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Interdisciplinary Practices along with the Basic Literacy Process: The Continuing Education Focused on Teachers

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Abstract

This collaborative research aimed to assist the process of continuing education for educators, suggesting the permanent meeting of formation groups in service, with discussions on child development, language (oral and written) and its relation to basic literacy and the use of tools/resources to support these processes. Six teachers with higher degree and average age of 32 years old participated in this study. All six participants had experiences in basic literacy (varying from four to nine years). Their students that also participated in the study were from second and third grades, with an average of 22 students per classroom. The data collection were carried out through the Metatextual Intervention Program PRONARRAR (Oliveira & Braga, 2012) and through conducting workshops with teachers from dialogic activities aimed to verify the knowledge of these teachers on the acquisition and difficulties of language (oral and written), the link between language acquisition and basic literacy and the possibilities of support and resources in these processes in the school environment. After the research, the topics were discussed and thereafter proposed the use of PRONARRAR in classroom with, forming groups, in which the scribe should be alternated as the sessions were advanced. After 12 sessions, the analysis of the student productions displayed improvement, especially from the rise of parts of stories and their characteristics, indicating the understanding of these pupils about the constituent elements of the narrative. The macrolinguistic aspects also progressed, since the students wrote a paragraph for each part of the story. The intervention program was set as an alternative to the pedagogical practices geared to delay situations in the basic literacy process. It can also be considered as an alternative to an interdisciplinary work to support this process in the school environment.

Keywords

Basic Literacy, Language Development, School Assistance, Teacher Training

1. Introduction

In several areas of knowledge, work facing the continuing education of teachers has been a satisfactory action alternative in educational institutions, especially when related to experts that pursue development for the basic literacy process. This paper, as it considers joint actions (speech therapist, psychologist and school staff, for example), helps the teacher understand the process of acquisition and development of oral and written language, its relation with basic literacy, as well as its difficulties. This understanding, in turn, contributes and glances adaptations of teaching practices that promote basic literacy.

Costa and Rocha (2006) are supported when it is said that the continuing education involves all apprenticeship resulting from the permanent update of professional experiences, associated or not to updating courses that extend the initial training. Therefore, it is through a continued process that educators understand simultaneously their need and the development of their work.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education (MEC, 2006) defined principles and guidelines to this process. In this document, the following aspects were considered: the continuing education was a demand from professional activities; teaching practice and theoretical knowledge were references; going beyond the provision of refresher courses or training; being a fundamental part of teacher professionalization and integrating into the school's daily life. Hence, some preferred the term "in-service training".

In this context, a key aspect of the university was used: collaborative research. It can be defined as a method of the scientific investigation, designed and performed with a close association to an action focused on solving a problem (Vergara, 2005). Thiollent (1994) defined it as a form of continuous intervention for the researched system. These interventions are characterized by the actions involving all actors, whether in university or community members. In these actions, joint deliberations to solve the problems experienced are mainly present and, thus, providing a better understanding of their causes, hence its investigative characteristic.

How the teacher appropriated and internalized the theoretical practical dimensions built throughout his life (not only as an educator) reflects in their actions in everyday life (Fontana, 2000). The pedagogical project is capable of modifying this fact, which should be considered as a resource to support the teacher in maintaining a critically reflexive teaching. Their work must be (re)organized based on problematics that their initial training theories propitiated. This observation, in turn, may provide to these professionals a closer relationship between the speech and the action, rather than a simple application of these theoretical assumptions acquired during their training (Martins, Oliveira & Carnevalle, 2013).

On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that the anxieties that the teaching-learning process generated long ago on these professionals expose an initial training that does not even indicate solutions or problematizations of these difficulties in face of the diversity. Therefore, it is agreed that discussing the issues involved in this professional training is urgent, especially when related to higher education. However, the immediate support to professionals who are willing to rethink this practice is urgent, as the aspects of child development, especially those related to basic literacy, cannot be unsupported.

In this context, this article exposes an experience to offer study and debates related to the process of acquisition and development of language (oral and written), as well as its relation to the basic literacy process, through the use of an intervention program using the narrative genre (PRONARRAR). The PRONARRAR (Oliveira & Braga, 2012) originated from this article's first author doctorate degree research. This study verified the effects of the metatextual intervention program, in the production of pupil's narrative genre texts with delay in the basic literacy process. It is a program that allows the management of these situations in the pedagogical practice.

