

Original Article

Sentipensar Collectively about Human Communication, its Processes, and its Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to make a call to collectively *sentipensar* (feel-think) the emphasis given to the discourse of deficit concerning the study of human communication, its processes, and its knowledge. It is collective and reflexive work that shares three decolonizing and anti-ableist exercises to combine actions, guided by situated questions, regarding the training and professional practice of those who are working as or studying to become speech-language therapists. This work also includes those who teach and do research in universities.

Keywords:

Human communication; Feelthink; Discourse of deficit; Ableism; Speech-Language Therapy

Sentir-pensar a comunicação humana em coletivo com seus processos e conhecimentos

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é convocar a sentir-pensar em coletivo o peso dado ao discurso do déficit em relação à análise da comunicação humana, seus processos e conhecimentos. Trata-se de um trabalho reflexivo e conjunto que compartilha três exercícios descolonizadores e anticapacitistas que combinam ações pautadas por questões sobre a formação e atuar profissional de quem está trabalhando ou cursando estudos de fonoaudiologia e também daqueles que ensinam e pesquisam nas universidades.

Palavras-chave:

Comunicação humana; Sentir-pensar; Discurso de déficit; Capacitismo; Fonoaudiologia

Sentipensar colectivamente la comunicación humana con sus procesos y sus saberes

RESUMEN

El propósito de este texto es convocar a sentipensar colectivamente el peso dado al discurso del déficit en relación con el estudio de la comunicación humana, sus procesos y sus saberes. Es un trabajo reflexivo y conjunto que comparte tres ejercicios decolonizantes y anticapacitistas para conjugar acciones, orientadas por preguntas situadas, sobre la formación y el actuar profesional de quienes están trabajando o están cursando estudios de fonoaudiología. También de quienes enseñan e investigan en las universidades.

Palabras clave:

Comunicación humana; Sentipensar; Discurso del déficit; Capacitismo; Fonoaudiología

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INTRODUCTION

*The time of the subjects
is slower than that of the economy, and subjectivity is lazy*

Elvira de Arnoux, 2010

The purpose of this article born from *sentipensar* (translated as “feel-think”, henceforth left in Spanish), as a collective journey narrated by three voices that do not always concur, is to reveal the impact of two aspects present in university-level training and the everyday work of speech-language therapy in Colombia: the discourse of deficit and the act of correcting it. The first refers to language (understood as a symbolic-creative phenomenon), speech (explained as a physical-acoustic phenomenon)/non-speech (analyzable as a mechanical-biological phenomenon), and hearing (measurable as a psycho-acoustic phenomenon); the latter corresponds to the decision taken in response to the detected or clinically diagnosed deficit, regardless of the context of training or professional practice.

In the following pages, we attempt to *sentipensar* the place that this noun (“deficit”) and this verb (“to correct”) occupy concerning human communication, its processes, and its knowledge, the foundations on which we train professionals as speech-language therapists to work in other fields beyond the clinical origins of speech-language therapy. At *Centro de Pensamiento Discapacidades, Corpo-diversidad y Corpo-disidencias* of *Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, the thinking exercises relate to the focal points of *sentipensar* to the extent that, in line with Orlando Fals Borda's proposal, they call us to question the dominant visions, to value the experience of groups that contradict western rationality, and to generate alternative contributions that, ultimately, entail the defense of territory and life (Bastidas, 2020).

Accordingly, we make a call to stop constructing deficient subjectivities, which become pathologized and are subjected to therapy with/by/in a clinical setting. This is yet to be reimagined from within interventionist notions so that it does not preserve the structures in social interaction that stigmatize or promote the marginalization of persons based on communicative differences, amid structural conditions like social inequality, cultural disenfranchising, political subordination, and systematic impoverishment.

In this context, we propose three self-reflective exercises meant to be experienced with a decolonizing¹ and anti-ableist² perspective, in order to think and *sentipensar* about communicative knowledge. This, like all knowledge, is socially

and historically constructed outside the academia as a situated experience, although it also develops amid the transformations the university system undergoes in each country, as analyzed by Miguel Huertas (2022). Within these situated dynamics, communicative knowledge related to language, speech/non-speech, and hearing emerges, and listening to them allows us to understand the facets of the challenges posed by groups of service users, in terms of the up-rising alter-active (translation of *alter-activa*, a word play on “alternative”, and *in-surgente*, wordplay between “arising” and “uprising”) or otherness described by Adolfo Albán (2006, 2012). The act of listening to said inquiries, this time collectively, brings forward the questioning certain populations propose of ableism, understood as the process of construction and consolidation of able-bodiedness, as stated by Stephanie Jenkins (2021).

Considering the established intellectual canons, it is necessary to deepen the ways of *sentipensar* in university-level education. This is in order to reveal, using decolonizing and anti-ableist exercises, that language, speech, and hearing not only constitute an anatomic-functional extension of Western rationality –given the role they play in the configuration of the Logos cultivated in academia– but also that the mastery of linguistics and the emphasis on spoken or verbal communication have excluded other forms of communicative knowledge. This is nothing more than an escalation of the question “Why is only one form of communication privileged when there are many ways to communicate?”, posed by Nora Gómez and Nora Pava (2021, p. 236).

At the same time, the diversity of subjects of communication who seek speech-language therapy services and are pathologized by the ableist gaze –as well as racialized, gendered, and categorized by class– wants these exercises to be included in order to decenter the relevance that the deficit has had in their lives, for all that they lack as users of spoken or written language, clients in the health system, or patients of a prescribed therapeutic program.

Consequently, this call involves all actors that are committed to *sentipensar*. We propose beginning by exploring the institutional framework that establishes the discourse of deficit and correction in everyday university life, before delving into the scope of the exercises of *sentipensar*, triple-voiced to experience them collectively.

