

## THE INTERPRETATIVENESS OF THE IMAGINARY FORMATION IN THE THERAPY SESSION

A INTERPRETATIVIDADE DA FORMAÇÃO IMAGINÁRIA NA SESSÃO DE TERAPIA

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**Abstract:** This article aims to interpret the importance of communication in psychotherapy according to the concept of imaginary formation and its possible implications for meanings and how these are constructed in this therapeutic space, as well as aiming to train therapists in the appropriation of a discourse analysis "tool" for their practice. In order to understand these relationships, we undertook a descriptive examination of communication and how the concept of imaginary formation, derived from Discourse Analysis, can be considered operational in the psychological practice of therapy. In order to make this journey possible and make it both more perceptible and more fruitful, we bring excerpts from three literary works that deal with the therapy session as the setting in which their narratives unfold, in order to observe how imaginary formation works. The works are: "Lies on the couch" (YALOM, 2006), "Stories on the couch" (ROLÓN, 2008) and "Therapy session" (VARGAS, 2013). Among some of the results obtained from this endeavor are the necessary conditions for leaving the plane of theoretical abstractions and turning to the interpretative application of imaginary formation in situations close to those experienced by countless therapists in their offices.

**Keywords:** Imaginary Formation; Therapy Session; Discourse Analysis.

**Resumo:** Este artigo objetiva interpretar a importância da comunicação na psicoterapia segundo o conceito de formação imaginária e seus possíveis acarretamentos de sentidos e de como esses são construídos nesse espaço terapêutico, além de visar à formação do terapeuta no que tange à apropriação de uma "ferramenta" da análise do discurso para sua prática. Para compreender tais relações, empreendemos uma verificação descritiva da comunicação e de como a concepção de formação imaginária, oriunda da Análise do Discurso, pode ser considerada operacional na prática psicológica da terapia. A fim de viabilizar este percurso e torná-lo tanto mais perceptível quanto mais profícuo, trazemos excertos de três obras literárias que abordam a sessão de terapia como cenário no qual se desenrolam suas narrativas para neles se observar o funcionamento da formação imaginária. As obras são: "Mentiras no divã" (YALOM, 2006), "Historias de diván" (ROLÓN, 2008) e "Sessão de terapia" (VARGAS, 2013). Dentre alguns dos resultados obtidos com este empreendimento, encontram-se as condições necessárias para se deixar o plano das abstrações teóricas e voltar-se à aplicação interpretativa da formação imaginária em situações próximas às vivenciadas por incontáveis terapeutas em seus consultórios.

**Palavras-chave:** Formação Imaginária; Sessão de Terapia; Análise do Discurso.

## INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS: COMMUNICATION IN THERAPY

The therapy session is a communication in which intimacy is performed. The process involving its members leads to the extraction of meanings that have hitherto been little observed. Through language, the interlocutors present their needs and their ways of meeting them. In the therapy session, communication is the place for conflict, reflection, understanding, remembering, forgetting, analysis, speech and, fundamentally, healing. It is impossible to think of psychological therapy in isolation from its eminent communicational character, the main phenomenological feature of which is the encounter between an "I" and a "you".

In the strictest sense, this is the dynamic relationship between the two instances of psychotherapy itself, i.e. "In the broadest sense, any method of treating psychic or bodily disorders that uses psychological means and, more precisely, the relationship between therapist and patient" (Laplanche; Pontalis, 1983, p. 506). Therefore, any type of attachment whose aim is to establish a relatively healthy state of psychic activity is psychotherapy, even if there are a large number of approaches to its occurrence. Thus, the contingency of the therapy session, that is, of psychotherapy, is precisely to make use of the primacy of the convergence of subjects and their subjectivities through communication.

It is precisely in view of this importance that the aim of this article is to deal with communication in the therapy session from the point of view of the concept of imaginary formation and its interpretative relationship superimposed on the language processes involved in the therapeutic dynamic. In order to understand these relationships, we will undertake a descriptive examination of communication and how the concept of imaginary formation, which comes from Discourse Analysis, can be considered operational in the psychological practice of therapy. In order to make this journey possible and more perceptible and more fruitful, we will bring excerpts from three literary works that deal with the therapy session as the setting in which their narratives unfold, and from them we will observe the functioning of imaginary formation in communication. The works are: "Lies on the couch" (Yalom, 2006), "Stories on the couch" (Rolón, 2008) and "Therapy session" (Vargas, 2013).