This theoretical framework of this research focuses on the psycholinguistic perspective applied to the examination of metalinguistic activity, which is an activity performed by the individual to analyze the language itself. Nevertheless, the program enables this activity to be completed without separating the language's use and role, as it is dealing with a familiar genre: the story.

Hence, although the structure and organization of the text are focused, the individual does not cease to work

with the content and the uses of language. Moreover, PRONARRAR also uses the support of pictogram, carefully selected, according to stories related to the context and life experiences of most children, inserting familiar content to their productions (Oliveira, Bonki, Braga, & Schier, 2012). However, it should be noted that PRONARRAR was developed with children from the countryside of Paraná. Adaptations may be needed when discussing other regions.

Specifically on writing, the program allows the school to analyze their production, approaching its properties while the story is rewritten. This analysis is needed and must be even more carefully conducted when dealing with the alphabetic writing system, which demands understanding that the letters correspond to lower sound segments, in other words, comprehend the alphabetic principle of the graphophonemic correspondence (Cunha & Capellini, 2009; Capovilla, Capovilla, Trevisan, & Rezende, 2006; Capovilla, Capovilla, & Suiter, 2004). This also favors the review of that writing's linguistic aspects.

Thereon, it is important to mention that some researchers have found two main difficulties related to the continuing education of teachers in schools: on one hand, the public policies disjointed from scientific production and, on the other hand, a discomposure between procedures that facilitate the reading and writing learning and conceptions of cultural appropriation in the school environment. Although it may be clarified that it is related to different aspects, many professionals still assume that the adoption of systematic strategies that facilitate basic literacy process may involve changes in the methodological aspects at school. This is also a challenge for the researchers (Oliveira, Braga, Viana, & Santos, 2014).

For a long time, the basic literacy investigation in countries that use the alphabetic writing systems revealed that the success greatly depends on the level of understanding and the pupils' verbal expression (Maluf & Cardoso-Martins, 2013; Viana, 2005; Barrera & Maluf, 2003, and others). Within this context and widespread today, the 'Reading Science' has proven to be one of the largest holders with respect to reading and writing learning.

In this perspective, several authors have emphasized the importance of considering the empirical studies on the development of reading and writing, for the purpose of assisting the basic literacy process. However, it is highlighted that this process involves the importance of social practices of reading and writing, in and out of school, as it has been debated for decades. Gombert (2013) discusses epilinguistic skills, as although there may be expressed conventional rules, during the initial process of language development, it cannot be considered as a conscious process. In other words, this linguistic competence is naturally acquired by children during the socialization process and daily communicative situations.

Finally, it is within the context of continuing education, child development, focused on the process of language acquisition and development (oral and written), that the experience provided in this article aims to contribute. Considering such aspects, this study, with collaborative focus, offers school activities that will assist the continuing education training for elementary school teachers. Specifically, it suggests the continuous meeting of discussion groups about the in-service training, with exchanges on aspects of child development, language (oral and written) and its relation to basic literacy, as well as the use of tools/resources to support this process.

2. Methodological Aspects

The principles and program steps will be displayed (Oliveira & Braga, 2012) in order to provide subsidies for its use, as well as possible adaptations. In the original study (Oliveira, 2010), measures of performance in participants' reading and writing were initially collected through strategies that mainly involve the creation of oral and written narratives originated from pictographic support. The students produced oral narratives from the reading of stories illustrations. The writing was then initiated with the same illustrations. These creations were marked in order to compare their performance during the intervention program. This happened individually, but there are no restrictions for applying this program to a group (Oliveira et al., 2014).

PRONARRAR offers 17 modules (17 stories). However, the last completed studies revealed significant effects with the use of 12 modules. Furthermore, the program is constantly improved for validation purposes. One of the variations that have already been accepted is the judgment of each story.

In general, the procedure consists of requesting, at school, a sequence of four pictures and, subsequently, their oral and written descriptions. The illustrations are created from original stories, and each story should contain four prints in order to indicate the constituting parts, namely: setting, theme, plot and resolution. After the description of each figure, the story is completed and specific instructions for examination, as well as for complementation.

There are unique tools to analyze the stories created by the students, which were exclusively considered in Olivera's program (2010), constructed from previous studies. The protocols contemplated to measure the performance of the participants were based on studies of Morrow (1986), Silva and Spinillo (2000) and Santos (2007). These studies explained production analysis projects of oral and written stories in qualitative and quantitative levels.

