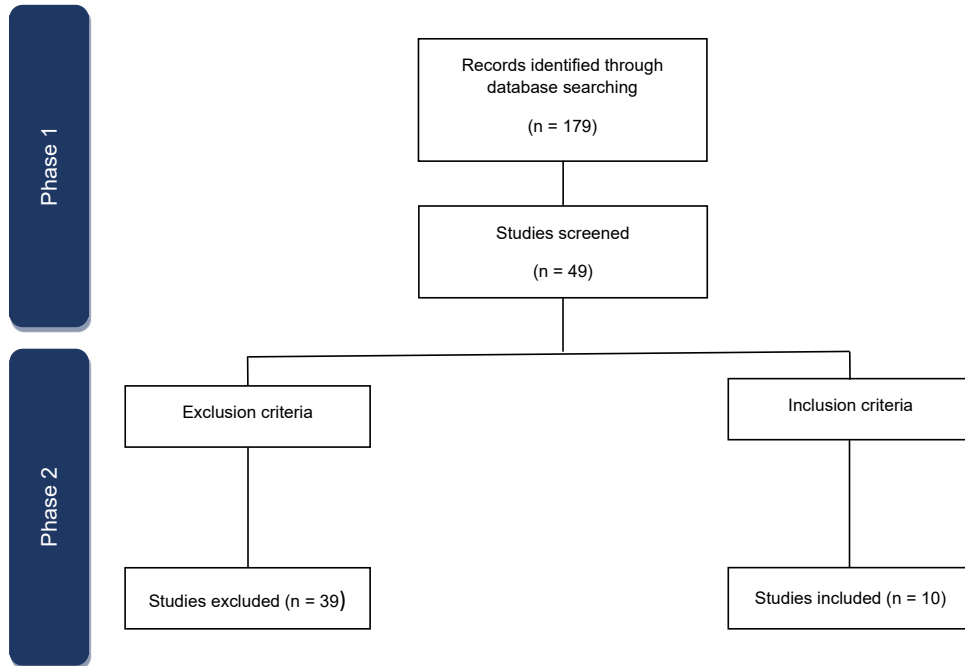


Figure 1. Studies selected through the inclusion and exclusion criteria

Table 2. Studies published by year

Author	Name of the study	Year of publication
Cardoso C, Fernandes FDM.	Relation between social cognitive aspects and the functional communicative profile in a group of adolescents of the autistic spectrum.	2006
Freitas AP, Castro GS.	The constitution of dialogic processes in a group of young people with mental deficiency.	2006
Fernandes FD, Cardoso C, Sassi FC, Amato CLH, Sousa-Morato PF.	Language therapy and autism: results of three different models.	2008
Soares AJC, Cárnio MS.	Phonemic awareness in students before and after language workshops.	2012
Cardoso C, Rocha JFL, Moreira CS, Pinto AL.	Social cognitive performance and different communication settings in groups of children with different disorders.	2012
Lourenço RCC, Massi G, Lima RR.	Language and aging: a search for resignifications of life stories.	2014
Guarinello AC, Massi G, Berberian AP, Cláudio DP, Festa PSV, Carvalho HAS.	Retextualization as a practice in Speech Language Therapy with deaf individuals.	2014
Santana AP, Signor RCF.	Group for subjects with reading and writing difficulties: theoretical and methodological aspects.	2015
Sales NJ, Chun RYS, Santos FFD, Sampaio ATS, Noronha PSV, Gonçalves RSS; et al.	Speech Language Pathology Undergraduates Interventions in a Special Education Reference Center from Brazilian Northeast.	2015
Zerbeto AB, Batista CG.	Group approach for the evaluation of language disorders in young children.	2016

Literature review

The studies' data are presented in chronological order, highlighting the following items: year of publication, study's objective, sampling, pre- and post-intervention evaluation method, therapy session's structure, theoretical framework and main results.