As we aim to interpret the importance of communication in psychotherapy according to the concept of imaginary formation and its possible implications for meanings and how these are constructed in this therapeutic space, as well as aiming to train therapists in appropriating a "tool" from Discourse Analysis for their practice, we have adopted the following sections: **Communication and imaginary formation**, **Analysis of imaginary formations** and, finally, **Final considerations**. In the first section, we discuss communication mechanisms from the perspective of structuralist linguistics and the inclusion of imaginary formation in the field of communication by Discourse Analysis. Next, we use this concept in excerpts from the works mentioned above, which deal explicitly with the therapy session, in order to investigate its heuristic potential and its viability in clinical practice. In the last section, we assess, evaluate and critically weigh up the path we have taken here.

## COMMUNICATION AND IMAGINARY FORMATION

In this section, we don't aim to understand the whole range of elements that make up human communication, as is done by the title of the book "What is communication" (Bordenave, 2006), nor do we have the scope to unravel the historical threads contemplated by the linguistic historiography that deals with it, but rather we follow the paths that best fit our objective of interpreting the importance of communication in psychotherapy according to the concept of imaginary formation<sup>1</sup>. For this reason, we have not delved into notions that are not very fertile for our purpose and have taken a detour in order to scrutinize the most common and well-known aspects of communication and, consequently, arrive at the emergence of imaginary formation as a concept applicable to the therapy session. So we started with the most basic and elementary characterization of communication: interaction.

"Human communication is a complex constellation of factors whose Aristotelian formula, 'man is a political animal', contained in the work *Politics*, can synthesize" (Soares, 2018, p. 13, emphasis added). Beyond this anthropological understanding and turning to the traits pertinent to communication, Mattoso Câmara in "Dicionário de Linguística e Gramática" (Dictionary of Linguistics and Grammar) conceptualizes it as "Mental exchange between men through language" (2004, p. 77). Dubois et al. (2006, p. 129) state that communication is "the verbal exchange between a speaker, who produces an utterance intended for another speaker, the interlocutor, from whom he requests to hear and/or an explicit or implicit response (depending on the type of utterance)". And again: "Communication is intersubjective. On a psycholinguistic level, it is the process in the course of which the meaning that a speaker associates with sounds is the same as that which the listener associates with those same sounds" (Dubois et al. 2006, p. 129).

Émile Benveniste, in the second part of "Problems of General Linguistics I" (2005), goes on to investigate communication with great acuity. Ratifying much of the theory developed by Ferdinand de Saussure about language, Benveniste deals with the communication of bees and, in the end, exposes human communication as non-linear, profound and open, since it depends primarily on language. André Martinet in his "Elements of general linguistics" assures that "The essential function of the instrument that is language lies in communication: for example, Portuguese is the tool that allows Portuguese-speaking individuals to enter into relations with each other" (1972, p. 6). Therefore, language is the great key to human communication, because as Benveniste rightly said, there is no interpreter capable of interpreting the world and itself as language does (2005).

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<sup>1</sup> This is a concept that can be considered psychological, as it was in the development of Discourse Analysis (SOARES 2020a), but it is similar to the virtual image, which Aristotle called *ethos* in his *Rhetoric*, created by the speech of an enunciator. Here we treat it as the manifestation of the subject in language circumscribed to a particular conjuncture, namely the therapy session. From this point of view, there is no psychologism, but rather an objective prescription for its use.

"Language, as the main means of human communication, is a systematic organization of signs that obtain their identities from the opposition they make to others" (Soares, 2018, p. 15). The internal system of language serves to understand part of the integral problem of communication, but when language is put into operation, performances emerge whose roles were carefully examined by the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, especially in the article "Linguistics and the theory of communication" (2010). On the basis of Karl Buhler's theory of communication, Jakobson stipulated six constitutive factors of the communication process and associated them with the performances of language. The elements of communication, therefore, are:

- **Sender:** the person who produces the message.
- **Message:** contents or meanings.
- **Receiver:** the person who receives the message.
- **Channel:** the way in which the message is sent. It can be spoken, written, imagery or even a hybrid.
- **Code:** language (as a rule, language), but depending on the conditions of communication, it can be: gesture or other meaning-producing conventions (such as telegraph codes, Morse code).
- **Context:** empirical reality.