The adjustments made in relation to the score of this protocol followed the structure of the written stories produced by students from a pilot study (Oliveira & Braga, 2009) and the elements required during the creation of the story (setting, theme, plot, resolution and sequence). Since each of these elements contains specific characteristics, the marking was modified from what appeared in such stories (**Table 1**).

It is necessary to acknowledge the fact that the ideal total is based on a story whose elements reveal the main characteristics. For example: the ideal is a setting that includes: place, time and more than one character, so that the plot is properly linked to the structure. Therefore, the ideal score is 4 points. In other words, to assess the story created, it should be related to the characterization, not the sum of the given points in **Table 1**, conceived from these criteria and based on the structure of a narrative, as presented by Morrow (1986).

a) Specific phases from PRONARRAR

Phase A for the Intervention

The first step of the program begins with an activity that aims to identify the elements of a written story. For this purpose, the reading of a pre-defined story is conducted, as well as a painting activity to highlight each story element (Oliveira, 2010; Ferreira & Spinillo, 2003). Oliveira (2010) implemented this phase with the creation of a table containing the main characteristics of the story elements. This table will be used by the student, in phase B, to reduce the support from the teacher.

Throughout the second step from phase A, the pupils were instructed to create the forming elements of a story, one by one. According to Oliveira (2010), this phase was accomplished in two sessions, where the story was also completed with linguistic assessment at the end of the second session. During the completion of the story, in addition to the assessment, inferences were made in order to improve the production of each story element.

Phase B for the Intervention

Table 1. Score of the stories produced by students.

Categories	Grading	
Setting	1 character	YES = 1
	More than 1 character	YES = 2
	Time	YES = 1
	Place	YES = 1
Ideal subtotal: 4 points		
Theme	Description of actions	YES = 2
	Clear presence of a problem situation?	YES = 5
Ideal subtotal: 5 points		
Plot (Problem resolution)	No action	YES = 0
	One action	YES = 2
	More than one action	YES = 4
Ideal subtotal: 4 points		
Resolution/Denouement	End set from the resolution of the problem	YES = 4
	Simple and straightforward end without solving the problem	YES = 2
	Simple and straightforward end unrelated to the rest of the story	YES = 1
	Undefined or missing end	YES = 0
Ideal subtotal: 4 points		
Sequence (Mark only in the presence of a plot)	Present	YES = 1
	Missing	YES = 0
Ideal subtotal: 1 point		
Ideal total of points	**18/18**	

In phase B of the intervention, the researcher should offer less support for the student. The creation of the story must be accomplished according to **Table 1** from phase A, which contains a detailed description of the elements forming a story: setting, theme, plot and resolution. Hence, the table is a self-regulation strategy, from which pupils produce their own story, differing from phase A.

b) Illustrations used for emergency written stories

The figures used during the program were specifically created for this purpose, usually by an illustrator. Therefore, the original stories were properly separated into its constituent elements (setting, theme, plot and resolution) and provided by an illustrator in order to design a figure for each element.

The characteristic of these figures were conceived according to suggestions from a pilot study, produced by Oliveira and Braga (2009): focus on the story elements of each illustration, in order to provide detailed aspects of each element. The main objective was to adapt and refine the instruments used in this program. Examples of these prints are provided (**Annex 1**), referring to a story. The order of the pictures, currently displayed numerically, should not be offered to the children throughout the program.

c) Preliminary recommendations

The results obtained in two schools of a city in the countryside of Paraná are presented in this article. These results, which are also part of a larger project, were developed in different schools and were financially supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq—process number: 405359/2012-8), currently approved by the Ethics Committee, on the advice of number 397532, in 2013.

The specific methodological procedures used in this experience were suggested by Oliveira and Braga (2012), in addition to workshops with teachers for the study and discussing the language acquisition process, the combination of this process with the basic literacy and knowledge of PRONARRAR and its use with collective samples.

Six teachers and their respective students have participated in this experiment. These educators have taught 2nd and 3rd graders, with an average of 22 pupils per class. The teachers have a postgraduate degree, are 32 years old, in average, and have four to nine years of experience in basic literacy. Workshops with teachers investigated their knowledge about: language acquisition (oral and written), difficulties in this process, the link between the process of language acquisition and basic literacy, as well as possibilities of support and resources, and others. These examinations occurred through the use of dialogic activities, alternating participants and registering, with consent, his lines. After the previous research, questions concerning the subject were raised and the use of PRONARRAR was proposed, with arrangement of groups (classroom), in which the scribe should be alternated as the sessions advanced.

