

# COLLABORATIVE AND INDIVIDUAL WRITING IN A CLASSROOM: AN ANALYSIS OF TEXTS WRITTEN BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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- **ABSTRACT:** Collaborative writing for classroom dyads is a didactic situation that places students dialoguing to build a single text through negotiation, unlike individual writing, where one usually writes alone and in silence. Affiliated to the studies proposed by Textual Genetics based on an enunciative approach, the objective of this work was to develop a comparative study with the purpose of highlighting the advantages and / or disadvantages of writing collaboratively. Three categories served as analytical parameters: A - textual extension, measured by the number of words; B - the incidence of orthographic errors; C) the number of erasures. The study sample was defined by convenience and comprises 8 manuscripts, 4 of which are individually produced and 4 which are produced in pairs. The students are in the 2nd year of elementary school in Brazil, with ages between 7 and 8 years. Data were collected respecting the ecological conditions of the school context. Analyses have shown that, collaboratively, students write, on average, texts 34% longer than individually, producing 170% more erasures and 10% more errors than in the individual format.
- **KEYWORDS:** Interaction. School manuscript. Errors. Erasure.

## Introduction

Collaborative writing (DAIUTE; DALTON, 1993; VASS *et al.*, 2008; WIGGLESWORTH; STORCH, 2009), conversational writing (APOTHELOZ, 2001, 2005; GAULMYN; BOUCHARD; RABATEL, 2001; CAMPS *et al.*, 2001) or cooperative writing (BRASSAC, 2001) is a situation in which two or more participants assume the task of writing a single text jointly through dialog. For Gaulmyn, Bouchard and Rabatel (2001, p. 09), the collaborative writing situations, also called “conversational writing” are privileged situations when both the writing coming forth from orality, as well as orality creating writing are observed. Although these authors relate that there is a growing interest of research toward the textual genesis, Gaulmyn mentions that these

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“oral-graphic” situations are still often ignored by researchers, since “[...] studies on the oral fall on talks without writing and reading activities and studies on written texts fall on the finished products and not on the process of their production.” (GAULMYN, BOUCHARD; RABATEL, 2001, p. 31)<sup>1</sup>.

The research herein proposed brings peculiarities that make it difficult to find other jobs through similar parameters: it has to do with analyzing the *writing process* of students newly literate, aged between 7 and 8 years, writing collaboratively. Given the scarcity of studies<sup>2</sup> that have similar configuration, it was necessary to work not only in the field of linguistic diversity, but also in Cognitive Psychology and Didactics of written language, expecting that the results obtained by such studies allow us to move forward in our own reflections, from the linguistic diversity. As we shall see, such work exposes investigations in different contexts and with different types of subject, but they all have one thing in common: they analyze the advantages and/or disadvantages of collaborative writing.

Therefore, some concepts proposed by the Textual Genetics were mobilized, which consider the modern manuscript its object of study and memory location of works *in status nascendi*. Arising out of this concept, the *school manuscript*<sup>3</sup> is the result of a writing process that shows the intensity of the enunciative conflicts that will, little by little, structure a text until it is “finished”. Our experience, upon observing how the successive returns are set on the writing text, returns which are materialized in the form of erasures, allow us to say that writing can only be constructed deconstructing it.

Thus, another concept on Textual Genetics and also to our studies is the erasure. It affects a segment already registered by the recognition of “problems to be solved.” Upon being understood in the process, the heuristic statute of erasure is enhanced, and it allows us to investigate moments of student’s reflection about writing in course. Thus, the erasure is a fundamental tool for one who writes, an “[...] intellectual operation that may have been preceded, in just a few seconds of reflection, for a considerable number of verbal-mental formations.” (BIASI, 1996, p. 06).

The possibility of knowing what the student thinks about what he or she writes is only possible by the dialogic dimension inherent in the collaborative writing process, which exposes the points of tension and the oral erasures. Thus, the concept of dialog which underlies our work is the one proposed by Benveniste. For this author, intersubjectivity is constitutive of the language and the reversibility between announcer and receptor, array of dialog:

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<sup>1</sup> “[...] os estudos sobre o oral recaem sobre conversações sem atividades de escrita-leitura e os estudos sobre textos escritos recaem sobre os produtos acabados e não sobre o processo de sua produção.”