INSTITUTIONAL DESCRIPTION

In addition to its biological, psychological, and linguistic foundations, professional training in speech-language therapy is informed by human communication studies. Its practice consists of services related to the assistance, not merely clinical, of communication disorders, as indicated by the websites of the universities where the career is offered in Colombia (Appendix 1). These so-called communication disorders, an object of study that is at the base of speech-language therapy programs, have prompted individuals and communities to question the notion of communication deficit since, when applied to specific people and groups, the issue of individual-social-cultural differences emerges, and also due to the multiple contexts in which this discourse emerges in everyday life.

Historically, these forms of categorizing people and groups have been crystallized in the expertise that university degrees provide, and by the emphasis on ableist foundations anchored in deficits and corrections. Following this crystallization, which occurs during the speech-language therapy training –repeated every semester and in every subject–, human beings, as subjects of communication, disappear. What remains is only the deficit described by a diagnostic classification rendered objective by technological and scientific discourses, which is often disconnected from the relational sense of human communication. This is because people's problems and their experiences are decontextualized during the intervention, as noted by Dana Kovarsky and Irene Walsh (2011).

In this context, we propose three decolonizing and anti-ableist exercises based on the following questions: (1) How does a deficit manifest itself and who is responsible for naming and correcting it? (2) How, when, why, and with what purpose should it be made visible?, and (3) Where can we blur the power differences between speech-language therapists and individuals, families, groups, and communities that attend the clinical practice, regardless of the reason for the consultation?

Firstly, these multidimensional questions aim at the twelve higher education institutions in Colombia where women, men, and individuals who identify differently go to train as speech-language therapists, and whose decision regarding which institution to attend is based on the career descriptions that we share in Appendix 1.

Secondly, they also question the models that underlie the career of speech-language therapy. According to official information, speech-language therapy programs in Colombia include models, concepts, and forms of research that emerged in the geopolitical

north, both in the United States, through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), and from international classifications, such as the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, ICF (WHO, 2001), the International Classification of Diseases, ICD-11 (WHO, 2022), or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM (APA 2014).

Regarding the two aforementioned aspects, Conni Guevara-Urrego (2021a) sought to understand the field of knowledge that informs the speech-language therapy curriculum in universities. For this purpose, she carried out a semantic analysis based on what the institutional websites describe, focusing on the emphasis given to human communication. Although the central word that emerges from the analysis is the noun “communication”, apparently the most important finding is the relationship between two semantic fields: the scientific and the human, even though there is no apparent link between the two. Nevertheless, this relationship indicates that the understanding of communication is based mostly on the contributions from the formal and natural sciences, although some marginal references to human, social, and political sciences can be found. In addition, a notion of communication as a linear sender/receiver and stimulus/response model stands out, common to all the institutions. This is in turn related in different forms to two other key notions; one of them, frequently questioned by those who experience the social effects of the devaluation of bodies and subjectivities, is disability; the other, which calls for cultural and political approaches and not just linguistic ones, refers to variations. In any case, the images resulting from the semantic analysis indicate the predominant use, including synonyms and related words, of both the noun “deficit” and the verb “to correct”.

Thirdly, these inquiries question the central axes of professional practice in Colombia, immersed, since the origins of the profession in the 1960s, in health and education scenarios, and framed by a unique epistemic regime of diagnoses/treatments/programs that is responsible for the objectification of deficit outside the clinical practice³. This professional attitude is maintained during the 21st century, now linked to disability and the disabled because, according to Gloria Bermúdez, it is “consistent with the current approaches to functioning, disability, and health proposed by the ICF” (2011, p.7).

The services that speech-language therapy currently offers are part of the range of public and private services subjected to official rules in terms of cost-benefit, focusing more on figures than on the *sentipensar* of the population. This is due either to scores on a measurement scale, to the appointments’ report, or to

the income they generate. As Virginia Zabala affirms, "We are in the age of numbers because there is a reverence for and fixation with numbers, quantitative evidence, measurements, results, productivity, and performance" (2018, p. 3).

In this regard, Conni Guevara-Urrego (2021a) reiterates that this profession –like all those in the field of health, education, and social policy– is exercised under the opinion and surveillance of a State that acts as a multiplier of oppressions exerted on bodies, through a historical series of ableist norms, exacerbated during the pandemic, and whose effects have been documented and denounced by members of the Crip community (people with disabilities), *Spoonies* (people living with chronic illness), and older people (due to the ideologies around age, or ageism, or to the permanent infantilization towards them), as reported by Dora Munévar and Yency Cardozo, (2021). These are terms that, in the words of the activist Diana Vite (2020), have emerged from the resistance and have been consciously chosen by people and groups to call themselves from a re-existence⁴.

In addition to the first three points, the questions previously posed also challenge the association between the notion of deficit and impairment, mental and physical dysfunction, and an unfavorable condition or individual disadvantage. This association becomes the foundation for an explanatory model that refers to what a person lacks, according to their distance from an established norm. Thus, the professional practice is configured based on standardized interaction models that result in the patients, users, or clients being judged for their deficit, identifying them from that judgment, as analyzed by Christopher Candlin & Jonathan Crichton (2011).

The deficit is usually held as a model that focuses on a fragment of the communication process; a symptom, a lack, or a flaw that leads the person to consult with speech-language therapy, where the search for this consultation is mediated by power, knowledge, and gender relationships. The application of this model makes deficit an identified, quantifiable, and measured issue that requires correction, even though not all people require correction, and many claim this recognition through their narratives.