As you can see, when communication is thought of through the prism of these elements: sender, message, receiver, channel, code and context, it structures the production and understanding of meanings in such a way that it appears to be a mechanical process. It is true that these constituents take part in the communicational act, as in the case of the therapy session, but there is no supposed planned linearity, rather there are a series of noises and crossings in the interaction between the subjects that also (re)produce meanings and, therefore, must be interpreted. In stark opposition to this perspective, Michel Pêcheux defines discourse as "[...] an effect of meaning between points A and B" (Pêcheux, 2010, p. 81), precisely because it opposes the "flat scheme of information derived from Jakobson's work according to which a sender produces a message X and sends it to a receiver who, in turn, receives the same X sent" (Soares, 2020a, p. 175).

When we talk about historicity, we don't think of history reflected in the text, but we think of the historicity of the text in its materiality. What we call historicity is the happening of the text as discourse, the work of the meanings in it. Undoubtedly, there is a link between external history and the historicity of the text, but this link is not direct, nor automatic, nor does it work in a cause-and-effect relationship (Orlandi, 2015, p. 68).

If the receiver understood the message in its entirety, there would be no language misunderstandings and communication would always be perfect. It is precisely because there are points of drift in communication and because language is not transparent that "Points A and B are the positions occupied by subjects crossed by history; the effects of meaning are constructed in the use of language; history makes up the conditions of production of the effects of meaning" (Soares, 2020b, p. 46). Thus,

the historicity of subjects is reflected in the use of language, which in turn reflects its intergenerational accumulations in society. For this reason, the concept of discourse arising from the formulation of "[...] effect of meaning between points A and B" (Pêcheux, 2010, p. 81) brings the insight that in communication, first and foremost, there are effects that relate its members and not a direct connection as, in theory, would occur in telepathic interaction. It is exemplary to bring to mind the fact that something is often said and the understanding of that something is very different from what is produced by the intention of the person who said it.

From this milestone in linguistic studies, communication gradually acquires the interactional characteristic of discourse. Discourse is then confused with the interactional act for the reason that it is an integral part of it and also goes beyond the restricted use of language, since between interlocutors A and B the creation of effects can take place through verbal use, as well as through other forms of language. However, language, as Benveniste reminds us, is the universal interpretant, so that all objects in the world can be discursivized. Therefore, the concept of discourse profoundly alters the linearized configuration of communication by opening up the meanings to its multiple effects among its participants.

Based on discourse as an effect of meanings between the interlocutors, another important concept emerges for Discourse Analysis, namely that of imaginary formation. Imaginary formations, as Pêcheux conceptualized them in 1969, refer to the place occupied by A and B, whose representation in the discourse is due to anticipations implicit in the discursive chain. "Imaginary formations are images that each of the participants in a verbal interaction makes of themselves and of the other in the projection of such images as effects in the discourse" (Soares, 2018, p. 116). When writing a term paper, students need to bring the knowledge they have acquired throughout their course into their text. This is an imaginary formation that an evaluating teacher has of his student, responding to which, the teacher will have to make the necessary corrections to the text. In turn, the student, in possession of the image of the correcting teacher, will try not to make any mistakes in order to satisfy the image created by the teacher.

From the imaginary formation comes what Pêcheux calls anticipation. A kind of calculation according to which the imaginary formation is able to recognize its mirror. In other words, a given argumentative position generates its opposite, in a dialectical effect, practically every time it is uttered. Therefore, imaginary formations can serve as an anticipation of the enunciative project set in motion in the discourse (Soares, 2020, p. 176).