<sup>2</sup> A fact that was also observed by Wigglesworth and Storch (2012, p. 364), when they say that “[...] while the use of work in pairs or small groups in the classroom [...] have been extensively studied and their benefits well documented, there are few studies that documented the benefits of collaboration in written work.” Investigations on collaborative writing (or cooperative writing) based on wikispaces, chats or other media that allow interaction on the Web are, however, fairly common.

<sup>3</sup> See Calil (2008).

This dialog condition is that it is constitutive of the person, because it implies reciprocity - I become you in the allocution of which in turn is designated by me. [...] The language is only possible because each speaker presents himself or herself as a subject, referring to himself or herself as I in his or her speech. Therefore, this I proposes another person, that, although outside me, becomes my eco - to which I say you and that tells me you. (BENVENISTE, 1991, p. 286, author's italic)<sup>4</sup>.

In this enunciative framework, the orality instantiates the language, linking the announcer and the receptor in a game marked by intersubjective relations, that act producing senses in discourse, where 'I' and 'You' provide and structure the dialog. Benveniste's studies provide us with interesting subsidies in order to understand the didactic-diplographic situation in which the students are (discussing and writing collaboratively a same text), the trading of positions and the attempts to influence one another through the most diverse strategies.

After this brief introduction, this article follows with: an exhibition of the most relevant studies on collaborative writing, whose results are, somehow, relevant to this work; a detailed presentation of the methodology by which the data were collected, and this designed study; a discussion of the results obtained through qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, followed by the main conclusions.

### **Collaborative writing: a dialogal situation**

In situations of collaborative writing, the presence of another person can stimulate a reflection process on the language, even more intense than when the writing is carried out individually. This is because the subject is taken to write about his or her own questions and also about the partner's questions (FELIPETO, 2015), who need to formulate a response. The collaborative format favors an explanation of knowledge, since the interaction demands a negotiation and resolution of specific problems that arise during the writing. From the didactic-methodological point of view (which will be described in the following section), the collaborative didactic textual production (writing a single text in pairs) allows us to have access to what the students think while writing, from the dialog established by the students.

The work developed by Camps *et al.* (2001) aimed at understanding the processes of development and learning the language situation with adolescent students attending school. The situation of the *school's* collaborative writing allows us to observe the

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<sup>4</sup> “Essa condição de diálogo é que é constitutiva da pessoa, pois implica em reciprocidade – que eu me torne tu na alocução daquele que por sua vez se designa por eu. [...] A linguagem só é possível porque cada locutor se apresenta como sujeito, remetendo a ele mesmo como eu no seu discurso. Por isso, o eu propõe outra pessoa, aquela que, sendo embora exterior a mim, torna-se o meu eco – ao qual digo tu e o que me diz tu.” (BENVENISTE, 1991, p. 286, grifo do autor).

characteristics of the writing learning process and the strategies used by the students in the problems resolution that appear in several levels and in various moments of the process. According to the authors,

Talking to write represents a situation different from that which is established between two interlocutors in a conversation, it is a situation of ‘conversational essay’ [...] that defines a contract and requires participants to meet a certain goal. (CAMPS, *et al.*, 2001, p. 295)<sup>5</sup>.

The reformulation, which is characterized by a return of the writer on the writing, gains a contour treatment when in a situation of collaborative writing and is often accompanied by statements which display the activities of reflection on the language. In group situations, it constitutes a kind of “oral draft” and is the expression of a cumulative process from which the text arises. Thus, the reformulation is a dialogic phenomenon that brings into the light the metalinguistic activities of the involved, aiming mechanisms of textual cohesion, adequacy and regulatory correction.

Apothéloz (2005) investigated the techniques used by two subjects writing collaboratively aiming textual progression. More precisely, his or her interest resided in knowing how the subject coordinates his or her attention and how to make the text progress conversationally. The author has analyzed an audio *corpus* from two college students, non-francophone at advanced level, who had the task to write together an argumentative text about the relevance of “homework”.