The discourse of deficit, a product of university education, appears repeatedly in the language used by professionals who are trained in the field of communication disorders (as well as among professionals who accompany people with disabilities) since the already formalized language taught in universities implies labeling embodied differences when they distance themselves from the compulsory body integrity. Thus, disorders are gradually incorporated into the world of the "deficient".

At the same time, the discourse of deficit deepens the notion of a skill that is flawed, insufficient, and inadequate, even disabling, due to the discrepancy between the expected and the obtained performance, in an assessment carried out with an ableist perspective. The deficit then constitutes a reason for exclusion due to the created disadvantage, the embodied vulnerability, or the sense of fragility established from a single referent of normality defined, from the beginning of the profession, by measures of normal distribution that eliminate differences and even dominate all other possible forms of communication. This occurs within social dynamics that hide the ideological foundations of the norm, normality, and able-bodiedness, and that maintain the hegemony of a single line of thought⁵. According to Andrea Soares Wuo, Fabiana Batista Yaedu, and Sheila Wayszceyk, this is due to

A socially imposed notion of normality, which defines as abnormal or pathological everything that, quantitatively or qualitatively, distances itself from the normal pattern. The normal and the pathological appear with a static nature and independent of cultural and social conditions (2019, p. 3).

In the context of institutional discourses, studies on human communication use knowledge that, according to Dora Munévar (2011a), is limited to embodied subjectivities homogenized by society, professions, and professionals. For this reason, when knowledge about communication processes is linked to gender, class, age, race, or ableist bias, these pervade each (deficit) diagnosis made and received in the hospital, each (expert) intervention experienced in school settings, and each convergence of therapy processes that are experienced in every-day community life, resulting in multiple individual and collective effects. Therefore, this knowledge requires generating exercises for thinking and re-thinking with a decolonizing view.

THINKING EXERCISES: THE DISCURSIVE EMPHASIS ON DEFICIT AND CORRECTION

Human communication is, in itself, a relational process that establishes meaning, transforms interactions, increases reflexivity, and seeks to maintain closeness, even when it is mediated by technological resources or occurs on digital platforms converted into pedagogical settings, as it happened during the pandemic. In daily life, human communication generates, activates, and maintains situations framed by unequal exchanges, ideological interpretations, and culturally determined meanings.

For this reason, the understanding of human communication as a field of study "exits the fence of discipline to feed on other knowledge", as stated by Denise Najmanovich (2018, p. 44), remembering that the processes that constitute communication occupy symbolic spaces where, according to Chiara Zamboni, "exchanges with the reality of which one speaks" take place (2004, p. 9). This, without relegating its structural nature, apparently inseparable from the knowledge guided by social life that emerges not only through the spoken or written word, but also requires, among other things, pictorial, signed, or symbolic resources.

While spoken and written words adopt specific meanings in everyday life, it is as they move away from this common meaning and their use specializes that they become properly standardized terms and circulate as accepted discourses in education. Moreover, knowing that within the neoliberal model, all professional training is a tool to achieve the skills necessary to enter the productive work market, it is noteworthy that the training itself acts as a mechanism for acquiring abundant expert knowledge and a standardized professional language.

Thus, academic language progressively encloses professional development as the semesters pass in the classroom, because, as Elvia González warns, in academia "a common word is extracted from all the fullness and breadth of its relations of meaning and fixed to a certain conceptual meaning" (2011, p. 137). In this context, two everyday expressions included in the fence where speech-language therapy training is installed are the noun "deficit" and the verb "to correct". At the same time, both correspond to communicative processes measured by specific competencies, especially those considered as characteristic of the two most appreciated tools of the intellect in the dominant literate society: speaking and writing in the official local language.

If the communication processes taught in academia focus on speaking and writing skills and their relationship with listening and reading as technologies of the intellect, where does that leave the situated understanding of communication knowledge according to the cultural environment of people? If corrections based on deficits are imposed not only on the language, speech, or hearing of those who do not speak, read, write, hear, or process information, but also on their bodies and subjectivities, even when these subjects do communicate, are not classified as illiterate, and display multiple communicative knowledge, why then are these subjects of communication ignored, if they are the ones who nurture the profession with their communicative knowledge and contribute to the transformation of the study of human communication?

In order to listen to the subjects of communication, we consider that Luis Gómez refers to the culture interwoven between subjects as an "unequal and inherent space marked by differences and by force dynamics that allow it to remain or exist in relation with other subjects, entities, and material processes" (2015, p. 130). Due to the above, it becomes necessary to *sentipensar* about how each society assigns certain political values to what is said or sustained by the discourse of deficit, as well as about what is written regarding individuals who are categorized as "deficient" when analyzed from the expert discourse. This analysis is constructed at different moments of the career.

Consequently, and based on their history with speech-language therapy, it is understandable that service users rarely communicate their lived experiences to groups of professionals⁶. Women, men, and people of other gender identities –of diverse class, age, ethnic/racial, generational, linguistic, or regional backgrounds– are at the same time human and historical beings who reproduce situated knowledge, as well as subjects of communication that confront the work of speech-language therapy. These lived experiences, replicated in the three areas of professional action, question the components of the correction indicated as a result of the objectification of deficit. Thus, by dismissing lived experiences during consultations, diagnoses, and treatments, the professionals communicate the power of their expertise to make judgments, carry out symbolic operations, or make objectified evaluations based on the categorization of the deficit. This, in order to apply the most useful correction, often alienated from the use of language or the communication repertoire, with its situated actions and diverse identity expressions, understood by Virginia Zabala as "the set of sociocultural resources that allow us to participate in these communicative and social activities" (2018, p. 3).

