

## The musical dimension of *lalangue* and its effects on the practice with children with autism<sup>1</sup>

Beatriz Alves Viana\*  
Luis Achilles Rodrigues Furtado  
Camilla Araújo Lopes Vieira  
Adeline Annelise Marie Stervinou

Universidade Federal do Ceará, Curso de Psicologia. Sobral, CE, Brasil

**Abstract:** This paper is the result of observations made from children with autism during a university extension course performed between the Mental Health network and the Psychology Service. We investigated the *Lalangue* relationship with music and established its contributions to the autism clinic. To this end, studies on psychology and music were employed. We used some reports from professionals' experience and the work conducted with the extension group as material for investigation. The relationship of *Lalangue* with music is shown through the rhythmic games based on the presence or absence of sound during the time, bringing notable elements to the proper constitution of the participant, placing us before a diachrony, which is also present in *Lalangue*. Thus, we can say that studying this concept can help us understand the relationship of the primary participant with Another one, which is especially true in autism.

**Keywords:** *lalangue*, music, autism, psychoanalysis.

### Introduction

This article stems from questions raised during experience with children with autism from a university extension action<sup>2</sup>, which was developed in a General CAPS (Center for Psychosocial Care) and a Psychology service associated with this same University. This research uses vignettes originated in the group experience with these children and relates them to our theoretical concerns regarding issues related to the notion of *lalangue*, music, and autism.

Along with the experience and listening to reports from professionals who worked with similar proposals, the great interest that some individuals with autism showed for music presented itself to us in a quite intriguing way. The latter proved to be a potential pathway for working with these people, who, due to their relationship with language, often present themselves with acts and speech that seem meaningless, but which, however, contain features that indicate their subjective position and evidence of how they are affected by the Other.

Thus, this research aims to investigate the relationship of the concept of *lalangue* with music and, from there, establish its possible contributions to practice with individuals with autism. This question is justified when we consider the vast psychoanalytic literature published on the subject (Catão & Vivés, 2011; Didier, 1999; Quinet, 2012; Vivés, 2009) and the fact that these individuals pose challenges that involve the primordial relationship with the signifier and the Real. Therefore, this articulation between the Symbolic and the Real finds a very well defined notion in Lacan's teaching in the 1970s, namely, *lalangue*.

Since *lalangue* is transmitted through the maternal voice, with all its melody, presenting itself in various forms of sound events, we can delimit its close connection with the musical dimension, proposing that such manifestations can help us better understand the primordial relationship between the subject and the Other, especially in autism. Based on this evidence, we believe that the relationship with the musical dimension is implied in the first subjective baths in the river of language, which can give us ways to develop practices with these children.

### Methodology

In accordance with our primary goal, we carried out a literature review to help us analyze the guiding concepts. To this end, we used the Thesaurus produced by Firgemann and Ramos (2009), in which we found the passages in which Lacan refers to *lalangue* in his teaching. Here we chose to display some of these excerpts chronologically, and also to add some comments to them.

1 Beatriz Alves Viana and Luis Achilles Furtado's financial support: Fundação Cearense de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (Funcap).

\* Endereço para correspondência: beatrizalvesv@gmail.com

2 The action of the mentioned project is devoted to children in severe psychological distress and seeks to promote a space in which they can produce and express themselves freely through features such as music, as well as other tools that assist them to bond and develop the ability to better interact with others. The intention of these spaces is to welcome and follow up these individuals in their constructions, so that they can recognize themselves as authors of their production. This study is based on the psychoanalytic clinic, especially the *Treatment among Many*. (Bezerra, 2013, p. 102).

Besides the aforementioned bibliographical material, we also based our research on other authors who have dedicated themselves to similar studies, as well as authors from the field of music. In addition, we used vignettes from our extension experience, as well as clinical cases published in the field of psychoanalysis – especially the paradigmatic case of Dick described by Melanie Klein – and reports from professionals who work with individuals with autism. In addition, we stress the great importance of the practical experience during the development of this research, since it was mostly from our experiences and supervision during the action of the above-mentioned project that we extracted the necessary foundations to better understand and articulate the concepts to be discussed.

We highlight that the reported vignettes come from an experience carried out before the development of the research. In this way, the latter did not have to be put before the Ethics Committee, since it did not submit any individuals to the condition of direct research object. As has been common in psychoanalytic studies since Freud, the theoretical elaboration on this practice was only carried out at a later time. Thus, we feel justified regarding our abstention from obtaining authorization from the Research Ethics Committee.

### The concept of *lalangue*<sup>3</sup> in Lacanian teaching

After establishing the thesis about the unconsciousness structured as a language and developing the notion of the object *a*, Lacan is faced with something constituted prior to articulated speech: *lalangue*, which refers to the first babbling in the mother tongue. Lacan (1971-1972/1997, p. 15), from a Freudian slip pronounced by him, for the first time uses this neologism, associating it to a baby's *lalation* in its onomatopoeic aspect. The term highlights the homophonic character at the expense of the lexicographical dimension. In the same year, Lacan continues this discussion, highlighting *lalangue* in its relationship with speech and its goal of enjoyment and not of communication.