The author asserts that the effective registration of what is being oralized aims to delete the assignment of formulation to only one of the co-writers, so that the act of writing has a public official character. As a result, the one who is in possession of the pen holds a controlling power and induces a system of complementary roles: “[...] the writer controlling and officializing a result and his or her companion is instructed to initiate new propositions and, possibly, to dictate them.” (APOTHÉLOZ, 2005, p. 172)<sup>6</sup>.

Apothéloz points out some of the prosodic characteristics of conversational writing, such as the deceleration of the utterance, with a tendency to highlight the phrases, which gives an analytical dimension to what is being said. The pace, slower, allows the companion to take turns and may co-elaborate. During the conversational interaction, a fragment is placed in the scene by one of the students as a suggestion, “[...] waiting for an approval or a counter-suggestion; additionally, expressing a disagreement regarding the proposition previously made, or, on the contrary, a rectification.” (APOTHÉLOZ,

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<sup>5</sup> “Falar para escrever representa uma situação diferente daquela que se estabelece entre dois interlocutores em uma situação de conversação, é uma situação de ‘redação conversacional’ [...] que define um contrato e obriga os participantes a cumprir um objetivo determinado.” (CAMPS, *et al.*, 2001, p. 295).

<sup>6</sup> “[...] o escritor controlando e oficializando um resultado e seu companheiro se encarregando de iniciar novas proposições e, eventualmente, de ditá-las.” (APOTHÉLOZ, 2005, p. 172).

2001, p. 53-54)<sup>7</sup>. This “disagreement” that the researcher talks about is also mentioned by Daiute and Dalton in several of their studies, such as that which gives rise to a “cognitive conflict”, which is essential to the collaborative writing process.

The role of collaboration among peers in the development of literacy is the object of study of Daiute and Dalton (1993). Following the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, the authors investigated fourteen children from seven to nine years old in an urban classroom in the northeastern United States, from low income families, and analyzed the impact of collaboration in their abilities to write stories. The students used a computer word processor to write four stories individually and three stories in collaboration with a partner during a period of three months. The authors observed that even children with minimum abilities to write stories transferred the basic aspects of the story structure to each other.

In a previous study, Daiute and Dalton (1989) showed that, upon collaborating on writing tasks, students will examine their own knowledge and beliefs, by requiring that each one repeats, clarifies, expands and justifies their proposals and assessments of text strings. In addition, when writing together, they play with the language, with concepts and with each other. Through this game, novice writers writing in pairs exchange, examine and expand their ideas, helping each other spontaneously. This form of writing is effective to the extent that leads students to explicit explanations about their strategies for planning and reviewing.

Another important factor in the collaboration between pairs is the cognitive conflict - disagree, argue, contest (DAIUTE; DALTON, 1989, 1993) - in the knowledge construction. According to the authors, “[...] when children disagree, they examine their own thoughts, as well as those of others, and, therefore, are more prone to clarify, refine and expand their thinking than when they work without questioning.” (DAIUTE; DALTON, 1993, p. 286)<sup>8</sup>. Listening to a different point of view to a problem that needs to be shared forces children to contrast it with their own point of view.

Wigglesworth & Storch (2012) analyzed the results of some studies that demonstrate the benefits of collaboration in the work of writing and as the writers deal with *feedback* in writing. Aimed at the learning of a second language and assuming a sociocultural theoretical perspective, the authors suggest that the collaborative writing allows students to learn better due to the discussion that occurs around the writing, including a variety of acts of interaction through speech, such as discrepancies, agreements, explanations, etc., in which they concentrate on specific aspects of the language.

Storch (2005) sought to investigate the nature of collaborative writing in students, starting with a socio-constructivist view of the teaching-learning process. The author points out some studies that highlight the positive aspects of this methodology of

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<sup>7</sup> “[...] à espera de uma homologação ou uma contra-sugestão; adicionalmente, exprimindo um desacordo com relação a uma proposição anteriormente feita, ou, ao contrário, uma retificação.” (APOTHÉLOZ, 2001, p.53-54).