After the program (12 sessions), the analysis of the children's production, following the program (Oliveira & Braga, 2012), were discussed with the teachers in workshops. The results are going be reported and discussed as follows.

3. Results and Discussion

This session will present and discuss some of the results reported by teachers from the beginning of the workshops, in addition to the subjects discussed according to the reports. Students' performance in written productions data during the sessions of the program will be presented next.

3.1. Teacher Reports from Initial Workshops

Table 2 and **Table 3** present data from the main aspects reported by educators at the beginning of the training workshops, including the main subjects discussed (with text reading) after these reports.

Referring to the fact that language development is a sociocultural process and, therefore, must be taught, Zorzi (2003) sustained that learning does not depend only on individual skills, since it is subject to social and educational conditions that, if not sufficiently favorable and appropriate, may completely restrict the development and, hence, the child's appropriation in relation to their culture.

Given this dependence on social factors, this process should not be coupled only with linguistic and/or individual aspects. Zorzi (2003) also emphasized the need to investigate whether the child has or has had the opportunity to live next to people who have the habit of reading. Thereby, the child can understand how and what to write, what writing means, the situation requiring it and, consequently, this would be applied to reading.

There are many scientific evidences revealing that individuals can implicitly acquire language structure

Table 2. Main aspects reported by the teachers at the beginning of the debate about subjects defined in workshops.

Subjects	Concepts and knowledge mentioned by teachers
Oral language acquisition aspects	Assigning formal aspects: ("when the child begins speaking"; "child's first word"; "early proper speaking"; "not changing words"...)
Written language acquisition aspects (reading and writing)	Assigning formal aspects: ("Knowing the alphabet"; "Knowing how to copy the alphabet"; "Knowing how to perform sentence completion activities"; "Knowing the sound of letters"...)
Writing acquisition and basic literacy relationship	Same assignment as the language acquisition process: ("Knowing the alphabet"; "Knowing how to copy the alphabet"; "Knowing how to perform sentence completion activities"; "Knowing the sound of letters"; "Knowing how to identify letters and syllables";...)
Usage and role of writing	Immediate use assigning: ("Knowing how to read"; "Study more"; "Get into college"; "Get a good job";...)
Teaching reading and writing common procedures	Assigning in relation to the alphabetic system teaching techniques: ("Naming the alphabet"; "Identify capital letters through forenames and illustrations"; "Forming syllables"; "Pronouncing letters";...)

Table 3. Main subjects discussed (with text reading) after the initial reports of teacher from the workshops.

Subjects	Main content discussed after the teachers' initial reports
Oral language acquisition aspects	Language aspects as a psychic subject constituent; What means to 'acquire' the language in the subject building context; The language and its formal, functional and social usage aspects.
Written language acquisition aspects (reading and writing)	Writing as a cultural legacy; The language and its formal, functional and social usage aspects; Basic literacy and literacy; Appropriation of culture related to writing; Epilinguistic and metalinguistic skills; Genres and text types.
Writing acquisition and basic literacy relationship	Writing as a cultural legacy; The language and its formal, functional and social usage aspects; Basic literacy and literacy; Appropriation of culture and writing; Epilinguistic and metalinguistic skills; Genres and text types.
Usage and role of writing	
Teaching reading and writing common procedures	Paths for learning reading and writing in alphabetic systems; Current scientific works related to these aspects; Basic literacy and literacy; Epilinguistic and metalinguistic skills; Genres and text types.

knowledge (Gombert, 2013). Several studies permeated the educational setting long ago, drawing attention to the process called basic literacy. Soares (2004) claimed that basic literacy and literacy process cannot be dissociated, since current researches related to various conceptions of reading and writing, such as psychological, linguistics and psycholinguistics, have shown that children begin writing from both processes.

On the other hand, it must be highlighted that the researches revealed that basic literacy teachers must consider the systematic procedures that facilitate the initial process of learning to read (and consequently writing). These strategies were developed and strictly studied based on alphabetic system languages (Maluf & Cardoso-Martins, 2013; Viana, 2005; Barrera & Maluf, 2003, and others). As already mentioned, even with specific strategies, the basic literacy process must always be accompanied by social reading and writing practices, inside and outside of school, since children also learn conventional rules during the initial process of language development without their knowledge (Gombert, 2013).

