Abstract

Spelling performance of elementary school students: developing and implementing an instrument of intervention

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The acquisition of written language enables the integration of students into social practices. In the educational context, the concern with the learning and formal teaching of writing is emphasized and object of concern from educators and other professionals due to its complexity in the education and high indices of students with difficulties related to spelling. This research was presented in the form of three studies. Study 1 aimed to raise the spelling profile of students from 1st to 5th grade of public education, in order to characterize, compare and classify the spelling performance according to the semiology of errors, as well as to identify the spelling standard for this population. One hundred and fifty students of both genders from 1st to 5th grade of elementary school, with ages from 6 to 12 years old were evaluated. As evaluation procedure, it was applied a spelling evaluation protocol – Pro-Orthography –, in collective and individual versions. The results showed that the students evaluated had an average of right answers that increased with schooling level in the Pro-Orthography; regarding the semiological classification, the findings indicated a higher frequency of natural spelling errors in comparison to arbitrary spelling errors. Study 2 aimed to elaborate an intervention program for spelling difficulties according to the semiology of errors. Study 3 aimed to verify the effectiveness of the intervention program in students with lower spelling performance. The study included 40 students of both genders from 3rd to 5th grade of public elementary education of the city of Marília-SP, with ages between 8 and 12 years, distributed into the following groups: GI (20 students with lower spelling performance), subdivided into GIe (10 students with lower spelling performance submitted to the intervention program) and GIc (10 students with lower spelling performance not submitted to the intervention program); and GII (20 students with higher spelling performance), subdivided into GIIe (10 students with higher spelling performance submitted to the intervention program) and GIIc (10 students with higher spelling performance not submitted to the intervention program). In both pre and post-testing situations, all groups were submitted to the application of the Pro-Orthography in their individual and collective versions. The results showed that, in general, all groups had higher means of right answers in post-testing, with reduction of the types of errors, according to the semiological classification, especially related to natural spelling errors. However, the results also showed that GIe and GIIe had better performances on spelling tests in comparison to GIc and GIIc, which is indicative of the effectiveness of the intervention program for spelling difficulties of the students in this study. In conclusion, the intervention program developed was effective to the subjects in this study, indicating that it may become an instrument to help both teachers and clinicians who work in the area of education, contributing to teaching and learning of spelling, as well as to the minimization of the difficulties of students with spelling delay.