From 2006, two studies were included in the review. The first study analyzed the evolution of the functional communication profile and the socio-cognitive performance of five adolescents on the autism spectrum. They were analyzed in three different situations of communication: in individual language therapy, in group therapy with a coordinator and in group therapy without a coordinator, taking into consideration that the group coordinator is not the language therapist. Each therapy session lasted 30 minutes. Video recordings were used as the evaluation method, comparing the recordings from the beginning and the end of a 12-month-therapy period. The recordings served as a basis for analyzing the functional communication profile, using the criteria proposed by Fernandes (2004), and the socio-cognitive performance, using the criteria proposed by Molini (2001). The therapy sessions' structuring and the theoretical framework for the group's formation were not reported in the study. The authors concluded that there is a relation between the evolution of socio-cognitive performance and functional communication profile in the three situations of communication⁸.

In the second study from 2006, the objective was to promote and analyze dialogical interactions in a speech and language therapy group. Four young people with intellectual disabilities participated in the study. The study did not describe how the participants were assessed before and after the therapy sessions. The group was seen weekly by a speech therapist for four months. The theoretical framework for the group's formation was socio-historical. The study pointed out that group therapies encourage an increase in communicative intentions, recreating an appropriate environment for promoting dialogue and allowing the exchange of experiences among young people with disabilities⁹.

From 2008, one study was included in the review. This study analyzed the differences in the communicative and socio-cognitive performance of children and adolescents on the autism spectrum. Participants were divided into three dif-

ferent intervention situations: individual therapy, therapy in pairs and therapy with their mothers. The 36 individuals who participated in the study were evaluated by recording the beginning and the end of a 6-month-therapy period. All recordings were transcribed to analyze the communicative and socio-cognitive aspects. The group therapy was conducted in 20 sessions. The duration of the sessions and the theoretical framework were not reported in the study. Analyzing the three types of therapy, those performed in pairs produced the best results in the number of communicative acts expressed per minute and an increase in the proportion of communicative interactivity¹⁰.

From 2012, two studies were included in the review. The first study verified the phonemic awareness performance of 49 students before and after language workshops. Phonemic awareness was evaluated pre and post language workshops using a phonological awareness test called *Consciência Fonológica – Instrumento de Avaliação Sequencial (CONFIAS)*. Each group participated in five weekly workshops, each one lasting 50 minutes. The theoretical framework was not reported in the study. Results showed that the average of correct answers in the test was higher after the language workshops, showing an improvement in the phonemic awareness performance¹¹. The second study from 2012 verified the socio-cognitive performance of 30 children, of which ten were on the autism spectrum, ten had intellectual disabilities, and ten were hard of hearing. They were evaluated in two different communicative situations: in group therapy and individual therapy. The group and individual therapy sessions were recorded to evaluate the participants. A test developed by Molini-Avejonas and Fernandes (2003) was used to analyze the data. The therapy sessions' structuring and the theoretical framework were not reported in the study. The study highlights that, with children on the autism spectrum, group therapy simulates situations closer to reality and generates better communicative performance than individual therapy¹².

From 2014, two studies were included in the review. The first study described the experiences of elderly participants in a language workshop that stimulated discussion and writing through their personal stories. The authors interviewed ten elderly people from a health unit center in Curitiba/PR, who participated in weekly language workshops, each workshop lasting 90 minutes. The workshop



coordinator's work was based on Bakhtin's philosophy of language, which conceives language as a socio-interactional and dialogical phenomenon. The participants were assessed qualitatively through semi-structured interviews. Using the reports collected, the authors concluded that the language workshops helped the elderly participants be inserted into society and give new significance to life and the aging process in their stories¹³.

The authors from the second study from 2014 developed a project to promote written language development through retextualization in speech and language group therapy. Retextualization is the process of producing a new text from a base text; in this specific case, the transformation of Brazilian sign language information into texts in Brazilian Portuguese. Eight hard of hearing people who use Brazilian sign language and written Brazilian Portuguese participated. The theoretical framework and the method of assessing the individuals were not reported in the study. The therapy session occurred weekly, lasting two hours each. Through the group retextualization, the hard of hearing participants began to reflect on writing and its social function, using this language modality with more disposition and self-confidence¹⁴.

From 2015, two studies were included in the review. The first study from 2015 aimed, following the enunciative-discursive theory, to present theoretical and methodological assumptions that support speech and language therapy in groups aimed to develop written language skills and analyzing its effectiveness. Five adolescents with reading and writing difficulties were part of the study. The method of assessing the individuals was not reported in the study. The speech and language therapy session occurred weekly, lasting about three hours each. The authors used the social-interactionist theoretical framework from the Bakhtinian concept of speech genres. According to the study, group work provides, besides the exchange of knowledge, a feeling of togetherness that raises self-esteem, favoring the learning processes¹⁵.