<sup>8</sup> “[...] quando as crianças discordam, elas examinam seus próprios pensamentos, bem como os de outros, e, portanto, são mais propensas a esclarecer, refinar e expandir o seu pensamento do que quando elas trabalham sem questionar.” (DAIUTE; DALTON, 1993, p. 286).

working with the writing. Among them, Ede and Lunsford (1990), for example, found that the collaborative writing promotes in the students a sense of ownership and encourages them to contribute more effectively in decisions about all aspects that involve writing (content, structure and language). Whereas the research carried out by Higgins, Flower & Petraglia (1992) and Keys (1994) showed that collaborative writing is a mean of promoting reflexive thinking, especially if learners are engaged in explaining and defending their ideas for their partners.

Thus, inserted in this context, the study of Storch was developed in a class of English as a foreign language, with twenty-three students at an intermediate level of proficiency (ESL 1). The participants were all adults and university students and had the option to perform the activity in pairs or individually, and students who chose to do in pairs had their conversations recorded on audio during the activity. Out of the twenty-three students, eighteen chose to do it in pairs and five did the activity alone. The activity consisted of producing a small text (one or two paragraphs) related to a chart that displays proficiency grades in two distinct groups.

The collected data were analyzed using as criteria, fluency, accuracy and complexity. The results showed that the time spent by the pairs to complete the task (22 minutes) was higher than the time spent by students who performed the activity individually (10-15 minutes). The texts produced by dyads are smaller in relation to the other students, however, regarding accuracy and complexity, the dyads had a better result, with more precise texts grammatically, linguistically more complex and more concise. For Storch, pair work provides opportunities for apprentices, as co-construct, to share their linguistic resources, and thus compose more linguistically complex and grammatically accurate texts. Pairs can also help each other with explanations and guarantees (STORCH, 2005).

In relation to the writing process, the study showed that, in opportunities for interaction, students discuss about different aspects of writing. Another particular outcome to the collaborative writing is that it encourages students to generate new ideas and expose different points of view. In addition, students are more receptive to suggestions and feedback from their peers, teachers and more experienced writers, for example.

Also based on the sociocultural theory, Vass *et al.* (2008) described the ways in which the collaboration between symmetrical pairs can stimulate activities of creative writing in the classroom. The study, developed in England, was based on longitudinal observations of activities in classrooms with children aged from seven to nine years old. Collaborative activities were observed and recorded using audio and video equipment in their literacy classroom, covering thirteen pairs, who participated in the activity twice to four times each.

The objective was to understand and describe ways in which the collaboration among colleagues can stimulate activities of creative writing in the classroom, through the significance of emotions over the episodes and their confidence in the collaborative support. According to the authors, the expression of emotions, the simultaneous and overlapping conversations, the playful games, work as a generator of creative thinking,

supporting together free association. However, the role of emotion is not only restricted to the associative process of creative content generation, but it was seen as a general characteristic of all the stages involved in the composition of the creative text.

Of the works exposed above, only two have focused on the collaborative writing with children from 7 to 9 years, as is our case. Of these, Daiute and Dalton (1989) draw attention to the fact that, when in a collaborative situation and faced with a cognitive conflict, students need to clarify their proposals for change, arguing and questioning. Vass *et al.* (2008), in turn, highlight the simultaneous and overlapping conversations, besides the playful games which act as textual creativity generators. The situations described above are absent from the individual writing and occupy a part of the writing process, which led us to investigate the issue of textual extension. The studies of Storch (2005) pointed to the fact that texts written collaboratively are smaller than the written individually, but her study was conducted with adults. The author observed, however, that, although the texts are smaller, they presented greater grammatical accuracy. Knowing that the reformulation is a process that involves both the recognition of a “mistake” and its deletion, through erasures, we also proposed to check in that situation, either individually or collaboratively, if more (or fewer) errors and erasures are produced.

In the section that follows, we described the didactic-methodological procedures by which our study was carried out.

## **Methodology**

For a period of three months (April to June 2012) a didactic and research project was implemented titled “Tales of the how and the why” into two elementary school sophomore classes in a private school in Maceió - AL and students, at that time, were seven years old.

In the course of the project, several short origin stories were read and interpreted in the classroom, and, after this phase, the students were asked to produce tales of origin, individually and in pairs, defined by affinity, i.e., we let the children choose their own peers. The writings were, in general, once a week in the morning. 13 proposals were carried out, both from titles suggested by the researchers, and from free themes, as well as characters suggested by the teacher and also by the students. Two individual writings were performed, one at the beginning and one at the end of the project, one collective and ten collaborative writing.