In *L'Étourdit* (Lacan, 1972/2003, p. 492), he defines the concept of language based on the inscribed mark of *lalangue*. Thus, by putting the dimension of sense aside, *lalangue* is presented through the mistakes, homophones, alliterations, and misunderstandings present in language.

In the seminar titled *Encore* (Lacan, 1972-1973/1985b, pp. 188-190), *lalangue* is evoked as something that precedes language. Language is, thus, reduced to

what the scientific discourse produces to account for *lalangue* itself. Lacan (1972-1973/1985b, p. 190) stresses, therefore, that language is an elucubration of knowledge on *lalangue*. Therefore, *lalangue* is not equivalent to language. Although we understand that language pre-exists the individual through the Other, such claims imply that in the subjective constitution, language can be conceived as something secondary and consisting of *lalangue*. Affections, in turn, are effects from *lalangue* that “go well beyond anything that the speaking being is likely to enunciate”.

In *Alla Scuola Freudiana* (1974), Lacan deals with *lalangue* concerning its onomatopoeic character. He presents its definition as something transmitted by the Other, which can be incarnated by the mother figure. It is from the Other's desire that the sound substance that occupies *lalangue* is transmitted, which is made up by the phonemes specific to each language, implying, in short, in all figures of speech, figures of sound such as alliterations, assonances, and onomatopoeia. We also highlight the homophones, paronomasses, and cacophonies as phenomena involved in the sonority of the words and often used by poets.

In *The third*, Lacan (1974/1991b) insists on the unconsciousness dependence on *lalangue*, even though it is structured as a language. At the same conference, Lacan (1974/1991b, p. 89) uses a rainfall metaphor that shall be repeated in other conferences: “What needs to be conceived there is the deposit, the alluvium, the petrification marked from the management by a group of its unconscious experience”. In addition, the author recalls the concept of the letter and its relationship with *lalangue*, suggesting letters as receptacles through which *lalangue* shall precipitate: “There is no letter without *lalangue*, this is the problem, how good can *lalangue* precipitate in letters?” (Lacan, 1974/1991b, p. 95).

At the *Conference in Geneva on the Symptom*, Lacan (1975/1991a, pp. 125-126) places *lalangue* as the first mark inscribed in the speaking being that shall subsequently reappear; “in dreams, in all kind of stumbling, in all manner of saying”. Furthermore, he recovers considerations regarding language, claiming that it shall operate through *lalangue*, and it is not, thus, in a field of theoretic formality that seeks meaning, but rather the misunderstandings and homophonies that resonate in the body in its materiality. In the same year, in the United States, Lacan (1975) argues that *lalangue* rightly deserves to be called maternal, since it is from the mother that the baby receives it. According to him, *lalangue* is not learned, it is received, as it passes through the body of the speaker.

In summary, we can say that *lalangue* was, for Lacan, a key point of his teaching in the 1970s. The question for him was whether *lalangue* precipitates in letter. This is a crucial question for anyone who works with individuals with autism in the light of psychoanalysis.

3 According to several translations to Portuguese of the term “*lalangue*”, formulated by Lacan, we can find two options: “*alingua*” (which prefers to emphasize the term “*a*” of the neologism, as a reference to the Real and the object); and the option that we adopted in this study (in its original version, in Portuguese) “*lalingua*” (emphasizing the proximity with the expression “*lalation*”).

Furthermore, as we have seen, Lacan insists on the sound materiality of *lalangue*, implying, therefore, its musical dimension, which we shall now discuss.

### The musicality of *lalangue* and practice with children with autism

First of all, it is important to point out the fundamental concepts from the field of music to distinguish it from other sounds or noises. We consider “music” as the standardized alternation between sounds and silences. This alternation encompasses essential parameters called the “Specific Qualities” of music, such as height, intensity, and timbre. Height concerns the frequency of sound waves caused by the vibration of a body at any given moment. Intensity refers to the force with which sound is produced, representing the amplitude of the vibrations. And, finally, timbre, which is defined as the specific quality of the sound, which allows us to distinguish different voices or instruments (Danhauser, 1996). Parameters of sound are associated to these: the melody, conceived as the frequency of successive sound vibrations that can be perceived, as the identity of a particular note; harmony, which refers to the simultaneity of sounds; and rhythm, also called pulse, the standardized repetition of alternation between sound and silence, presented through frequencies perceived as time cuts (Wisnik, 1999). It is worth remembering that without standardization, the set of sound manifestations is not music, but merely noise. According to Wisnik (1999, p. 27), “Music is originally described as the extraction of orderly and periodic sound from the turbulent middle of noise”.

We anticipate that these definitions are very relevant when we think about the reality of autism. Carly Fleishmann (2012), a girl with autism made famous by expressing her understanding of language through a computer after several years without manifesting intelligibly in her communication, states during an interview to an American television channel that, given the amount of stimuli from the world, she is not able to filter them and thus they end up being invaded. Thus, we figured, if it is not possible to distinguish a melodic pattern in sounds, everything else becomes noise. This finding, in turn, reminds us of Lacan’s indication (1975) that, regarding individuals with autism, everything around them is chattering<sup>4</sup> (1975/1991, pp. 133-134), which has the same invasive character that Carly Fleishmann points out. We can ask ourselves: if everything talks, how do we distinguish a voice/melody among so many? Unfortunately, we shall not address this matter in this study.