This situation is worsened by what the dominant books, articles, and research literature expose through publications, websites, courses, conferences, and workshops, even through discursive social activities and practices. Something similar occurs with the results of digital searches or the production of multimodal discourses that point to the complexity of real, concrete, and lived human interaction to guarantee "the production of this knowledge and the location from which they are articulated, [and it is possible] to map and understand them in a situated manner", as asserted by Luis Gómez (2015, p. 134, note 20).

In general terms, in the context of networks of meaning derived from both a notion and a model of deficit, any diagnosis, as an initial phase or component of speech-language therapy, reminds us how one valid and normative form of communication is

constructed, based on ideologies and associated to the logic, agency, and identity of the dominant group. This group occupies an apparently invisible position of normality (St Pierre, 2012), but also contributes to the discrimination based on the dominant or official language of the subjects of communication who are different, as well as to the configuration of symbolic and epistemic violence, especially when their communicative knowledge is disregarded.

If the communication processes –language, speech, and hearing– develop in normative environments, are regulated by norms, and are always presented from a normative perspective, the need to correct the deficit will be based on a biological model and discourse, anchored in an ideology that is sustained by analyses preestablished as natural. The foregoing is because they obey the sequence of fixed stages described by an accepted and incontrovertible perspective and thus they appear neutral. This is a result of standardized tests such as those analyzed by Ulker Shafiyeva (2021) in the field of education, which make the aforementioned analyses objective by eliminating all interference from evaluators.

The social structures established by what is natural, neutral, and objective are associated with an anatomic and functional taxonomy that constitutes the foundations of the analysis of the communication processes to justify the deficient results, without reflecting on the fact that said taxonomy does not indicate the existence of anatomical or functional variations and elides cultural and political diversity. According to Dana Kovarsky and Irene Walsh (2011), it is for this reason that the so-called communication disorders are built into the professional language so that they remain anchored to the discourse of deficit and are consolidated through the content of books, research, and professional services.

From a reflexive stance concerning human communication issues, as proposed by Denise Mattioli and Agustina Solera, even though speech-language therapists might find themselves in a context where a deficit is present, they should prioritize unlearning "the tendency to view the individuals who participate in the process as objects of study" (2015, p. 96). This is especially relevant because "service users", "clients", or "patients" no longer wish to be seen as objects, stripped of their embodiments and subjectivities and subjected to linguistic-cognitive practices that are scored according to standards and appreciated by different listeners on a daily basis, in words of Virginia Zabala, "as part of a particular position in the social world and often of a racialized body" (2019, p. 10).

From unsubmitive postures, these individuals want to continue expressing their discomfort, full of emotions and feelings, since they do not wish their existence to be disregarded. They want their presence to be a reminder of multiple actions of resistance, like the Deaf communities as self-proclaimed linguistic minorities, groups of neurodiverse people united by diverse styles of cognitive processing, variations in neurocognitive functioning and Mad movements, or people with disfluency using the cyberspace to communicate with their peers freely.

Additionally, some actions call for rethinking the historical exclusion of groups of people with aphasia, whose experiences differ depending on their gender, or of people diagnosed with dementia who must endure the ableist attitudes of specialists, peers, and families. This also includes people who are objectified by the discourse of deficit and discriminated against or devaluated as a consequence of ageism when they reach old age, even in a state of good health.

Along these lines, and quoting the words of Gabriela Veronelli applicable to communicative knowledge, the "decolonial theory of communication should confront and negotiate the complications of the difficulties to dialogue that the coloniality of language has produced" (2016, p. 55). Meanwhile, those who work with human communication should receive their service users as subjects who can feel and think and as speakers of different languages beyond technical or technocratic issues, whether regarding institutions, cultural data, or symbols. In this way, they would enter the field of sociolinguistic justice to, according to Virginia Zabala, "think about more critical, intercultural, and democratic language policies" (2019, p. 1).

In other words, one should avoid the reproduction of hegemonic narratives around an embodied deficit that emerges from an objectified trait that, due to its divergence from the norm, will always maintain a negative social appraisal that is rooted in ideologies. As a consequence, according to Joshua St. Pierre, it is the "deficient" speaker who emerges in order to

Provide an important critique of the ableism and exclusion latent within communication theory and offer new modes of thinking about posthuman communication as an embodied and impure activity based on noise, relationality, and reciprocity (2015, p. 331).

In summary, those who have a speech-language therapy practice dominated by the discourse of deficit are gradually becoming aware that there are actions in society that maintain inequalities, stereotypes, and discrimination towards what is different. At the same time, they are holding spaces to identify the symbolic

dimensions of non-listening and their refusal to listen to otherness, as a decolonizing exercise to decipher the communicative knowledge of the people with whom they work. This possibility implies considering that the diverse range of women, men, and people of other gender identities who attend their practice are fully willing to share their multiple communication knowledge.

EXERCISES FOR *SENTIPENSAR*: LISTENING PURPOSEFULLY

To combine word and action to help transform speech-language therapy as a training and as a practice, it is necessary to strengthen an epistemic movement aimed at understanding our ways of *sentipensar*. Along this path, and tying this movement to others, the notion of *sentipensar* as a dynamic, rebellious, and changing concept implies breaking with the mind-body binary, but also brings actions of its own, guided by “a praxis that reminds us that we become knowledgeable through collective ways”, according to Rosalba Icaza (2019, p. 28, quoting Georgina Méndez et al., 2013).

The exercises for *sentipensar* have revealed that professional training and practice follow contents derived from Western positivist science that are embedded in the discourse of scientificity, pedagogically crystallized and implemented through lessons, outlined according to the established order of the academic system, and that adhere both to institutionalized values and to the interests of researchers and academics, be it inside or outside the classroom. These contents are also guided by the interests of those who control, monitor, and evaluate the work carried out daily, as well as of those who do the work and are subject to said control since the aforementioned order is instilled through power dynamics that are recreated within the practice and through the standardized clinical judgment. This forces us to again ask ourselves about the place of deficit and its links to ableism.