The second study from 2015 aimed to describe speech and language therapy activities with patients of the Reference Center for Special Education in Sergipe, a state in the Northeast of Brazil, and their parents. With individual and group therapy, the activities were conducted in the following order: situational diagnosis of the Reference Center patients, interview with the parents, speech

and language therapy, therapy's feedback to the parents, language workshops and final feedback of the activities to those responsible for the activities' proposition. All activities were recorded and transcribed. Twenty-seven patients participated in the study, 19 boys (70%) and 23 girls (85%), all enrolled in regular education¹⁶.

Initial language evaluations were conducted: oral language was analyzed by a speech disorder screening test called *Teste de Rastreamento de Distúrbios Articulatorios de Fala (TERDAF)*, and written language was analyzed through the writing of a text or the dictation of letters and words. For voice evaluation, the Consensus Auditory-Perceptual Evaluation of Voice (CAPE-V) was used; for orofacial motricity and stomatognathic functions, the orofacial myofunctional protocol called *Protocolo de Avaliação Miofuncional Orofacial com Escores (AMIOFE)*; for hearing, the auditory tasks from the *Triagem do Processamento Auditivo Central*. Such instruments allowed to define the activities considering the difficulties and the potential of the participants. A comparison of linguistic, perceptual and interaction aspects before and after language workshops was also conducted¹⁶.

Individual therapy served as a basis for the undergraduates to analyze the participants' deficits and linguistic-cognitive capacity. The participants were divided into eight groups; each group participated in an average of five sessions. There were three students in each 60-minute session, which was mediated by two Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences undergraduates. The theoretical framework was not reported in the study; however, the authors emphasized that the homogeneity of medical and speech and language diagnostic hypotheses was not considered for the groups' constitution; thus, all participants were included¹⁶.

Different levels of improvements were observed in the group intervention, considering the individuality of each subject. The participants showed a greater perception of their difficulties and potential, decreased body tension, improved social interaction, communicative intentions and functions, greater visual or auditory attention, increased face, body or language expressiveness, among other improvements¹⁶.

The most recent study included in the review was from 2016. It aimed to describe the contributions of a group therapy approach on the evaluation of language in children. Nine children participated

in the study. They were divided into three groups of three participants (G1 and G2 - children with language disorder problems and a diverse diagnosis, G3 - children without language complaints enrolled in a public kindergarten). Video recordings and a field journal were used to evaluate each child's participation in group therapy and their verbal and non-verbal productions. Four meetings were held, lasting between 30 and 60 minutes each, with a socio-interactionist focus. In the results, the authors described that the group's constitution favored the identification of the children's linguistic potential and the interaction and cooperation among the participants. They observed that children with less difficulty helped others with mobility difficulties and some children followed the examples of others in the way of using objects or reproducing words. It should be noted that the authors observed an increased complexity in the language functions used by the groups' participants by assessing them through a larger number of sessions³.

There is a scarcity in the number of studies that address group therapy in Speech, Language Pathology and Audiology, including the area of Language. Studies indicate the need for further studies on group work approaches and the development of literature reviews on the subject⁴. The strengthening of Speech, Language Pathology and Audiology activities in oral and written language only happens when the results are systematized, recorded, analyzed and disseminated¹⁷. A listing of services offering group work approaches in speech and language therapy should be conducted. Their general characteristics should be evaluated the same way other studies have characterized other types of approach¹⁸.

Regarding the evaluations, only some studies reported in their methodology the use of evaluation instruments before and after the therapy sessions to gather data to evidence their results. The studies included in this review used different instruments for the participants' evaluations: video recordings, functional communication profile criteria by Fernandes (2003, 2004), socio-cognitive performance criteria by Molini (2001), Molini-Avejonas and Fernandes test (2003), phonological awareness test called *Consciência Fonológica – Instrumento de Avaliação Sequencial (CONFIAS)*, a speech disorder screening test called *Teste de Rastreamento de Distúrbios Articulatorios de Fala (TERDAF)*, the Consensus Auditory-Perceptual Evaluation

of Voice (CAPE-V), the orofacial myofunctional protocol called *Protocolo de Avaliação Miofuncional Orofacial com Escores (AMIOFE)*, and the auditory tasks from the *Triagem do Processamento Auditivo Central*. To ensure the effectiveness of the procedures, therapeutic planning and evaluation instruments are necessary, which is increasingly required by professional councils¹⁷.