As we have already mentioned, the neologism *lalangue*, relates to the expression *lalation*, from the Latin *lallare*, which means “singing the child to sleep”. Lacan (1974, p. 5) states: “I write *lalangue* because this

means *lalalá*, *lalation*, i.e., it is a fact that very soon the human being *lalates*; so, he just has to see a baby”. The author, thus, points directly to this first form of speech of children, full of rhythm, sounds, misunderstandings, onomatopoeia, alliterations, assonances, i.e., mistakes and musicality.

According to Quinet (2012, p. 10), “*Lalangue* consists of what is signified from the mother tongue + the music with which they were told”. Therefore, it is possible to notice a close relationship between music and *lalangue*, since before the *infans* give meaning to phonemes, is the musicality of the mother’s voice – *lalangue* – that is captured first. Wisnik (1999, p. 30) demonstrates this operation very clearly:

When the child has not yet learned to speak, but has already noticed that language has meaning, the mother’s voice, with its melodies and touches, is pure music, or it is that which we will continue to hear in music: a language in which one realizes the horizon of a sense that, however, is not discriminated in isolated signs, but is only intuited as a whole in perpetual retreat, that is non-verbal, untranslatable, transparent in its own way.

The effects of *lalangue* have a puzzle-like effect, for being part of an understanding that escapes the individual and that is transmitted without communicative intent (Lacan, 1972-1973/1985b, p. 188). *Lalangue* announces something that goes beyond what speech is able to announce, that resonates and is deposited in the body of the *infans*.

It is possible to notice the musical aspect present in *lalangue*, since it, just like music, presents itself as something that resonates in the body and is not attached to a meaning. As Santos (2006, p. 273) highlights, *lalangue* is a field of resonances, in which the signifier is more conducive to enjoyment and separated from the meaning and relationship to another signifier.

Still in regards to the approach of the concept of *lalangue* with music, Alain Didier-Weill (1999, pp. 240-241) stresses that an isolated musical note cannot be translated by another, it does not imply a meaning, but brings forward a “real pureness”. For this author, the effect of the music serves to celebrate the individual’s constitution in a mythical time with an absolute beginning. There, the *real* of the maternal voice while *das Ding* (coming from the outside) comes as a *human thing*, as it submits to the signifier (Didier-Weill, 1999, p. 16). Only in this way, therefore, being bound to the symbolic, can this real be subjectivized in its intimate exteriority. In this way, sounds related to each other go out of the field of pure noise and into musicality.

It is only through the transmission of these first sounds, expressed by the maternal voice, through its melodies and rhythms, that we can give meaning to the sounds heard. This is the basis through where the spoken word shall then originate. What is first presented to the

<sup>4</sup> In the original French, Lacan uses the verb “jaspiner”, which has the sense of “talking in abundance”, “chatter”.



*infans* is the melody and the rhythm from *lalangue*: “The musical rhythm – how notes and silence are organized in a given time – exists within *lalangue* even before speech itself, in the lalation period” (Quinet, 2012, p. 11).

The first appearance of the subject as a speaking being – since he gives testimony that he can articulate something – is as one who listens, who has been affected by the sonority of *lalangue*. Once affected by this real, that is where the individual will inscribe the signifiers it receives from the Other, as in the work of writing dreams with the “pictography” of thoughts from the dream, which is independent from sign relation, for example (Freud, 1900/2016, p. 299).

In this period prior to language acquisition, *lalangue* can be understood as “floods accumulated with misunderstandings, from the linguistic creations of each individual” (Miller, 1998, p. 10), and its alluvial dimension brings a diachrony in itself, accumulating, as time passes by, waste from the “language water”, as Lacan would say. Such as *lalangue*, rhythm also involves a diachronic character. For Didier-Weill (1998, p. 19), the rhythm of music implies a diachronic succession between the existence and non-existence of sound. Thus, the first corresponds to a presence and the second to an absence, resulting in a symbolic alternation that has been long known in psychoanalysis, ever since its founding. In this alternation, Didier-Weill highlights that, in the moment of non-existence, there is a promise that sound shall return.

The author points to the presence and absence games, common to the individual’s formation, which present themselves as existence and non-existence, respectively. The moment of integration of these two contradictory messages is exactly what was called original repression by Freud. According to Didier-Weill (1999, p. 19), this mythical and prehistoric time is the stage at which there is the encounter between human real (defined as “that body that reaches the world with a materiality that weighs”) and what shall be inscribed on it (the symbolic, i.e., “that which belongs to the sphere of the signifier”). It is, therefore, from the confrontation with the absence of the signifier – “non-existence” – that the trauma shall be formed and, along with it, the promise of the return of this sound/presence – “existence”.