As a result of the emergence of the concept of imaginary formation in linguistic studies, more specifically in Discourse Analysis, there is the possibility that its use can resize the effects of meanings produced between the interlocutors of the communicational act, in such a way as to be one of the forces at work within it. Given our objective of interpreting the importance of communication in psychotherapy according to the concept of imaginary formation and its possible implications for

meanings and how these are constructed in this therapeutic space, it is imperative that imaginary formation is applied and understood as one of the "tools" available to the therapist in their clinical practice. Therefore, in the following section we use it analytically in excerpts from the works "Lies on the couch" (Yalom, 2006), "Historias de diván" (Rolón, 2008) and "Sessão de terapia" (Vargas, 2013), in order to illustrate the viability of its use.

## ANALYSIS OF IMAGINARY FORMATIONS

The three works, "Lies on the couch" (Yalom, 2006), "Stories on the couch" (Rolón, 2008) and "Therapy session" (Vargas, 2013), have many elements in common that are significant for understanding how imaginary formations work in the psychological clinic. They all show part of the treatment undertaken by therapists in their practice; the dramas experienced in the interaction between the storyteller and the listener; the various anxieties that exist in the human spectrum make up the basic material of the multiple fabrics present in the narratives. The three books were written by experienced authors and produced under the supervision and consultancy of specialists.

"Lies on the couch" (2006) was written by American psychiatrist and university professor Irvin D. Yalom, narrating the dilemmas and difficulties of a psychoanalyst, Ernest Lash, and his patients in the clinic. The communicative process by which Ernest and his patients act out the problems that arise in the clinic demonstrates the effects of imaginary formations. The following excerpt illustrates this:

- You asked me to speak honestly," Carol continued, "to say what I was thinking.
- That's exactly what I did, Carolyn. And you're doing exactly what you should be doing. Honesty is the main virtue in the realm of therapy. We can, we must, talk about everything, express everything... as long as we each remain in our own physical space.
- Ernest, that doesn't work for me. Talks and words aren't enough. You know my history with men. Mistrust runs very deep. I can't believe in words. Before Ralph, I consulted several therapists, each for one or two sessions. They followed the procedure, they followed the formula down to the last letter, they were faithful to their professional code, they remained correctly remote.
- Apart from Ralph, has anyone offered you anything useful?
- Just words. When I left their office, I didn't take anything with me. It's the same now. When I leave without touching you, the words just disappear, you disappear, unless I have some impression of you on my skin.
- "Actually, Ernest," she continued, "what I really want today is not to talk, but to sit next to you on the couch and just feel your presence close to me.
- I wouldn't feel comfortable doing that - that's not how I can best help you. We have a lot of work to do, a lot of things to talk about (Yalom, 2006, p. 393-394).

It's a delicate moment, as we can see, in which the therapist needs to recognize the paths and possible detours in the communicative act, both the former and the latter cut out by the imaginary formation. Carolyn initially imprints in her statements the image of a woman who desires her enunciator,

that is, her therapist. The argumentative calculation for the construction of the image of a desiring woman by her analyst is structured around the connection of an honesty that must be maintained between the participants in the session, and is later anchored in Carolyn's own life story, in which she seems to have always been deceived by words. In this way, the image is not just of a woman seducing her interlocutor, but of someone who can't believe in words and therefore needs more closeness in order to believe.

Carolyn reinforces the imaginary formation of an incredulous woman when she says that the distant and protocol-oriented posture of other therapists didn't bring her any added value. Now, the imaginary formation conceived by the patient's speech contains precisely the image she has of her therapist, that is, of someone who follows a conduct restricted by an ethical code (internal and/or external) and, therefore, also restricted in being able to help her with her own issues. "In other words, what works in discursive processes is a series of imaginary formations that designate the place that A and B each attribute to themselves and to the other, the image they make of their own place and the place of the other" (Pêcheux, 2010, p. 81).

Beyond all the interpretations of ethical conduct, Ernest's speech corresponds precisely to the imaginary formation engendered by his patient when he says he doesn't feel comfortable sitting too close to Carolyn. By constructing the image of a desiring woman through her proximity to her interlocutor, she was already aware of his ethical commitment, which in turn reinforced her imaginary formation. The imaginary formation created by the therapist's communicative act reflects her own imaginary formation about his behavior. According to the imaginary formation engendered by Ernest's speech, Carolyn's behavior should not be ratified by him, because it could result in "problems" (this is a perfectly possible inference, because the relationship that must be maintained in the therapy session has its limits).