During one of the Portuguese classes of the week, students knew that they had from 08:00 to 09:30 a.m. to write their story. Therefore, the same time was given to both the individual writing as for collaborative writing and, in general, in both situations, the students took around 50 to 60 minutes to complete their texts.

The study design involved the individual records of four students (who also formed the dyads) performed at the beginning and the end of the project and also four

carried out by these same students, but collaboratively, totaling twelve manuscripts. Thus, the study sample was defined by convenience and comprises the total twelve manuscripts, being eight produced individually and four produced in pairs. In the latter format, students combined and wrote together the same school manuscript, alternating the pen possession, so that both had the same opportunities to serve as “writer” and as DNTE “the one who dictates “, or, as suggested by Apothéloz (2005), one controlling and officializing what goes to the paper and the other is instructed to start or remember the propositions previously combined. It is worth remembering that the person who dictates is also in charge of the “reader” role of what goes to the paper. As the process is quite dynamic, it is not uncommon that students of this age (7-9 years) exchange roles during the task execution.

The table below summarizes the format of the writing sessions, the title of the stories, the subjects involved and the date when they occurred.

**Table 1** – Data characteristics

Date	Formation	Student	Title
04.11.12	Individual	C	How do birds fly?
04.11.12	Individual	I	Why does the sun shine?
04.11.12	Individual	M	The Ladybug and the ant
04.11.12	Individual	S	Why doesn't the elephant have friends?
04.20.12	Pair	C and I	How were the environment and animals created?
04.20.12	Pair	S and M	Why does the giraffe have a long neck?
06.13.12	Pair	I and C	Why do the fish live in the sea, river and lakes?
06.13.12	Pair	M and S	Why does the sun shine?
06.18.12	Individual	C	Why does the hedgehog have thorns?
06.18.12	Individual	I	Why doesn't the crab have a head?
06.18.12	Individual	M	Why does the monkey live on trees?
06.18.12	Individual	S	Why does the dragon breath fire?
C and I: boys - M and S: Girls			

**Source:** Author's elaboration with data from the Laboratório do Manuscrito escolar, 2017.

Initially, the task was presented to the students and it was defined who would be responsible for writing and who would be responsible for “remembering” what had been agreed. That is why, according to the table above, the initials of the names alternated, as, for example: C and I/I and C. i.e., this indicates that, in the first situation, C was responsible for writing and, in the second situation, I.

In the second moment, students combined the story, and received the paper and pen when they informed the teacher that their story had already been combined. The third moment is the moment when the students reported the deal on the paper. In the fourth

moment, students re-read everything that was recorded and produced new alterations, if they deemed necessary.

Maintaining the ecological context of the classroom was crucial to the project setup, so the researchers went out of the room during the whole process. Ramos System was used for the record of each session<sup>9</sup> and the whole process was transcribed afterwards.

Three analytical categories served as a parameter, namely: a) the textual extension, measured by the number of words; b) the incidence of spelling errors; c) the number of erasures. Our goal, upon defining such categories, was to investigate the advantages and/or disadvantages of writing in collaboration, seeking answers to the questions: In which situation are longer or shorter texts produced, individually or collaboratively? In which situation are more or fewer spelling errors produced, in the presence or absence of the gaze of another peer? In that situation is there a better or a worse student's feedback on his or her text, aiming to improve it?

The option to analyze texts that were written individually at the beginning (04.11.12) and at the end of the project (06.18.12), period interspersed by collaborative writing (of which we selected two productions, 04.20.12 and 06.13.12) was with the intention of observing whether there is any difference in relation to the categories described above after students have experienced working in dyads. Median was employed in the calculation, thus avoiding a distortion caused by a value quite unusual (*outliers*)<sup>10</sup> presented by one of the subjects in one of his or her textual productions.