It is important to remember that this alternation is part of the significant machine responsible for the subjectification of the presence and absence of the Other. The recognition of the presence of sound refers to the individual’s formative operations of primary assertion – *Bejahung* – and its simultaneous correspondent, expulsion – *Ausstossung* (Freud, 1925/2007). The repetition of the automatism of this meaningful game (in this case, sound as a sign of the presence of the Other) establishes the promise that, in the succession of a silence, there will be the reappearance of sound, which, in turn, represents the Other. This promise has the character of a pact that can be broken if the object is not recognized again in the

outside world through the reality test. In the absence of this object recognition, therefore, it presents itself as lacking, establishing what Freud called *Versagung* – which was mistranslated as “frustration”.

The regularity of the return of the object in alternation with its consequent implication of promise of reappearance indicates that the object can be missing within the real, but rather its nature is symbolic. This happens because such an object only appears as a promise, as a representation to be found in reality by an expectation of reunion. If it’s missing or is not recognized/subjectivized, then there is a breaking of the pact/promise. This is what Lacan (1956-1957/1995) called the dialectic of frustration.

This time of waiting for the sound as a presence can be found in the famous example of “fort-da”, as described by Freud (1920/2006). For him, the boy’s game would be the way to deal with the issue of original repression, articulable by the sound opposition between *fort* and *da*, since, in this dialectic, *fort* (there) cannot be understood without *da* (here). In this example, we witness, in the alternation of specific sounds that refer to distinct syllables, a game of presence (appearance) and absence (disappearance) of the object. In Lacan’s (1964/1985, pp. 225-226) discussion on the Freudian text, the author brings up the game played by the child not as a desire to be close to the mother or to be put in an active position considering what he suffered passively, but rather as an attempt at a symbolic ordering from the mother’s absence, i.e., the symbolization of the lack. However, the indefinite repetition of this experience implies that something remains, thus, with impossible symbolization.

Quinet (2012, p. 11) stresses that, in this vignette presented by Freud, “This baby’s lalation does not intend to communicate but rather to enjoy, *Genussen*, with *lalangue* tragically representing the disappearance of the Other”. There is, finally, a disharmony in the meeting with *lalangue*, since the marks of enjoyment are inscribed in the body of the *infans*, configuring themselves as something real that the symbolic will never be able to circumscribe. The debris of the language deposited on the child, since he is born sensitive to language’s innate cancer, are present even before the child is able to articulate speech. Lacan (1975/1991, p. 11) tells us:

I have watched many young children, starting with mine. The fact that a child says *maybe*, *not yet*, even before being able to build a real sentence, proves that there is already something in him, a sieve that crosses through where the water of language leaves something while passing, some debris with which he will play, with which he will necessarily have to deal. That is what makes all this activity non-reflected – remnants to which, later, being premature, problems shall be added, of what will scare the child. Thanks to this, he will perform coalescence, so to speak, of this sexual reality and of language.

For the psychoanalyst (Lacan, 1960/1998, p. 849), the first movement on the individual's formation, born from an original slit, is fading. This, in turn, forms the identification of the individual by a temporal primordial pulse, joined to the significant synchrony.

From these coordinates on the trauma of *lalangue* and the primary operation of the individual's formation, various questions arise as to how these elements are presented in psychosis, or more specifically in autism, since, it is in this clinical structure that the relationship of language with the symbolic operates differently from neurosis, considering that there is a flaw in the primordial symbolizing, and, therefore, the lack of the Other is not subjectivized. Since the Other is not presented as lacking in psychosis, the individual does not enter the logic operation of separation from the object and, therefore, there is no interval between S1 and S2. Lacan (1964/1985, p. 225) denominates this notion holophrase, "when there is no interval between S1 and S2, when the first couple of signifiers are solidified". This solidity mentioned by Lacan will be resumed in 1975 at the Geneva Conference with the term "freezing".

In any case, for Monteiro (2011), the deposit of signifiers coming from the primordial Other, who marks the body and produces trauma in the *infans*, is not subjectivized by individuals with autism – even though it affects them –, which can be verified in the production of disarticulated signifiers. As Bastos and Freire (2006, p. 116) say, "concerning autism, we watched this non-subjectivized deposit, or that which is still not transformed into enunciation, since the individual does not appropriate it, but is trapped by it, making his body an object of enjoyment". Let us now see how we can illustrate these claims.

### *Lalangue and the Clinic*

We can illustrate such imprisonment of the non-subjectivized deposit of *lalangue* by reading the study by Lima (2009), in which the analyst speaks about a 6-year-old girl with autism named Leci (name given by the researcher). During the visits, the mother always declared her dissatisfaction and regret concerning motherhood, in addition to reporting that the presence of the daughter was unbearable for her, emphasizing the horror Leci caused her. The place the mother outlined for her daughter was a "wall", a word always repeated by the mother to refer to her daughter, who, according to her, only knew how to scream and cry, and who felt nothing. The mother was unable to build any sense from her daughter's acts. All these words uttered by the mother could not fail to have an effect on that child.

The analyst reports that, in a particular session, Leci, who did not speak, showed up on this day talking non-stop. However, it was not possible to understand the sounds she produced. When the analyst asked what she meant, the girl took her closer to the institution's wall,

pointed and said "sea". It was at this moment that the pure sound "sea", which apparently represented nothing, was proved to be a significant element, once located regarding the second element (S2) – wall – pointed to the mark of a significant deposit from maternal speech – *lalangue*. In this regard, we highlight: "The signifier, in itself, is not definable, it can only be defined as different from another signifier. It is the introduction of the difference as such that allows what belongs to the signifier to be extracted from *lalangue*" (Lacan, 1972-1973/1985b, p. 194).

