

**El fenómeno del lenguaje de la ecolalia en los trastornos del espectro autista
y el derecho y los desafíos de la educación inclusiva****The language phenomenon of ecolalia in autism spectrum disorders and the right
and challenges of inclusive education**

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RESUMEN

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo analizar el fenómeno lingüístico de la ecolalia en el trastorno del espectro autista (TEA), abordando los derechos y desafíos, así como los mecanismos de inclusión en el espacio educativo. Esta es una revisión asistemática de la literatura que conduce a la reflexión y la problematización de las políticas de inclusión de las personas con TEA. Los niños con TEA generalmente presentan dificultades en el uso funcional del lenguaje, independientemente del enfoque conceptual, que representa uno de los aspectos fundamentales de la patología. Es necesario implementar capacitación específica y capacitación de docentes y profesionales en el campo de la educación, y la tendencia de los estudiantes con TEA a las dificultades semánticas y, en casos más serios, a la pragmática del lenguaje.

ABSTRACT

The present work aims to analyze the linguistic phenomenon of the echolalia in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), addressing the rights and challenges, as well as the mechanisms of inclusion in the educational space. This is an asystematic review of literature that leads to the reflection and problematization of the inclusion policies of people with ASD. Children with ASD usually present difficulties in the functional use of language, independent of the conceptual approach, representing one of the fundamental aspects of the pathology. It is necessary to implement specific education and training of teachers and professionals in the field of education, and the tendency of students with ASD to semantic difficulties and in more serious cases, in the pragmatics of language.

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INTRODUCTION

With the first studies on the prevalence of autism published in the 1960s and 1970s, the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), of inconclusive etiology and essentially clinical diagnosis, is currently characterized as a developmental disability, being in the fifth edition of the Manual Diagnostic and Statistical Mental Disorders, published in 2013, defined as a single disorder encompassing different conditions marked by neurodevelopmental disorders. Children with ASD usually present difficulties in the functional use of language, such as echolalia, independent of the conceptual approach, representing one of the fundamental aspects of the pathology.

Contemporary changes in conceptions of autism have reflected positively in many social areas, especially in the educational area, ensuring gains of important rights. However, it is essential to implement specific education and training of teachers and professionals in the field of education in the realization of the rights of students with ASD. Thus, this research focuses on the study of the inclusive education of students with ASD, mainly by addressing issues related to the linguistic phenomenon of echolalia, as well as the challenges that are imposed to the realization of these rights and viability of the concreteness of constitutional precepts.

METHOD

From this problematic involving inclusive education and the linguistic phenomenon of the echolalia in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the study aims to discuss and problematize this theme, as well as the challenges that are imposed to the realization of these rights, through a asystematic review of literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

With inconclusive etiology and multifactorial conditions, the manifestations of ASD originate from a very striking triad in the syndrome, characterized by signs and symptoms related to interaction, social communication and the presence of restricted and repetitive behavioral patterns with impairments in adaptive functioning. Symptoms vary in form and intensity, causing children in the spectrum to have different levels of impairment, ranging from mild to severe.

The overall estimated prevalence of autism was 14.6 per 1000 children aged 8 years in 2012 by the Autism Monitoring and Developmental Disability Network (ADDM) (Table 1), and with a higher incidence in males. Epidemiological data from the Brazilian Ministry of Health statistics point to the existence of approximately 500,000 people with ASD, also exposing a possible underreporting, which may have been generated by incipient knowledge in professionals and/or underdiagnosis of the disorder (BRAZIL, 2013).

Table 1.

Identified Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder – ADDM Network 2000 – 2012 – Combing data from all sites

Surveillance Year	Birth Year	Number of ADDM Sites Reporting	Prevalence per 1,000 Children (Range)	This is about 1 in x children...
2000	1992	6	6.7 (4.5-9.9)	1 in 150
2002	1994	14	6.6 (3.3-10.6)	1 in 150
2004	1996	8	8 (4.6-9.8)	1 in 125
2006	1998	11	9 (4.2-12.1)	1 in 110
2008	2000	14	11.3 (4.8-21.2)	1 in 88
2010	2002	11	14.7 (5.7-21.9)	1 in 68
2012	2004	11	14.6 (8.2-21.6)	1 in 68

² Prevalence is the number of people in a population that have a condition relative to all of the people in the population. Prevalence is typically shown as a percent (e.g. 1%) or a proportion (e.g. 1 in 100).

Children with ASD usually present difficulties in the functional use of language, regardless of the conceptual approach, representing a fundamental aspect of the pathology. Their statements are not continuous, they have difficulties in engaging a conversation, in providing information, and especially in expressing their ideas. In most cases the child does not seem to know what they are and what the function of words is. This disturbance in the use of language may make it difficult to understand questions, instructions or metaphors (DELFRATE; SANTANA; MASSI, 2009; LOPES et al, 2014; MERGL; AZONI, 2015).

The Echolalia Language Phenomenon

When initiating the process of language acquisition, the child usually tends to go through the epochal period, that is, repeat the speech without meaning or sense, in a reproduction movement. However, children with ASD may extend the echolalia period for a longer time than typical development. The term echolalia refers to "echoes in speech," being used for the first time and accepted in the medical literature in 1825 by the French physician Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, in describing and diagnosing the curse of the tics on the Marquise de Dampierre as a symptom of disorder cerebral or emotional (SILVA et al, 2016).