This order is more frequently strengthened by symbolic representations, while it is incorporated by subjectivities and permeated by underlying ideologies. Less frequently, any established description of deficit is challenged due to its merely aseptic nature without any connection to technologies or ideologies, to the point of representing an irrefutable alternative that is integrated into cultural practices in different daily settings.

New research possibilities are emerging that are less prone to the habit of asking about the role of speech-language therapy (always clinical within diverse social contexts) or about the success of the interventions (defined by corrections). Some of these paths,

linked to listening to experiences of deficit rooted in ableism, have already been explored by Nora Gómez and Nora Pava:

We confirm the need to listen to families when working with children with a difference/disability, acknowledging their value through collaborative working relationships. However, we would emphasize that such work should involve undertaking changes in professional practice based on ontological reflections that lead to rethinking the ideas we hold regarding the meaning of being human, the relationships we build, and the worlds we create using different semiotic repertoires (2021, p.245).

In this context, and under collective conditions of a resistance that is *sentipensada* (felt-thought), it is possible to resort to uses of the verb “to listen” that is detached from the empire of Logos, an option that implies interaction and sensitivity in order to establish audible, situated, and multimodal conversations, and to visibilize something that until now has been invisible, as Benigna Zimba (2003) states. This listening that predominates over the acts of walking and talking, according to Olver Quijano (2017), as a way of acting from the recognition of otherness and heterogeneity, seeks to leave the canons of expert discourse to experience training and professional practice on double track.

The possibility of listening in order to discover anti-ableist practices allows us to appreciate the sense of shared communicative knowledge just like they have been experienced or cultivated by service users and shared by individuals, families, groups, or communities. Moreover, this kind of listening practice allows grasping how the ways of understanding communication processes are differentiated by gender, age, class, sexuality, ability, and ethnicity/race, as well as by education level, current activities, public role, and access to direct power to redefine how common practices of human communication are experienced.

In this way, by activating some of our forms of *sentipensar*, it is possible to resume the elaboration of subjectivities that share their knowledge, that is to say, that are embodied, appear as subjects of communication –individuals of different gender identities, ages, and social circumstances–, and have a place in the social structures collectively built with human communication.

Therefore, with service users and professionals as subjects of reminiscence, multiple accounts of situated experiences will begin to emerge (and will continue to emerge) to weave memories, stories will be told, or desires inspired that combine daily life realities and reconfigure both social relationships and cultural practices. Consequently, the role of speech-language therapy will experience a gradual shift towards listening to a lived

experience without forcing the subject to express what the professional wants to hear (the “correct” response).

With this, the subjects of communication, previously silenced, will no longer just whisper or stammer their desires, but will shout their knowledge through sound, radio, or digitized media such as those used by *Colectiva Alteroteca* (2021) or by the support group *Rompiendo Barreras* (Peña, 2020), and will develop multiple activities, including virtual or in-person acts of resistance. Similarly, in daily work, it will be possible to pluralize the changes experienced by people in order to create multiple acts of liberation based on the communicative knowledge present in the clinical practice –so that they are elided no longer.

These paths include the participation of the actors present in the clinical practice or narrative-felt research, and invite them to recount their experiences, revealing that the hegemonic communication processes, both spoken and written, constitute an extension of Western rationality due to the role they play in the development of reason and Logos. Also, due to how they have excluded other forms of communication, namely non-spoken and non-written, signed, pictorial, tactile, emotional, disfluent, and neurodivergent.

In this way, other forms of *sentipensar* communicative knowledge will continue to emerge in their socio-historic and situated contexts and, at the same time, epistemological postures that are close and *sentipensadas* will emerge. This, with the conviction that the academic language taught during university training – reproduced both in everyday work and in research– cannot keep maintaining its emphasis on deficit and correction. In turn, knowledge cultivated and shared by service users will emerge.

In other words, the effects of ideologies on communication processes cannot be forgotten. Furthermore, said ideologies are found in clinical practice when reproducing the mandates of the law, science, and traditions cultivated through social institutions and human interactions. In this sense, it is fundamental to remain aware of the fact that, as pointed out by Marina Mariasch, “language can become a powerful weapon for social discrimination, perpetuating asymmetrical relationships between sexes and the historical pattern of male domination” (2020, p. 65). Similarly, this can happen within deficient, disabling, and disabled discourses.

In these emerging practices, communication knowledge creates multiple symbolic networks with the input of context, a matter that has been rethought by Dora Munévar (2011b). Within these networks, people find lines of adherence or opposition and, through the exchange of knowledge, establish dialogues and

sustain conversations –not necessarily verbal or written– about life, desires, objects, gestures, symbols, and actions. In this way, they are able to participate, challenge, resist, or defend their knowledge.

For this reason, it is essential to consider the bases and the scope of some of the symbolic sediments installed in university classrooms, especially to understand how said sediments enter, remain, and multiply thanks to the discourse of deficit and the purpose to correct it, in scenarios that are not always attuned to the understanding of communication knowledge.

Beatriz Guerrero, Alexander Agudelo, and Nora Pava use the experience of an Afro-Colombian woman to explain how these clinical prescriptions can be challenged, but they stress that it is not enough to transform the ableism, classism, racism, and sexism present in everyday life (2020). This is where the contributions of a decolonizing and anti-ableist *sentipensar* emerge, where it becomes possible to explore other spaces so that multiple voices can resonate through the narration of situated experiences, to go beyond a clinical indication hitherto unavoidable.