We realize with this vignette that the girl introduces a significant difference through *lalangue*, which allows her to get rid, at that time, of her imprisonment by the Other and find her place before it, since "the signifiers from Others are an intrusion to enjoyment" (Bastos and Freire, 2006, p. 120). The girl, at this moment, presents herself as an individual, pointing to the place located regarding her mother's speech.

We also present another illustrative clinic practice, a session performed by Melanie Klein (1930/1996) on a boy with autism. We highlight the intervention of the analyst with little Dick, when he used a particle from his *lalangue* "Tea daddy" in one of the sessions, and Melanie Klein rectified it to "Eat daddy" in an attempt to register in it the language of the oral drive expressed in opposition to swallow/incorporate and spit/expel. Although it can be understood as a forced interpretation by Klein, it is possible to note her effort to make this dispersed particle of the *lalangue* spoken by the boy into a signifier, establishing an oral-driven relationship of the individual with the Other, in this case, his father.

Thus, Monteiro (2011, p. 42) states that before the possibility of absence of object extraction operation in autism, we can witness an overflow of enjoyment in the body and in the signifier, implying that this enjoyment is beyond the language of the Other. Thus, there would not be a separation by language between enjoyment and body. This combination of enjoyment, body, and signifier places us in the field of *lalangue*, since it presents itself through the enjoyment of the language, and can be "a possible route for the treating autism and psychosis, which urges analysts to reflect on politics, redefine their strategies, and expand their tactics" (Bastos & Freire, 2006, p. 121).

Regarding this self-erotic enjoyment, we can again give examples through *lalangue* particles. A vocal enjoyment when little Dick is able to establish a meaningful relationship from the interpretation of Melanie Klein, who sought to guide him towards what she supposed was a precocious Oedipus complex. The analyst, having reported that Dick did not express any interest in the toys in her office, or was not bothered by being left by his nanny, takes a big train and puts it next to a small train, saying: "Daddy-train" and "Dick-train". In doing so, Klein establishes a meaningful relationship between the trains, thus establishing their symbolism. However, the most interesting aspect of all is that the boy proves to be

sensitive to the words and vocabulary, immediately picking up the small train that the analyst called Dick, and carrying it to the window. Then, the boy says: “station” and from there, Klein goes further in her interpretation, saying: “*The station is mummy; Dick is going into mummy.*”

Lacan (1953-1954/1979), when commenting on this case, says that this is a forced interpretation from Klein, however, he points out that it was not without consequence for the treatment, since from then on Dick began to show visible clinical effects. What we would like to highlight in this example, the item that drew our attention, is the sonorous relationship between the phonemes in the words “train-station”. In regards to this point, we can cite the work by Furtado and Vieira (2016), in which the authors discuss the onomatopoeic character of those words, since if we repeat it several times in its original language or just the phoneme [t], we can easily notice the materialization of the sound of a moving train, reminding us of the relationship that Lacan makes between *lalangue* and the onomatopoeia and the way psychotic individuals treat words like things, in their materiality.

As we did in the case of Dick by Melanie Klein, we can highlight another example that reinforces our hypothesis, which is supported in Lacan’s affirmation on the coalescence of sexual reality with language. This vignette is provided by Henry (2003). Below is the excerpt:

“Do you know how to talk like Donald?” the girl asked.

“No!”, she replied (analyst).

The girl, salivating and drooling a lot, started, then, to say: “Quain, quain, quain”.

“What do I need to hear there?”, wondered the analyst, upset.

Quainquando, the girl pointed to the clock with a finger.

“It is ten past three”, replied the analyst.

The child laughs. Donald’s language had just been invented. (Henry, 2003, p. 132)

When reporting this case, the author says that this girl “embodies *lalangue*” and makes a linguistic creation that she starts to use in sessions and with her family. He also adds that the girl’s construction shows us how important a practice with psychosis that uses “transferring *lalangue* is to forge a social bond”. Another point highlighted by the author is that the motivation of the transfer is not a supposed knowledge, but *lalangue* itself, “as the one that allows a signifier to make signals. And signaling what? Something that is out of sense: an onomatopoeia, a figure, a mark” (Henry, 2003, p. 132).

### *Between Sound (S1) and Silence (S2): Lalangue and Music*

By understanding *lalangue* as something that is not bound to meaning, such as music, we might wonder

how music could also be used in the construction of a bond in individuals with autism. Dick himself, as an adult, expressed great interest and knowledge in the musical field (Nasio, 2001). Lima (2009, p. 31), speaks of the great interest these children show for music, developing the hypothesis that the ease of approach that these individuals have with music is due to the fact that it “does not summon” and, therefore, does not demand anything. Thus, music would be a non-invasive means of contact, which would enable a greater openness to the Other.

Sacks (2007), when reporting on experiences with young people with autism, states that to achieve a more accessible contact, he took his own piano to the hospital. He also claims that this tool worked like a magnet, referring to the case of Stephen Wiltshire, who “suspended” his autism when hearing the song “It’s not unusual”.