The most common language-related singularities in children with ASD are: (i) Pronominal Inversion: difficulty in using the pronoun in the first person; (ii) Inflexibility in Social Interactions; (iii) Late Echolalia: repetition of commercial excerpts or speech of cartoons and (iiii) Immediate Echolalia: when repeating the phrase or the last word during the dialogue (ARAÚJO, 2016).

Repetitive speech can be manifested by self-repetition of speech or repetition of the other, presenting in: immediate echolalia (repetition of words or phrases, usually the last part of what was said, immediately upon hearing them); late echolalia (when memorized speech is "recovered" in parts of words or phrases); (occurs when the child changes the repetitions by saying them in a different tone or by changing some words) and mitigated echolalia (where the speech is contextualized and intends to communicate, presenting variations in rhythm, accentuation and inflection in the attempt to adapt them to the different contexts)

(AMORIM, 2011; LOPES et al, 2014; MERGL; AZONI, 2015).

Researchs about the language characteristics of people with autism is frequent, but a few deepen in echolalia. While for some the echolalia is a repetition without meaning and purpose, as speech indifferent to the other and to any interpretation, other studies interpret echolalia as a primitive attempt to maintain social contact when the individual is confronted with a language beyond their linguistic competences or as a positive prognostic factor (SAAD, GOLDFELD, 2009, LOPES et al, 2014, MERGL, AZONI, 2015).

In the school environment, even in children with ASDs considered verbals, while maintaining their echolalia speech, they persist in impairing the symbolic capacity and understanding of the meanings of the terms, in general, in specific contexts, and especially in the understanding of meanings that refer to the affective experience. However, to inhibit echolalia is to inhibit speech, it should be contextualized and inserted in the communicative context, which favors social interaction and language development.

Rights to inclusion

Associations such as the National Society for Autistic Children (USA, UK, Spain), Pro-Aid Autism (France), Autism Europe (Belgium, at European level) and the Associação de Amigos do Autista - AMA (Brazil) have demanded, for years, from their respective governments, the right to public services (and their effectiveness) to people with Autism Spectrum Disorder - ASD, especially related to health and education.

In the Brazilian scenario, education is a right of all, as is equality, being this material, that is, it does not mean that everyone should be treated in the same way, but that the equals should be treated equally and the unequals unequally, as far as of their inequalities. But treating the unequal unequally is not the same as isolating them, so the need for the inclusive school. The contemporary perspective establishes from society and from the school a preparation to welcome all and to promote a more independent, productive and autonomous life to the person with disability.

Inclusive school differs from the integrated school because this focuses on the adaptation of the disabled student, in special structure or even special

classes. Inclusive school seeks to focus on the needs of students with or without disabilities, respecting and accepting school diversity. That is, while in the integrated school the child is seen as having a problem and needs to be adapted to the other students, in the inclusive one recognizes that all children are different and that the school should transform to attend the needs of each student, guaranteeing the same use and opportunity to all, avoiding to standardize the students (SOUZA; SILVEIRA, 2011).

In this sense, the benefits of the inclusive school do not only affect children with disabilities, since living among disabled and non-disabled people develops human qualities, such as empathy, tolerance, understanding of other standards and other levels of difficulties, and the strengthening of teacher education is paramount, not only in the sense of using specific practices for this or that deficiency, since all students learn within their limits, but to take these limits into account and to conveniently explore the possibilities of each one. The teacher must be aware that diversity is important. (SOUZA; SILVEIRA, 2011)

A network of support between the school and some specialized professionals (e.g., speech, language and hearing pathologist, physiotherapists, psychologists) is essential to provide to the student a more efficient learning experience and to the teacher a different look. With the focus on the individuality of each student and the multiplicity of the group, it is fundamental to flexibilize and restructure the teaching, in order to offer students the promotion of independent living, including training for the labor market.

The Challenges of Inclusion and Echolalia

The inclusive school should have as a first step the overall formation of the student and promote the development of the necessary potentials for their autonomy and citizenship, fulfilling their role with equity, without prejudice, observing the specifics of each student, with the aim of their integral formation. In this sense, from the normative point of view, the promulgation of Brazilian Law 12.764/12 (Berenice Piana Law) represents a step forward in inclusive public policies for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, devising to them the device that guarantees essential rights to life, such as access to education, housing, the

labor market, social security and social assistance, among others, and fall within the concept described in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SANT'ANA; SANTOS, 2015).

Thus, the training and qualification of teachers and professionals in the field of education becomes an essential issue in the realization of the rights of students with ASD, aiming, among others, aspects of the construction of processes of language and meaning; pedagogical mediation; the implementation of parameters for pedagogical evaluation, the valuation of progress; the pedagogical intervention focused on social and communicative relations. In relation to the linguistic phenomenon of the echolalia, the tendency to semantic difficulties and in more serious cases, in the pragmatics of the language, that is, of functional and contextualized use, besides the symbolic capacity, that is to say, the child uses of the social demand for "speech", but at the linguistic level, there is no stored symbol itself to express their feelings, appropriating the speech of another person immediately or late (SANT'ANA; SANTOS, 2015; MERGL; AZONI, 2015).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is necessary to implement specific training of teachers and professionals in the field of education, and the tendency of students with ASD to semantic difficulties and in more serious cases, in the pragmatics of language. Therefore, it is necessary to guarantee to the educators and technical professionals the knowledge and the adequate formation, guaranteeing, through specific pedagogic actions, a preparation to welcome all and to promote a more independent, productive and autonomous life to the person with ASD.

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