By understanding how imaginary formations work within the communication produced in the psychologist's office, it is possible to make better interventions and also certain "deconstructions" that are necessary for the development of the therapeutic process. "Lies on the couch" (Yalom, 2006), among many passages, shows the feasibility of applying the concept of imaginary formation, as does "Historias de diván" (2008), written by Argentinian psychologist and psychoanalyst Gabriel Rolón. In his narrative, Rolón himself is the therapist responsible for describing the cases he has experienced in the clinic. In the excerpt from the book, Rolón interviews Antonio for the first time, who had just had his father admitted to a geriatric center and had never been to a psychologist.

--Your mother?

-- My mother died when I was seventeen years old.

-- Do you remember her?

-- Yes. I remember her beautiful, sweet... a sun. But you saw how memories are.

--How does it sound?

-- Deceptive. Sometimes time and memory change things a little.

-- Tell me what it was like.

--My mother was very religious. Her catchphrase was: "Nothing escapes the gaze of God." I suppose that's where a lot of my faith came from. Once again we remained silent. I feel that, although he's a very pleasant, cultured and intelligent person, we're a bit nervous and it's hard for us to achieve a fluid dialogue. It's clear that neither of us experiences this as something natural.

-- Antonio, I need to ask you a question.

--Say it.

-- Why are you here talking to me in a psychologist's office and not in a confessional with a priest? Think a little before answering.

-- I don't know. I've asked myself that too. But I can't find an answer. Maybe you can help me find it.

-- I promise I'll try.

-- Anyway, I have to say that it causes me a lot of guilt to be here.

--Why?

-- Because it's as if I've given up my faith.

--How?

-- thinking that my anguish stems from a psychological problem rather than a spiritual one.

-- Well, they're not so different, are they?

-- It could be.

We talked a bit more and that was the end of the first of the seven interviews. The truth is that I felt a little tense at first, but little by little we both relaxed and towards the end we even allowed ourselves to exchange some jokes (Rolón, 2008, p. 221-222).

Through his enunciative practices, Antonio constructs the imaginary formation of a subject who is not only suspicious of psychological therapy itself, but someone who is blaming himself for seeking this kind of help. His religiosity, acquired from his mother, has a great capacity to shape his way of seeing the world. In this way, Antonio's speech about seeking specialized psychological help endorses the imaginary formation of a religious subject who gradually feels some distrust of this power structure, but not enough to deconstruct it on his own. Thus, it is possible to see that the imaginary formation established by Antonio's statements is entangled by an external force, by religious power. For Foucault, "power must be analyzed as something that circulates, or rather, as something that only works in chains. [Power functions and is exercised in a network" (2012, p. 284).



"However, the invisibility of disciplinary power," warned Foucault, "had a visible counterpart in surveillance and a mechanism that supported it" (Giddens, 2011, p. 318). As we saw earlier, when describing the imaginary formation in communication, the act of saying will necessarily produce meanings and effects that necessarily create an image of its enunciator and, therefore, the visible part of the disciplinary surveillance mechanism of the power guiding imaginary formations is precisely in the statements produced in correspondence to a given communication situation, in this case, the therapy session.

The interactional action processes the integral components of the imaginary formations at play, with a view to the fluidity of the informational exchanges. However, as should be noted, there is often a part of the communicational expedient that is erased or silenced, since it is inherent to the chain of language that its constituents are selectively elaborated. "We believe that there is always a necessary non-saying in the saying. When 'x' is said, the unsaid 'y' remains as a relation of meaning that informs the saying of 'x'" (Orlandi, 2015, p. 82, author's quotation marks). In other words, what Antonio says not only expresses the meanings that weave his imaginary formation, but, at the same time, reveals the effects from which his discursive image is engendered. From this point of view, it is in the interaction between the imaginary formations that the therapy session gains its dynamics, as we can see in the dialogue between Antonio and Rolón.