3.2. Students Performances

a) Story score
Table 4 indicates frequency and development of children's score during program. The data were obtained from PRONARRAR (Oliveira & Braga, 2012).
b) Examples produced by one group (initial, intermediate and final)
Figure 1 provides examples of writing creations from one of the student group participating in the study.

Table 4. Frequency and development of children's score during program.

Stories/Sessions	Group score				
	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5
1st session	6	8	8	6	8
2nd session	6	16	11	11	6
3rd session	16	7	17	9	9
4th session	5	11	11	6	13
5th session	7	14	11	7	7
6th session	14	14	12	16	14
7th session	16	16	17	16	13
8th session	17	16	12	17	13
9th session	12	12	14	12	9
10th session	14	16	16	14	14
11st session	9	4	12	9	9
12th session	12	12	8	17	17
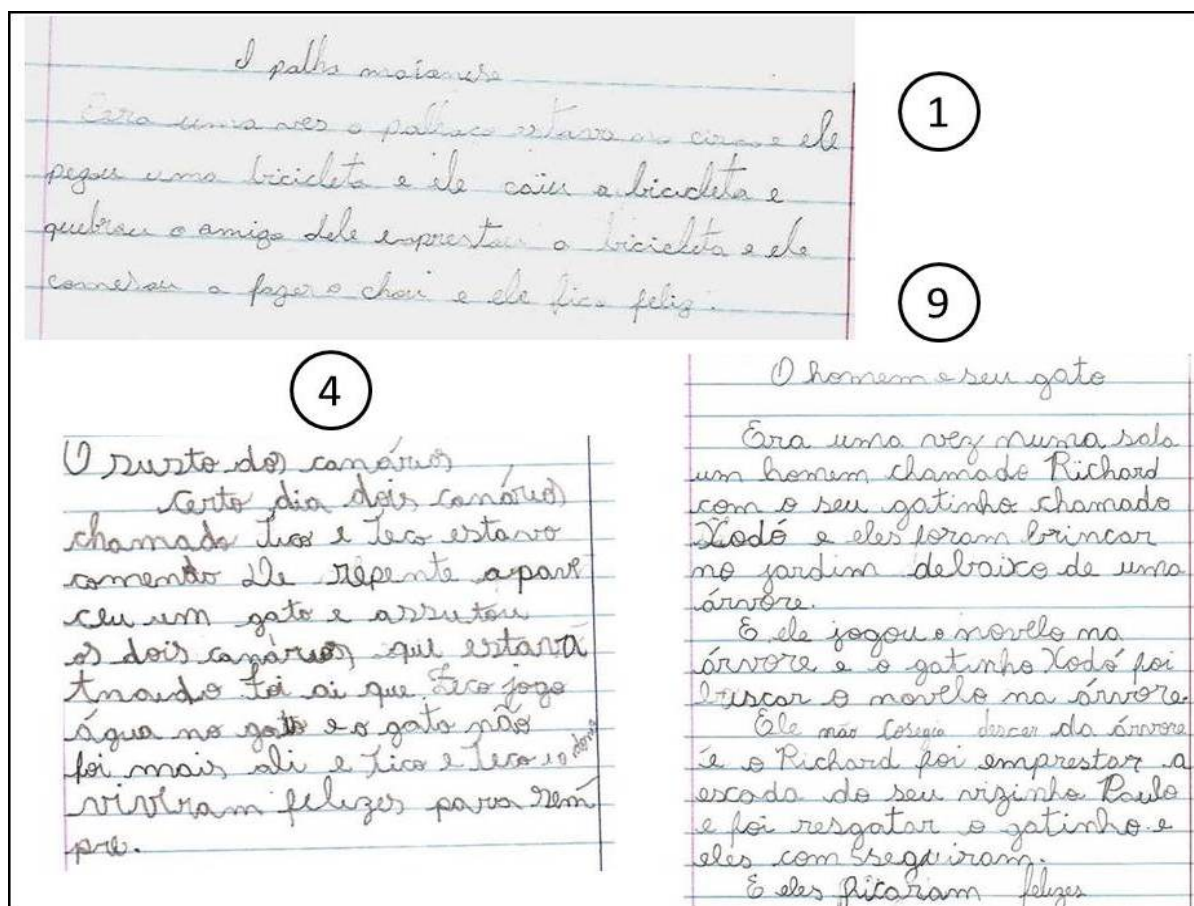
Figure 1. Examples of writing creations by one of the groups participating in the study. Source: creations from students during the research.