DECOLONIZING AND ANTI-ABLEIST EXERCISES: SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPY IN MOTION

The reflexive *sentipensar* about what is taught represents a point of encounter for purposefully listening to the alternatives proposed by the decolonizing and anti-ableist exercises. This, besides requiring “our best pedagogical resources to evaluate the state of our objects of study”, according to Miguel Huertas (2022, p. 32). These exercises demand a political and epistemic commitment to uncovering both the domination imposed on bodies and territories and how it crystalizes and remains unscathed through social imaginaries, perceptions, and representations.

These exercises represent a focal point of *sentipensar* that, in addition to embodying an intellectual synthesis of resistance to create awareness of being, knowing, saying, naming, interpreting, and acting, helps transform the foundations of knowledge to communicate wisdom, renew methodologies, and incorporate other ethical postures that boost the decolonizing epistemic movement.

María Eugenia Borsani (2015) states that carrying out decolonizing exercises implies putting thoughts in motion and promoting purposeful, complementary, and simultaneous action. According to Valeria Belmonte, they “hold the potential for a

process of transformation or change, [and] harbor and exude meanings that contribute to creating narratives of other worlds” (2018, p. 28). These epistemic movements have been recounted by individuals and groups involved in *sentipensar* about communication processes in relation to specific contexts, and are being included by professionals according to their local circumstances, but also in research, guided by the conscious movement of subjectivities that follow their own epistemic movements. For example, signers who question the power of the hearing-abled, neurodivergent people who resist the neuronormative and, according to Arturo Rodríguez (2021), stand against the dominance of a unique manifestation of cognition, or disfluent people who share their experiences online and offline.

The narratives propelled by the Deaf community from and towards the resistance to audist speech-language therapy services invite clinicians to integrate decolonizing exercises. The Deaf communities express their desire to shift their position in a world where the hearing and the Deaf populations coexist, revealing the impact that the deficit-based foundations have had on their lives, in the possibility to fully exercise their citizenship –for not speaking the language of the hearing world and for cultivating a signed repertoire–, and in ignoring that “our language is the manifestation of our ideological structure, of our way of understanding and feeling the world, of interpreting reality”, as noted by Marina Mariasch (2020, p. 64).

These acts of resistance are reinforced with the conviction that they embrace the complexity of human interaction as it unfolds in everyday life; in other words, against the social structures that include seeing, hearing, feeling, touching, moving, speaking, and imagining, as described by Achille Mbembe (2016, p. 229). This requires more than the five independent senses since it demands presence, existence, and re-existences to the rhythm of ancestral “speakings”, sonic “listenings”, the *escrivivencias* (which could be translated as “writing-experience”) of the writer Conceição Evaristo (2020), the felt co-creations and corpo-territorialities inhabited by subjectivities willing to share their knowledge.

Similarly, it is urgent to build anti-ableist postures by naming, shedding light on, and conceptualizing both the communication processes and knowledge. This should be done not based on a single normative body but by revealing how ableism has historically marginalized certain populations from the common world, among them people with disabilities who have experienced a world of biomedical, legal, and educational domination.

From the search for this place in relation to communicative knowledge, and to consolidate the scope of the anti-ableist debate,

the exchange of knowledge between actors emerges as a way to decentralize linguistic knowledge in favor of communicative knowledge, gain fresh perspectives, and recognize other forms of speech so that listening becomes the basis for other networks of meaning. This is a path that seeks to activate a heartfelt, situated, and experienced listening so that the envisioned anti-ableist horizon reveals the sense given to the deficient/correctable binary.

Through this double practice of thinking and *sentipensar* based on decolonizing and anti-ableist exercises, it is possible to rethink communicative knowledge with its pedagogical, theoretical, methodological, and ethical-political scope; it is possible to highlight the personal and collective aspects of the person’s being, living, and feeling to identify a place within speech-language therapy where listening to alterity is possible.

Said place must be decisive when investigating what has been experienced, when configuring knowledge, and sharing experiences among members of populations that have been objectified and silenced by academic research. It must embrace their re-existence even knowing that, in the words of Conni Guevara-Urrego, “the social system outlines the differences between people in order to categorize them, an inheritance obtained from the times of colonization” (2021b, párr. 2).

The decolonizing and anti-ableist exercises are activated when listening to what women, men, and people of other gender identities narrate about themselves when consulting with speech-language therapy. These populations exist in health, education, work, and community settings where only normal and acceptable communication processes provide social value in terms of what is correct. Its symbolic scope is then reproduced in the role played by individuals who escape that accepted norm and who, although forbidden from reinventing the notion of community, and even having been left out of the notion of population (there is no data available on neurodivergent or Down Syndrome populations), have grouped around three forms of resistance that pose common questions such as the following:

✓ Resistance: There are no deficient lives. Questions: Why is the work focused on the idea of a correctable deficit? And, what role does ableism play in the discourse of a deficit that needs correction?

✓ Resistance: Variations are experienced and differences are embodied, both must be recognized socio-culturally and politically. Questions: What is the correction based on in the speech-language therapy practice? And, why is the verb “to

correct" used, together with the verbs "to indicate", "to teach", or speaking/writing, reading/hearing?

✓ Resistance: the communicative knowledge of people who seek assistance has been silenced due to power asymmetries. Questions: How to look beyond their position as users, clients, or patients, recognizing that they are bearers of communicative knowledge? And, how to work on communication processes without eliminating their communicative knowledge, so that the work does not reproduce ableism?

These questions have special political relevance since, in addition to the deficit, both therapeutic prescription and prognosis are the main decisions regarding communication disorders. Situated experiences allow us to understand the scope of what has been instituted in order to deconstruct the structural foundations of power in which certain people or groups are immersed –or have been. Therefore, they are essential when researching the acceptability of communication processes that are different.