## Results and discussion

In order to determine whether there were identifiable differences in the texts written by students individually and in pairs, the texts were analyzed in relation to the extension, the number of spelling errors and the number of erasures. As for the extension, the count dismissed the erased words, those excluded from the text by the students. In the case of hypo- and hyper segmentations, the criterion used to count was the norm, i.e., written words as “so” (why), “suddenly” (suddenly) and “killem” (kill them) were counted as two words. On the other hand, words written as “tothe” (to the) and “directly” (directly) were counted as being a word.

For the counting of spelling errors words in disagreement with the orthographic system of Brazilian Portuguese were considered, including the lack of accentuation, mute/sound exchanges, errors by multiple representation (such as “pray” instead of “play”), etc. For this reason, we based the classification proposed by Zorzi (1998,

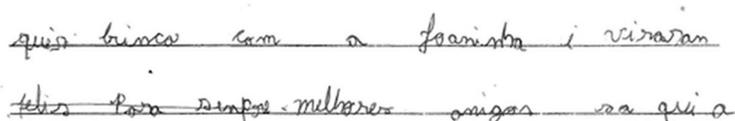
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<sup>9</sup> Ramos System is a tool for data collection developed by professor Dr. Eduardo Calil (CNPq) involving various media (cameras, microphone, recorder) which, after synchronized, facilitate and optimize with precision the process of analysis of the written productions in the classroom. It has the merit of capturing the writing process in ecological context and in real time.

<sup>10</sup> In statistics, outlier value is a very atypical one, away from the other values. Median is an excellent statistical function that can disregard these points outside of the curve that bias the sample.

2006). As for the count of erasures, some additional care was taken. Considering the excerpt below:

**Figure 1** – Excerpt from the story “The Ladybug and the ant”, written by M on 04.11.12.



**Source:** M (on 04.11.12).

**Chart 1** – Diplomatic transcription of history<sup>11</sup>

<i>wanted to play with the Ladybug and came</i>
<i>happi forever. best freinds only the</i>

**Source:** Author’s elaboration.

The dash in “happi forever” was counted as only one erasure, since it was done only once with the aim of suppressing an “idea”. With plenty of security, we can consider that “came”, by its homophony and homography with “became” triggered the sequence “happi forever”, the whole being all “lived happily ever after” quite common on the outcome of stories. However, as the tale was not in the end yet, the whole idea was erased. All the other erasures evidencing from concerns with the graphical form of a letter to “words” started and not completed, excluded, were considered.

### Comparative analysis of individual and collaborative productions

The following table contains the data obtained through the analysis of the productions written by the students. As we said, the analyzed data will be represented through the median, due to the presence of some *outliers*.

**Table 2** – Comparison of individual texts in pairs

Text	Productions	Avg_words	Avg_errors	Avg_erasures
Individual	8	80.5	9.5	4.25
Collaborative	4	108.5	10.5	11.5

**Source:** Author’s elaboration with data from the Laboratório do Manuscrito escolar, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> The diplomatic translation tries to adapt spelling mistakes Brazilian Portuguese to English.

## Textual extension as a result of the generation of ideas

The first analyzed variable in the two types of formations (individual and collaborative) was the textual extension, measured by the number of written words, being possible to identify that there is a difference between productions. The students wrote texts of longer extension in collaborative productions, around 34% more than the individual productions. The number of errors was also higher in collaborative productions, 10%, which may indicate a relationship between the two variables (number of words and number of errors). To check this possibility, the correlation among these variables was calculated and found a strong and positive correlation of  $r = 0.800$ , i.e., the number of errors is directly proportional to the number of words in most of our sample. The phenomenon is repeated in the measurement of erasures, because the collaborative productions presented about 170% more erasures than the individual productions. It was noted that the correlation between number of words and number of erasures is also strong and positive,  $r = 0.823$ .

Initially, based on what the literature points, our hypothesis was that texts written by dyads would be smaller in relation to texts written individually. The work of Storch (2005) points out that discussions on language matters occupied about 30% of the total time for writing and, furthermore, that texts produced by the subjects writing collaboratively were smaller than those who wrote individually. However, it was found that the rich discussion among students, as it can be seen in the dialog below, seems to cause a great idea generation, justifying larger texts when in a collaborative situation.

Dialog between M and S, at the time of planning for one of the stories.