Still in this sense, we can see another example that highlights music as a possibility to bond with these individuals. We refer to the contact we had with a four-year old girl, who we shall call Maria. She came to the University’s Psychology service we are part of, with a possible diagnostic of autism. In the space where the children groups took place, enters Maria, brought in by her mother and sister. The girl comes to the room quite irritated and shy. Despite several approach attempts by the extension agent who was there and her own sister, Maria did not interact, seeming not to hear their calls. Sitting on the floor, she just beat the curtain repeatedly on the wall. The extension agent then plays a song on the guitar, alternating with fast and slow paces. Maria, though still facing the other way, let herself be touched by the music, following exactly the rhythm made by the extension agent using beats on the curtain. The music involved Maria to such an extent that she began to laugh. Soon after, the extension agent stops the music, applying a lack and the promise dimension that we discussed earlier. Then, for the first time, Maria directs her gaze, smiling, as if awaiting the next chord, sketching the dimension of the appeal highlighted by Lacan (1953-1954/1979, p. 102).

In this fragment, we witnessed the child entering a rhythmic activity along with the extension agent. Through music, the extension agent intervenes in a non-threatening and intrusive way, momentarily producing an effect of release to the invasive word of the Other. Through music, with its alternations in rhythm, sound and silence, which demands nothing, Maria let herself accompany the melody brought about by the extension agent, thereby forming a temporal adjustment principle through rhythm. In this sense, music is a form of mediation between Maria and the Other. The symbolic alternation implied between sound and silence and the rhythmic alternation allowed the inscription of the interruption of the music as lacking, resulting in a look that makes us feel the extent of the appeal and the presence of the individual as the one who listens first and articulates something after.

Baio (2006 apud Monteiro, 2011), in turn, presents the case of a five-year-old boy with autism named Tano,



who was present in the so-called “Speech Workshop”. According to the author, the boy, refusing the presence of the Other, kept beating a wall repeatedly, without, however, showing any interest in interacting with others. The analyst introduces a guitar chord in the time between the beats, thereby, producing a later demand effect by the boy.

“Music, as a language that does not narrate, but that resonates in the body” (Lima and Poli, 2012, p. 381), serves, therefore, as a means of stopping this excess of enjoyment, and establishes, even if only in a few moments, alternating intervals of absence and presence. Since music operates through repetition of intervals of sound and silence, something that exists in *lalangue* primarily, it can act to establish waiting spaces – essential in the production of a rhythm.

As we mentioned earlier, this wait implies Freud’s *Versagung* (refusal/impediment), which is present in the initial operation of the individual’s formation, in which the Other inserts the child into a demand articulated with the satisfaction of need. Regarding this concept, Lacan highlights the meaning of this broken pact on which a promise was made. We can see the manifestation of this operation in the cases presented above.

In the case of Maria, the alternation between the presence and absence of sound imposed a break in the music, a waiting space. There, when the girl expected the sound to be repeated, only its absence was present and, therefore, the inscription of a lack. The extension agent established a symbolic alternation with the girl, from which the promise of the return of the sound was set, allowing the girl to appeal through her eyes.

We then realized that the operation made through music might initiate a scansion between S1 and S2, since in autism such signifiers can be found *hollowed out, frozen, petrified*,<sup>5</sup> i.e., the interval between the two is not presented, they remain coupled, thereby preventing the association to other signifiers.

We witness this operation alternation in a case narrated by an occupational therapist (OT) from a General CAPS (Center for Psychosocial Care) who cared for a girl diagnosed with autism. According to her, Laura had great difficulty interacting and could hardly hold a conversation. The therapist said: “*When I asked her a question, she always repeated the same thing I said. I said ‘Hi, Laura, how are you?’ and she said ‘Hi, Laura, how are you?’ When I said ‘Let’s play?’, she answered ‘Let’s play?’*”. Before this difficulty in communication with the child, the OT reports looking for other mechanisms to communicate, using music as support material. “*I started singing a song by Paula Fernandes that said ‘I’m a fire bird’ and Laura answered with the second verse of the song saying ‘that sings in your ear’*”. According to the OT, this was the first time the girl had said something without repeating a previous speech.

In this report, we witnessed, on the part of the professional, a differentiation in the girl’s echolalia, establishing waiting intervals with stereotypical repetition. By alternating the words sung by the professional and the girl, an individual who announces being there emerges from that interval, “singing in your ear”, thus allowing an openness to the Other.

## Final considerations

With its rhythmic temporal games of presence (existence) and the absence (non-existence) of sound, music brings elements that mark the very formation of the individual, as has already been suggested by Didier-Weill (1998). This led us directly to *lalangue*, since it is constituted from the way the musicality of the mother tongue was spoken and heard. It is from these indications that we can consider the effects of combining music in practice with individuals with autism, considering that these aforementioned primordial elements operate differently in this clinic structure. Considering the diachronic dimension of *lalangue*, transmitted through the rhythm and musicality of a primordial Other, an alternation between presence and absence operates, which places the individual toward the lack in the Other. This suggests that music can help us think about the primordial relationship of the individual with the Other, more specifically regarding autism, and allows us to conclude that music affects this clinic.