These embodied processes gradually convert people, according to Adolfo Albán, into alter-actives that arise when alterity up-rises as a "questioning or disruption from diverse loci of articulation" (2012, p. 25). Thus, these alter-actives continue to challenge all kinds of analysis of difference based on the discourse of deficit, to trace the place of articulation or experience and elucidate its implications in the ways of understanding processes and knowledge that structure the field of human communication.

Decolonizing exercises constitute up-risings and expand the situated conditions to enable collective change with the increase of coalitions between those who have cultivated Deaf, neurodiverse, or embodied epistemologies (based on their experience), as well as othered cognitions and minds, othered corporalities or sights. Now, even within the haven of these epistemologies, it is necessary to understand, as Ulker Shafiyeva states, that "this is also a question of democracy" (2021, p. 3), that involves people from their lived experiences of aphasia or disfluency, Deaf communities from deafness, or different generations of clients from their diagnoses of language, speech/non-speech, and hearing disorders, as they convey the power of their communicative knowledge.

In this multidimensional horizon, creating focal points for *sentipensar* in different sections of professional training is urgent, in order to question what has been experienced in higher education institutions that, within a neoliberal system, constantly produce fixed and alienated subjectivities. This is done, according to Jaime Preciado, "for the market and for public functions, with

its inspiration and effects in the fragmentation of knowledge and the excision of the sentient-thinking subject" (2018, p. 13).

Hence, communication knowledge or social action that promotes the understanding of the plural and the collective world of human communication not only leads to its reinterpretation, but also, due to the reciprocal willingness to communicate, demands its rewriting and calls people to consciously put themselves in different places in order to enjoy the exchange of experiences and to fill common spaces with other meanings. This, without forgetting that said knowledge also promotes initiatives that allow us to rethink discourses (including those around disabilities and those that are disabling), expose their ideological background, explore written content in depth, read between the lines, rethink the origin of written norms or combine the multiple cultural practices marked on bodies, manifested in affections and full of emotions, from which to continue questioning the expertise that judges, performs symbolic operations, or conducts objectified and indisputable assessments.

CONJUGATING EXERCISES – COMMUNICATING *SENTIPENSARES*

By conjugating these decolonizing and anti-ableist forms of thought and *sentipensar*, not only does purposeful listening to the alter-active emerge, but a rethinking of human communication is enabled (with its processes and knowledge), so that it is understood more as a flow of exchange of meaning and senses between the communicative knowledge of human beings, than only as an object of the attention of experts to deficient processes that should be corrected.

This means that the desire to *sentipensar* about communicative knowledge through decolonizing and anti-ableist exercises is experienced epistemologically, and these, in addition to creating theoretical, methodological, ethical, and political transformations, break with the rationality that underlies and dominates the technologies of intellect distributed in academia with the aid of speech-language therapy.

Aware that the way in which institutions and professionals see deficits is the direct result of how society, universities, and the institutional framework think of and signify normality and able-bodiedness, a predominantly individual analysis emerges that, although showing some social input for programmatic purposes, rarely resorts to other epistemic, theoretical, methodological, ethical, or political suppositions. These suppositions would guarantee the recognition of subjects of communication who, with

their knowledge, seek a place of their own to transform the training in speech-language therapy through their lived experiences.

In this way, decolonizing and anti-ableist exercises, in relation to studies on human communication, include diverse subjects of communication in order to listen and amplify their multiple voices as linked to their lived, witnessed, felt, or imagined experiences. Accordingly, these subjects represent a comprehensive source of embodied-communicative and even embodied-verbal experiences, that is, a set of experiences that can be recorded in videos or photographs, fixed in close narrations and narrative practices, or any common digital form.

In addition to activating the process of *sentipensar*, this type of perspective discomforts both the speech-language therapy training and professional practice and contributes to the definition of focal points of *sentipensar* in conjunction with alter-active persons that provoke the slow reconfiguration of other anti-ableist horizons, now sensitive to the communicative desires of Deaf, neurodivergent, or disfluent subjectivities. These are the spaces to dispute dominant contents present in academic texts that are chosen, produced, or suggested for lessons, research, conferences, or any activity inside and outside the classroom.

With these exercises, we also challenge the technologies of intellect most used in academia: correct speech and formalized writing. This is because they reveal the bases of the ignorance imposed by not listening beyond the Logos and the absence of people, even when they are present, in person or virtually. Undoubtedly, absences and silences have also contributed to the establishment of the professional subjectivity that is shaped by speech-language therapy programs in Colombian universities.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Description of the Speech-Language Therapy career in Colombian universities⁸.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Universidad del Valle (Cali)

Speech-Language Therapy, as defined by its objective and its practice, is built within a wide field of interdisciplinary work, necessary to describe and explain the phenomena of communicative variations or disabilities, as well as to design and justify the possible solutions to these issues experienced by people. The knowledge that underlies speech-language therapy demands a superposition of social and natural sciences. Similarly, the study of communication and language processes requires the application of scientific concepts and methodologies, as well as those of fields as diverse as: linguistics; philosophy; social sciences: sociology, economics, anthropology, history, psychology, pedagogy; natural sciences: biology, physics; formal sciences: mathematics, logic. These sciences and disciplines provide concepts that give way to conceptual and instrumental specialized knowledge so that the speech-language therapist can describe, explain, and perform professionally, providing quality services with social responsibility.