After listening to the teacher saying that it would be free theme, S says:

S: (Talking with M and suggesting a title) **Why does the dragon breath fire?**

M: But there is no such thing. Ok, let's go. No, but will we not choose another one? **Why does the sun shine?**

S: There is, the drag... There is, dragon.

M: Look, what do you think? Why does the sun shine?... errrrr... **Why does the monkey only like to be on trees?** Which one?

S: **Why does the dragon breath fire?**

M: Ah! S, except that one. But **we will also have a dragon in ours.**

S: **How did the words come out?!**

M: Come on S, please! **Why does the sun shine?** It is good. Oh, so we pretend that **the dragon** had sent fire up because it ... A long time ago, the dragon did not have fire. It had gone into a volcano and opened his mouth: he was really hungry, sleepy. He opened, and the fire came and he had fire in the mouth::: had fire in the mouth.

S: You're talking about **the reason why the dragon breathes fire**, right? (after ten seconds of silence between M and S, S resumes the combination of story). Then it stopped shining and began to shine.

(Dialog 1: "Why the sun shines", *Corpus Criar & Recriar*, 2012).

**Source:** Author's elaboration with data from the Laboratório do Manuscrito escolar, 2017.

The dialog shows that, before so many different ideas, "Why does the dragon breath fire?", "Why does the sun shine?", "Why does the monkey only like to be on the tree?" and "How did the words come out?" and, faced with the fact that they need to reconcile different points of view, the students can associate<sup>12</sup> two of them, the dragon releases fire and has helped the sun to shine.

The generation of ideas seems to intensify, at least when it comes to children aged 7, writing in a collaborative situation. In this sense, this format of writing would have a fundamental importance for the practice of textual production in the classroom, since it introduces a discursive situation conducive to reception/association of ideas and knowledge to share. But, from a strictly linguistic, enunciative point of view, how does the dialogue constitute the basis of situations of collaborative writing?

Based on Benveniste's Theory of Enunciation, subjectivity is "the ability of the speaker to propose as a subject" (BENVENISTE, 1991, p. 286)<sup>13</sup> through forms that every language has, such as the personal pronouns, indicators of *deixis* and some verbs. So, "I" means the one who speaks and who, by addressing someone, constitutes, at the same time, a "you". This is the basic condition of dialog and has as characteristic the reciprocity: "I will become you in the allocution of that which in turn is designated by me" (BENVENISTE, 1991, p. 286)<sup>14</sup>. This polarity and the inseparability of subjects "I" and "you" are fundamental conditions for the existence of intersubjectivity and is what makes possible all linguistic communication.

Whereas "he" is absent from this constitutive relationship between "I" and "You", since that, for Benveniste, this is a *non-person*. The third person is a verbal form that has as its purpose to express non-person and behaves, as well, as an indication of wording about something - what is talked about or the one that speaks. In the case of collaborative writing in the classroom, it has to do with the textual object in question. Thus, it is by the enunciative void left by "you" that "I" occupies space in the enunciation and makes "he" present, introducing the world by speech.

Upon describing some prosodic characteristics of conversational writing, Apothéloz (2001) emphasizes both the deceleration of the utterance, and the slower pace, which allows the "You" to occupy its enunciative space. This possibility of "I" and "You"

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<sup>12</sup> On the associative relations, creation and its mode of operation during the process of writing in the classroom, see Calil (2016b).

<sup>13</sup> "a capacidade do locutor para se propor como sujeito". (BENVENISTE, 1991, p. 286).

<sup>14</sup> "que eu me torne tu na alocação daquele que por sua vez se designa por eu". (BENVENISTE, 1991, p. 286).

exchanging places between themselves constantly in time and instantiate themselves by a speech and not by a “he” person supports the condition of dialog that establishes in situations of collaborative writing which dyads participate.

Upon defining what the *Plan of the speech* is, Benveniste (1991, p. 267) says it has to do with:

Every enunciation that supposes a speaker and a listener and, at first, the intention of influencing, to some extent, the other. [...] Finally, all genres in which someone goes to someone, as an announcer is announced and organizes what she says in the category of person<sup>15</sup>.