Seeking to follow our research plan, we began our journey through displaying passages in the teaching of Lacan, in which the notion of *lalangue* is presented. After this display, we developed some considerations with the dimension of musicality, as well as reflections on its contributions through practice with children with autism. It was possible to see in the case of Dick published by Melanie Klein, the onomatopoeic dimension of *lalangue* present in the particles enounced by Dick during the sessions. Klein establishes a significant relationship to the dispersed *lalangue* particles presented by Dick, which had relevant clinical effects as a consequence. This is a clear illustration of what Lacan called the coalescence of the sexual reality to the signifier.

We can say that music, present in the dimension of enunciation, allows the individual to perform a piece of writing such as the development of a dream text, because, since the individual subjectivized this musicality, he inscribes the marks of his story there. By establishing musicality to the voice, the lacking dimension appears in the rhythmic and melodic alternations of speech. Regardless of meaning, as in the dream, the individual may write his presence on sonority.

It is important to note that the development of this research has prompted new questions, and was of great importance to think about our practice. Therefore, we do not intend to exhaust the subject, but continue in its development, investigating other aspects that we perceive

5 All these terms were used by Lacan in his teaching.

to be correlated and would assist further studies, such as a better approach of voice in psychoanalysis as a drive object, which maintains a close relationship with the autism clinic.

### **A dimensão musical de lalíngua e seus efeitos na prática com crianças autistas**

**Resumo:** Este artigo resulta da experiência com autistas em uma extensão universitária articulada à rede de saúde mental e a um serviço de psicologia. Investiga-se a relação de *lalíngua* com a música e estabelece suas contribuições à clínica do autismo. Para tanto, foi feita a leitura de textos nos campos da psicanálise e da música. Como material explorado, utilizaram-se relatos de experiência de profissionais e trabalho no grupo de extensão. A relação de *lalíngua* com a música é apresentada a partir da consideração dos jogos rítmicos de presença e ausência do som no decorrer do tempo que trazem elementos marcantes à própria constituição do sujeito, situando-nos diante de uma diacronia, também presente em *lalíngua*. Com isso, pode-se pensar como o estudo desse conceito nos auxilia na compreensão da relação primordial do sujeito com Outro, especialmente no autismo.

**Palavras-chave:** *lalíngua*, música, autismo, psicanálise.

### **La dimension musicale de lalangue et ses effets sur la pratique avec des enfants autistes**

**Résumé:** Cet article est le résultat d'une expérience réalisée avec des autistes lors d'un cours d'extension universitaire articulé entre le réseau de santé mentale et le service de psychologie. Nous recherchons la relation de *lalangue* avec la musique et nous établissons leurs contributions à la clinique de l'autisme. Pour cela, une lecture de textes dans les domaines de la psychanalyse et de la musique a été réalisée. Comme matériel à explorer nous avons utilisé les récits d'expérience de professionnels et le travail au sein du groupe d'extension. La relation de *lalangue* avec la musique est présentée à partir de la considération de jeux rythmiques basés sur le concept de présence et absence du son au cours du temps, apportant des éléments marquants à la propre constitution du participant, en nous plaçant devant une diachronie également présente dans *lalangue*. A partir de cela, nous pouvons établir de quel façon l'étude de *lalangue* peut nous aider dans la compréhension de la relation primordiale du sujet avec l'Autre, surtout chez l'autiste.

**Mots-clés:** *lalangue*, musique, autisme, psychanalyse.

### **La dimensión musical de lalangue y sus efectos en la práctica con niños autistas**

**Resumen:** Este artículo es el resultado de una experiencia con autistas en un curso de extensión universitaria, articulado a la red de salud mental y a un servicio de psicología. Se investiga la relación de *lalangue* con la música y se establecen sus contribuciones a la clínica del autismo. Para ello, se realizó la lectura de textos en los ámbitos del psicoanálisis y de la música. Como material explorado, se utilizaron relatos de experiencias de profesionales y el trabajo en el grupo de extensión. La relación de *lalangue* con la música se presenta a partir de la consideración de juegos rítmicos de presencia y ausencia del sonido en el transcurso del tiempo, que aportan elementos notables a la propia constitución del sujeto, situándonos ante una diacronía también presente en *lalangue*. Lo que nos permite analizar la manera en que el estudio de ese concepto puede ayudarnos a comprender la relación primordial del sujeto con el Otro, especialmente en el autismo.

**Palabras clave:** *lalangue*, música, autismo, psicoanálisis.

## **References**

- Bastos, A., & Freire, A. B. (2006). Sobre o conceito de alíngua: elementos para a psicanálise aplicada ao autismo e às psicoses. In A. Bastos (Org.), *Psicanalisar hoje* (pp. 107-122). Rio de Janeiro: Contra Capa.
- Bezerra, D. S. (2013). *O lugar da clínica na Reforma Psiquiátrica Brasileira: política e psicanálise oito anos após a Lei 10.216*. Curitiba: CRV.
- Catão, I., & Vivès, J-M. (2011). Sobre a escola do sujeito autista: voz e autismo. *Estudos de Psicanálise*, (36), 83-92. Recuperado de <https://goo.gl/Ks1eYD>.
- Danhauser, A. (1996). *Théorie de la musique*. Paris: Lemoine.
- Didier-Weill, A. (1998). *Lacan e a clínica psicanalítica*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Contra Capa.