Universidad Nacional de Colombia (Bogotá)

Speech-Language Therapy is a profession for human development insofar as the core of its disciplinary and applied interests relate to a growing human attribute –the ability to use language and to communicate– that enables access to information, and knowledge, and is the quintessential vehicle for social interaction. (...) it designs and provides human services related to the promotion of communicative well-being and the prevention and rehabilitation of communication disabilities in the different environments in which the individual functions. It carries out a wide range of specialized procedures and uses state-of-the-art communication technology, in order to fulfill its promotion, prevention, diagnosis, intervention, counseling, and consulting functions. It develops basic and applied research (...) to promote communicative health and eliminate, mitigate, or compensate communication disabilities of individuals, groups, and communities.

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Corporación Universitaria Iberoamericana (Bogotá)

The objective of this program is to train professionals in the field of interpersonal communication and the management of disabilities throughout the life cycle, with solid scientific foundations and clear ethical and social principles, who are open to intellectual debate, suitable and sensitive to the manifestations of our culture, committed to the communicative well-being of our population, and capable of offering the country real alternatives for prevention, promotion, and assistance of specific issues in this field.

Escuela Colombiana de Rehabilitación (Bogotá)

Speech-Language Therapy is a profession in service of human beings that involves the study of human communication and its disorders throughout the life cycle of individuals, groups, and populations. The areas of study are hearing, language, speech, voice, pharyngeal-oral function, and communicative interaction. Professional practice takes place in the fields of health, education, labor, community settings, and all those areas where human communication is a fundamental component for performance, participation, and inclusion.

Fundación Universitaria María Cano (Medellín)

Speech-Language Therapy is a health profession that addresses human communication, its disorders, and variations. Communication is manifested in the person's ability to interact with others through speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. However, these abilities could be impaired or disturbed due to biological, psychological, or social causes that impact the well-being of the individual and their quality of life, resulting in communication disorders.

Universidad del Rosario (Bogotá)

This is a unique program that integrates life sciences with human and social sciences into the understanding of communication as a process inherent to the human being. It addresses the communicative variations and disorders of individuals and communities of all ages.

Universidad de Santander (Bucaramanga)

Speech-Language Therapy has as its object of study “Human Communication”, its development, disorders, and disabilities at the level of oral language and/or reading and writing, as well as speech, swallowing function, voice, hearing, and cognitive-communicative aspects of the human being throughout the life cycle, from birth to adult life.

Universidad Manuela Beltrán (Bogotá)

It is the profession in charge of studying human communication and its disorders. For this reason, speech-language therapists are prepared for situations such as: the treatment of speech issues in children, training the voice of singers, working on phono-respiratory coordination to avoid fatigue when dancing and singing, carrying out vocal rehabilitation when singers suffer injuries to their vocal cords, the rehabilitation of children with hearing disabilities with the purpose of oralization, or offering therapy so that people can pass food properly.

FOOTNOTES

¹ For background information on this concept, see *Boaventura De Sousa Santos (2010). Descolonizar el saber, reinventar el poder. Ediciones Trilce. Montevideo. To sentipensar it in the context of universities, consult Milagros María Rocha (2021). Acerca de descolonizar (y generar) el currículum universitario. Revista nustrAmérica, Vol. 9, No. 18, e5512816, 2021*

² The *sentipensamientos* (thought-feelings) of activists are being communicated through podcasts. You can listen to Fran Riba, who shares the struggle of different communities to dismantle stereotyped beliefs about what it means to be different, a struggle that he has experienced in different spaces since he declares himself as an autistic person from the movement for neurodiversity and as a non-binary person from the LGTBQI+ community. Listen to season 4, episode 3: *No puedes negar mi identidad* (“You can’t deny my identity”), released June 23rd, 2021, with research and presentation by Arturo Rodríguez. Alteroteca Podcast, retrieved from <http://podcastradio.unal.edu.co/programa/alteroteca#>

³ Women have had a space for themselves in public universities since the 1960s. In 1966, training programs like physical therapy (today physiotherapy), occupational therapy, and language therapy (today speech-language therapy of *fonoaudiología*) were opened. Three careers were inaugurated at *Universidad Nacional de Colombia* within the same administrative action and with the "purpose of offering women new fields of study, increasing their places for students, creating intermediate-length careers, and gradually participating in Colombian society", according to what is written in the *Documento rosado* [Pink Document] (n.d., p. 2), as cited by Dora Munévar (2016, p. 3).

⁴ This is reiterated by Nicolás Torres, Jessica Yaima, Arturo Rodríguez, Paula Muñoz, Samir Cardozo, and Claudia Mora: as a form of reclaiming, different groups of people living with some disability(ies) call themselves “Crip” (in Spanish *persona disca*). Similarly, individuals living with chronic illness call themselves “spoonies”. This seeks to question the terminology emerging from the biomedical discourse, that centers its work on the biological and measurable, ignoring people’s experience and subjectivity (2022).

⁵ These dynamics have been objects of collective reflection that converge in a book entitled *Subvertir capacitismos. Iniciativas discas, diversas y disidentes* (forthcoming publication).

⁶ A note that brings the activist Johanna Hedva to mind with the following of her reflections: *Letter to a young doctor*. (<https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/letter-to-a-young-doctor/#text>).

⁷ Neurodiversity as a social movement aims at reclaiming categories. Based on the exercise of enunciation, it seeks to shed light on a political stance that questions normative cognition based on life experiences. By politicizing the lives of autistic people, oppressions are made visible and are named, even from an intersectional perspective that includes class, gender, and ethnicity. To examine this category deeper, see *Anna Stenning & Hanna Bertilsdotter Rosqvist (2021). Neurodiversity studies: mapping out possibilities of a new critical paradigm, Disability & Society, Vol. 36, No. 9: 1532-1537 (DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2021.1919503)*.

⁸ Not included: Universidad del Cauca (public), located in the southwest of the country; Universidad de Pamplona (public) located in the northeast; Universidad de Sucre (public) and Universidad Metropolitana (private), both located in the continental Caribbean.