Referring to stories number 1 and 3 (firsts provided in **Figure 1** on the left side), it is possible to observe the presence of setting elements, such as: place and characters. In these stories, the plot and the resolution were not present. In story 7, it is possible to notice the presence of a plot, although poorly defined. Finally, creation number 10 offered all the elements of a story. Therefore, it is possible to observe that the parts of stories and their characteristics were developed at each new creation presented, evidencing a gradual comprehension of a narrative's elements from the children.

In Rojo's study (1989), she indicated that some categories of narrative, such as setting, were already present at the beginning of basic literacy process for students. Others, such as problematization, resolution and denouement, were being developed. The author then confirmed that basic narrative structures are learned on the initial years of basic education, in other words, during the first encounters with reading and writing in a formal environment. Hence, the school is a privileged place for the construction of structured stories. It is interesting to notice that, since then, the author already highlighted the need to structure work with this genre.

Most difficulties for children while producing a story are present while creating a problematic situation and its resolution (Ferreira & Spinillo, 2003; Oliveira & Braga, 2012). From the moment that these questions are clearly and specifically revealed in the child's text, it can be concluded that this student significantly assimilated the elements of a story.

In addition to that, when related to macrolinguistic aspects, the development in students' stories could be observed, especially in the use of paragraphs. It is possible to notice that, for each element in the story, students gradually used a corresponding paragraph. It is important to mention that this aspect (paragraphing) is not the focus of this intervention according to PRONARRAR (Oliveira & Braga, 2012). However, this confirms that the mediations utilized during the program allow the appropriation of various linguistic aspects.

It could also be observed, during the stories presented, that the stories increasingly revealed more elements from the narrative genre. According to Schneuwly and Dolz (2004) and Marcuschi (2010), every text consists of sequences or text types, namely: descriptive, narrative, explanatory, injunctive and argumentative. Thereby, text genres are characterized by basic linguistic schemes that belong to various genres. Moreover, the children's creations are a synthesis of a set of common structure characteristics, lexical set, verb tenses, adverbs, among other elements that allow them being recognized as belonging to this genre.

It is important to remember that such development in a few creations (twelve, from which four were randomly presented) also deserves recognition in relation to the genre chosen for this work. Mira (2014) claimed the fact that contextualization of genres is closely linked to social practices. In other words, it must be acknowledged that an individual's own social context e communicative practices limit the types of genres to which the person may or may not be exposed. Thus, producing it with more or less ease, written or orally. Hence, the choice of the narrative genre was not made at random. It is one of the most present genres in an individual's childhood. In addition, this presence is natural during the language construction process (oral and written).

4. Final Considerations

The intervention program is set as an alternative to the pedagogical practices geared to delay situations in the literacy process. It is also considered as an alternative to an interdisciplinary work to support this process in the school environment.

In previous studies, where the program was used, the intervention was concluded as effective concerning the creating of written stories by the children. Therefore, its use is recommended in activities that aim to improve the reading and writing skills. It is reinforced that, although the program focuses on macrolinguistic aspects on children's text productions, microlinguistic aspects are optimized as well.

By using the reading and the illustrations in sequence as a resource for emergencies in written stories, the intervention focuses on the metatextuality principle. In other words, it allows the student to analyze the aspects of a narrative and, hence, analyze what is being produced. Hence, the text's structure tends to improve. So far, the use of pictures emphasized only the reproduction of oral narratives. This study, moreover, prioritized the specific features of the illustrations and the presence of this intervention.

The use of the program is applicable at schools since it is related to a low technology resource and easy comprehension for the teacher. In this environment, it is possible to improve the textual production aspects of students with delay in the literacy process with group activities and/or individual situations.

For future researches, the use of the program with different populations is suggested with students that have

different characteristics, in addition to the continuity of researches with group samples, along with the planning of conditions that favor the maintenance of acquired skills. These additional program refinements with further assessment will enable teachers to maximize the probability of successful students.

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Annex 1. Example of an Illustration in Oliveira and Braga (2012).

Source: Oliveira and Braga (2012).