- Didier-Weill, A. (1999). *Invocações: Dionísio, Moisés, São Paulo e Freud*. Rio de Janeiro: Companhia de Freud.
- Firgeman, D., & Ramos, C. (2009). Lalingua nos seminários, conferências e escritos de Jacques Lacan. *STYLUS*, (19). Recuperado de <https://goo.gl/hptgti>
- Fleishmann, C. (2012). *Dayse Alves Barbosa*. 9'59". YouTube. Recuperado de <https://goo.gl/kwq5eA>
- Freud, S. (2006). Más allá del principio de placer. In *Obras completas* (Vol. 18, pp. 1-62). Buenos Aires: Amorrortu. (Trabalho original publicado em 1920)
- Freud, S. (2007). A negativa. In *Edição standard brasileira das obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud: Primeiras publicações psicanalíticas – 1893-1899* (L. A. Hanns, trad., Vol. 3, pp. 145-158). Rio de Janeiro: Imago. (Trabalho original publicado em 1925)
- Freud, S. (2016). *A interpretação dos sonhos*. (R. Zwick, trad.). Porto Alegre: L&PM. (Trabalho original publicado em 1900)
- Furtado, L. A., & Vieira, C. A. (2016). Observações Iniciais sobre o caso Dick e Lalingua. In *IV Jornada de Psicanálise com Crianças*. Búzios, RJ, Campo Lacaniano.
- Henry, F. (2003). Lalingua de la transferencia en las psicosis. In J. A. Miller, *La psicosis ordinaria* (pp. 131-158). Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Klein, M. (1996). A importância da formação de símbolos no desenvolvimento do ego. In M. Klein, *Amor, culpa e reparação e outros trabalhos* (A. Cardoso, trad., pp. 249-264). Rio de Janeiro: Imago. (Trabalho original publicado em 1930)
- Lacan, J. (1974). Conferência Alla Scuola Freudiana. In *Centro Cultural Francês*, em 30 de março de 1974. Recuperado de <https://goo.gl/N1VFB6>
- Lacan, J. (1975). *Conferencias y Charlas em Universidades Norteamericanas*. Recuperado de <https://goo.gl/vLS1fF>
- Lacan, J. (1979). *O seminário, livro 1: os escritos técnicos de Freud*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1953-1954)
- Lacan, J. (1985a). *O seminário, livro 11: os quatro conceitos fundamentais da psicanálise*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1964)
- Lacan, J. (1985b). *O seminário, livro 20: mais, ainda*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1972-1973)
- Lacan, J. (1991a). Conferência de Ginebra sobre el sintoma. In J. Lacan, *Intervenciones y textos* (Vol. 2 pp. 115-144). Buenos Aires: Ediciones Manantial. (Trabalho original publicado em 1975).
- Lacan, J. (1991b). La tercera. In J. Lacan, *Intervenciones y textos* (Vol. 2, pp.73-108). Buenos Aires: Ediciones Manantial. (Trabalho original publicado em 1974)
- Lacan, J. (1995). *O seminário, livro 4: a relação de objeto*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1956-1957)
- Lacan, J. (1997). *O saber do psicanalista: seminário*. Recife: Centro de Estudos Freudianos de Recife. (Trabalho original publicado em 1971-1972).
- Lacan, J. (1998). Posição do Inconsciente no congresso de Bonneval. In *Escritos* (pp. 843-865). Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1960)
- Lacan, J. (2003). O Aturdido. In *Outros escritos* (pp. 448-497). Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1972)
- Lima, C. M., & Poli, M. C. (2012). Música e um pouco de silêncio: da voz ao sujeito. *Ágora: Estudos em Teoria Psicanalítica*, 15, 371-387. doi: 10.1590/S1516-14982012000300002
- Lima, F. M. S. (2009). *Sobre um tratamento psicanalítico da psicose na clínica institucional* (Dissertação de Mestrado). Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicanálise, Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.
- Miller, J-A. (1998). O Monólogo da Apparola. *Opção Lacaniana*, 23(10), 68-76.
- Monteiro, K. A. C. (2011). *O tratamento do gozo no autismo: clínica psicanalítica e objetos autísticos* (Dissertação de Mestrado). Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicanálise, Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.
- Nasio, J. D. (2001). *Os grandes casos de psicose*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- Quinet, A. (2012). Psicanálise e música: reflexões sobre o inconsciente equívoco. *Música e Linguagem*, 1(1), 1-14. Recuperado de <https://goo.gl/X15B84>
- Sacks, O. (2007). *Alucinações musicais*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Santos, T. C. (2006). *Sinthoma: corpo e laço social*. Rio de Janeiro: Sephora/UFRJ.
- Vivés, J-M. (2009). A pulsão invocante e os destinos da voz. *Psicanálise & Barroco*, 7(1), 186-202. Recuperado de <https://goo.gl/xK449m>
- Wisnik, J. M. (1999). *O som e o sentido: uma outra história das músicas*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Received: 02/22/2016  
Approved: 05/08/2017