The number of studies that used an instrument to quantify the improvements of group therapy's participants is an important aspect to be discussed. Of the ten studies analyzed, seven described the instruments used to evidence the results obtained, but all instruments were used for individual evaluation; instruments for group evaluation were not mentioned.

Studies describing group work dynamics, indicating its gains and limitations and pointing out gaps in this treatment model, will help the speech and language therapist reflect and consider group approaches. They will also disassociate the notion of group work only being an approach to supply great patient demand, to be considered an actual intervention alternative⁶.

The concept and the function of "evidence" must be recognized to comprehend its applicability in Speech, Language Pathology and Audiology practice. When used with the professional's experience and the patient's preferences, this concept can be understood as a set of elements or proofs that confirm or reject a given study's hypotheses¹⁹.

Regarding this issue, video recordings of the therapy sessions were used as a form of evaluation in four studies^{3,8,9,12}, combined with other instruments. In group therapy, it can be difficult to analyze the participants' actions when the interactions happen because several information and actions occur simultaneously. Therefore, recordings are a tool that helps analyze the data and compare the participants' performance by more than one professional. Despite being a good tool, it should be used in conjunction with other standardized instruments.

The studies structured the therapy sessions with very different characteristics: total number of sessions, frequency of sessions and duration. Thus, different models of therapy were registered. According to the parameter of time recommended by the Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences manual *Manual de Orientação ao Fonoaudiólogo: Balizador de tempo de tratamento em Fonoaudiologia*, the sessions' duration depends on the

patient's disorder or alteration. One must consider the individual development during the treatment, the degree of commitment of the individual, and the family. Another important aspect of being considered is attendance and punctuality, as the therapy gains are not the same if the patient has many absences and delays. This guidance manual was developed by the Brazilian Federal Board of Speech and Language Pathology and Audiology. It describes an instrument used to track time parameters called *instrumento balizador de tempo (IBT)*. Through this instrument, the therapist can see the average treatment time, the weekly frequency, and the recommended duration of the consultation/session according to the patient's pathology²⁰.

In six of the studies, the speech and language therapist had a coordinator and mediator role; that is, the professional led and managed the groups during the intervention. Some authors argue that patients should play an active role in their therapeutic process. They state that the therapist must contribute to the patients' growth and evolution, making them gain self-confidence, independence and personal integration to trace their own path to achieve their goals²¹.

Regarding the studies' theoretical framework, 30% described the use of the socio-historical perspective and 10% of the Bakhtinian perspective. There is a diversified number of theoretical frameworks used in group work approaches in speech and language therapy, the socio-historical perspective being prevalent for the construction of groups². A study verified how and why the speech and language therapy group was constituted with seven speech therapists. According to the interviewees, the group was initially constituted by demand⁶. Group approaches in the Speech, Language Pathology and Audiology clinical practice will gain direction and meaning from the moment that the theoretical framework they are based on and supported is understood and used by professionals.

The Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences literature demonstrates an inconsistency regarding the theoretical framework used in group studies, adopting concepts from other areas without careful consideration. There is a hypothesis that these inconsistencies happen due to a lack of articulation between the studies with the elements that characterize the Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences practice².

Conclusion

There is a scarcity of studies that explore the effects of speech and language therapy in language when conducted in groups. Still, there is no consensus on which approach or evaluation instruments guarantee effectiveness. Even using instruments designed for individual evaluation of the group participants, the studies that conducted evaluations demonstrated positive effects on the development and improvement of the language of children, adults, and elderly people. In this review, international studies were not considered, as this study aimed to verify Brazilian speech and language therapy practices. However, further studies should be conducted to compare the Brazilian and international reality to understand the construction of processes that facilitate language and subjectivity development when performed in therapy groups.

There is a need for greater investments in the development and structuring of speech and language group therapies and the dissemination of this information. Thus, speech therapists' performance can be strengthened, especially in public health or education institutions, in which group approaches represent reality.

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