The therapist, for his part, "creates" his imaginary formation according to his own needs at the time, since there is a dialogical responsiveness between the images within the interactional exchanges. By being open and receptive to Antonio, Rolón allows Antonio's imaginary formation to fully manifest, because he builds a discursive image that allows Antonio to bring out what is inside him. When Rolón asks his patient about the reason for seeking psychological help, the same welcoming imaginary formation also takes on the image of someone who has already grasped the religious image of his interlocutor. "Why are you here talking to me in a psychologist's office and not in a confessional with a priest? Think a little before you answer" (Rolón, 2008, p. 221).

Rolón 's point is, among other things, the expansion and reflection of Antonio's imaginary formation that generates an analytical moment responsible for tracing the explanation of what is going to be treated with psychological support. Therefore, the therapist's apprehension of the patient's imaginary formation has a fundamental impact on the possible interventions the therapist can undertake, the aim of which must be, among other things, to raise awareness of the possible causes of the patient's suffering. In this way, communication in the psychological clinic seems to take on greater significance for the treatment and the dynamics that exist between the imaginary formations receive greater investment from its participants, thus becoming another anchor point for the therapist's work, as we see in "Historias de diván" (Rolón, 2008).

In a manner more or less similar to "Lies on the couch" (Yalom, 2006) and "Stories from the couch" (Rolón, 2008), "Therapy session" (2013), an adaptation of the Israeli series *Be Tipul* by Brazilian screenwriter Jaqueline Vargas, is a work (we're using the book, not the TV series of the same name) that recounts Theo Cecatto's therapy sessions as interactional exchanges in which imaginary formations are present. As in the following case in which the therapist, for personal reasons, considers the possibility of terminating a patient's treatment and transferring her to another psychologist.

- What? What's your problem with me, Theo? I've been coming here for a year, I've never missed a session, today was the first time I was late. So, just because I thought I wouldn't come today but I did, you want to pass the ball to a colleague?

- No, Julia. It's not that.

- Theo, I told you. I get it. You're under no obligation to like me the way I like you. I'm not asking for anything!

- I'm not talking about that.

- What are you talking about? You know what? I really shouldn't have come," she replied before rebutting all my points about her boredom and neediness.

Suddenly she started talking about her fiancé:

- You really awaken feelings in me that I never thought I could have.

- What feelings, Julia?

- Just now I wanted to see André. I wish he were here. I wanted to be with someone who likes me (Vargas, 2013, p. 74).

To some extent, the case faced by Theo reproduces the characteristics of the situation Ernest experienced with Carolyn, since Julia, through her statements, creates the image of a woman who desires her therapist. However, the imaginary formation of Theo's patient engenders both her desire and her will to be desired. The work of the meanings proposed by Júlia's speech moves vertically so that her interlocutor shows that she likes her. In view of this, it is possible to say that there is no mirroring of the imaginary formations at play in the interactional space of the therapy session, because one imaginary formation seeks to have some kind of intersection with its interlocutor, while on the other hand there is apparently an avoidance on the part of the other party involved in the process.

In order to better understand the argumentative calculation made in the construction of Júlia's image, it is essential to bring her initial indignation to the unfolding of her imaginary formation, because from it we can extract her revolt at the possibility of being rejected by Theo. Even more so under the supposed justification of her treatment being interrupted by the fact that she had delayed the start of her session. "I've been coming here for a year, I've never missed a session, today was the first time I was late. So, just because I thought I wouldn't come today but I did, do you want to pass

the ball to a colleague?" (Vargas, 2013, p. 74). According to this statement, Júlia's imaginary formation is constructed and expressed under the aegis of fear of illegitimate and unfounded rejection.

Júlia's imaginary formation informs the interlocutor that there is a need, so as to leave the interactional path open for an imaginary formation that can make up for the exiguous contingencies of certain needs. Having said that, we are observing the discursive construction of Júlia's virtual image, and we are not aiming at any recommendations regarding Theo's behavior, both verbal and bodily, because this implies choosing postures and approaches to provide certain interpretations aimed at developing a type of therapeutic resource. As our aim here is to understand the importance of communication in psychotherapy according to the concept of imaginary formation and its possible implications for meanings and how these are constructed in this privileged space of exchange, the image generated by Júlia's words to her therapist are of illustrative and elucidating importance.

In this sense, when Theo is told: "You really awaken feelings in me that I never thought I could have" (Vargas, 2013, p. 74), the imaginary formation of a woman who desires her therapist is called into question, since it is not possible to say that Júlia is only attracted to her interlocutor, as there may be other feelings at play that deserve due attention in the therapeutic process. The same is true when she says: "I wanted to be with someone who likes me" (Vargas, 2013, p. 74), which effectively corroborates her desire for her interlocutor to construct/possess an imaginary formation that is dialogically responsive to hers. However, Theo, through his statements, tries to understand how she is, generating an apparently understanding image.

It's risky, perhaps even irresponsible, to proceed with the interpretation of Theo's imaginary formation, since his speeches are parsimonious and, precisely because of this, prefigure the image of a therapist who is cautious about handling the communicational situation in which he finds himself. Therefore, from what little he says in the excerpt, we can deduce the imaginary formation of an experienced professional in this type of interaction, according to which caution may be the best decision to make. In this way, despite the difficulty faced at the moment in the therapy session, there are, as Theo makes clear, relatively "neutral" postures responsible for engendering an imaginary formation to deal with certain insecurities arising from somewhat delicate circumstances.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As our aim was to interpret the importance of communication in psychotherapy according to the concept of imaginary formation and its possible implications for meanings and how these are constructed in this therapeutic space, as well as aiming, with this investigation, to train therapists in the appropriation of a Discourse Analysis "tool" for their practice, we believe we have fulfilled our purpose. Although gaps and restrictions contribute to the contingency imperfections that exist here, we can say that the purpose of this article has reached its main target, since, having selected for a

descriptive verification of communication and how the concept of imaginary formation can be considered operational in the psychological practice of therapy, we have taken excerpts from three literary works, which deal with the therapy session as the setting in which their narratives unfold, in order to observe the functioning of imaginary formation.

In the course of this article, we have tried to make it more perceptible and more fruitful. "Lies on the couch" (Yalom, 2006), "Historias de diván" (Rolón, 2008) and "Sessão de terapia" (Vargas, 2013) provided the necessary conditions for us to leave the plane of theoretical abstractions and interpretively apply imaginary formation in situations close to those experienced by countless therapists in their offices, in order to illustrate what Aristotle says about the imitation of art in relation to life: "Imitation is natural to men from infancy and in this they differ from other animals, because they imitate more and acquire their first knowledge through imitation" (2004, p. 40). Therefore, we are part of the contingent that draws life from art and life from art.

From this interpretative path, we have also found that there are psychological approaches that are more or less receptive and even more conducive to theoretical-methodological incorporation, as in the case of imaginary formation, while we know that there are others that are not so permeable. However, we hope to have clarified the fact that the image virtualized in someone's discourse is a process intrinsic to the use of the resources available through language, since the existence of the calculations made to describe, narrate and argue (and even for other processing of meanings) are independent of one's awareness of them. In view of this, knowledge and, consequently, assimilation of the imaginary formation expands the therapist's "mastery" and use of a poignant expedient in the therapy session.

Thus, "What differentiates a psychotherapy session in the consulting room from other personal relationships is the fact that client and therapist have agreed to put a magnifying glass or amplifier on the material that has emerged there with the aim of helping the client" (GRINBERG, 1997, p. 178). From this perspective, the implementation of imaginary formation in the psychotherapeutic process to help the therapist's practice can bring gains and contributions, because

The psychotherapist, having the privilege of witnessing the intimate struggle of a number of people, their often serious and bitter battles with themselves and with the external forces that challenge them, acquires a great respect for them and a new understanding of the potential dignity of the human being (May, 1973, p. 65).

Capturing the imaginary formation allows respect, care and acceptance to be applied, because it has in its theoretical germ the understanding of what is inherent to the human race, that is, its incompleteness, manifested in an also incomplete "tool", language, and its desire to communicate what goes deep inside it in order to remove suffering. Therefore, as well as being another communication technique, imaginary formation refers to the representation in which we are destined

to participate, that is, to express ourselves in front of someone who can help us, but who, in order to do so better, needs to understand how the images we create in our interactions work.

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