As one can see, the subjectivity is inherent in the shared writing and face-to-face. These are movements in the Enunciative structure provided by collaborative writing situations that re(create) and transmit rules related to the creation and textual composition.

## Erasures and errors

In situations of collaborative writing, the erasure, oral<sup>16</sup> or written, is the means by which, before a dispute, an agreement is fulfilled. The erasure introduces a discontinuity, suspends the discursive flow, is the moment in which, in writing, the writers experience feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their own work and/or others, pointing out failures, alleged errors, so that they look over what was said or written before promoting a major rectification.

To Biasi (2010), erasure is what “cheers up”, “gives soul or life” to writing, although, paradoxically, is the beginning of its “perpetual questioning” (BIASI, 2010, p. 70)<sup>17</sup>, because it marks a reflection, the recognition of a difference between what has been entered in the text but should not be “there” and shows points of tension in the manuscript. A very complex component of writing to the author, is the erasure of a “genetic phenomenon specifically, sensitive to an environment subject to incessant and multiple metamorphoses” (BIASI, 2010, p. 76)<sup>18</sup>, since there are several functions that

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<sup>15</sup> “Toda enunciação que suponha um locutor e um ouvinte e, no primeiro, a intenção de influenciar, de algum modo, o outro. [...] enfim, todos os gêneros nos quais alguém se dirige a alguém, se enuncia como locutor e organiza aquilo que diz na categoria de pessoa.” (BENVENISTE, 1991, p. 267).

<sup>16</sup> Oral erasure, a concept developed by Calil (2016a) to take account of the specific situation of talking to write in school context is characterized by returns that occurred orally during the dialogic flow, to focus on what was, will be or not inscribed and linearized. It indicates spontaneously and unpredictably how each student changes or modifies elements to be written in the manuscript in progress. Thus, the record of oral erasures maps the genesis of the writing process in pairs.

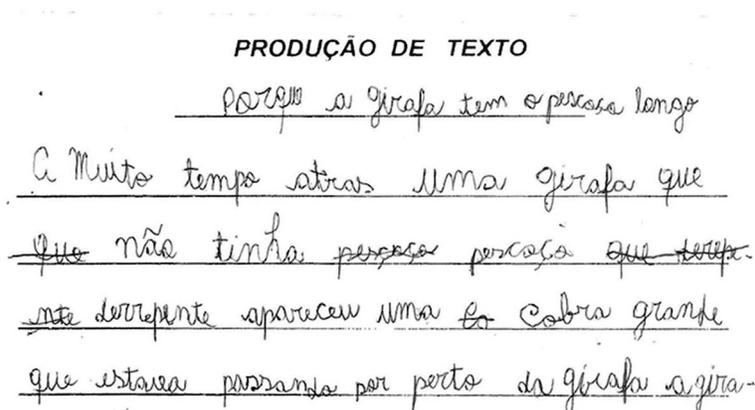
<sup>17</sup> “perpétuo questionamento”. (BIASI, 2010, p. 70).

<sup>18</sup> “[...] fenômeno especificamente genético, sensível a um ambiente submetido a incessantes e múltiplas metamorfoses.” (BIASI, 2010, p. 76).

the erasure can play in a writing process, as well as its several types. In a theoretical enunciative framework, for example, the erasure, even though it indicates an intention of erasure, establishes an enunciative act which, by its nature, is indelible.

When comparing texts written individually and in pairs, we found a number of erasures much higher in collaborative format, about 170% higher than in individual productions. The dialogs below show inexistent possibilities in situations of individual writing: the possibility of sharing knowledge, telling and be confronted with the gaze of another and, at the same time, needing to review/rethink their own (lack of) knowledge. Before that, we introduce the manuscript passage referring to dialog 2:

**Figure 2** – Excerpt from the story “Why does the giraffe have a long neck?”, written by S and M on 04.20.12



Source: M (on 04.20.12).

Dialog between M and S, for a re-reading moment of a passage of the story.

Students reread what is written in the manuscript. In the course of reading, S says that “there are many “that”” and suggests removing the “that” before “suddenly”. M agrees with the withdrawal:

1. S<sup>19</sup>: Let me read... (Reading) A long time ago...
2. M: (Reading) ...nec...
3. S: (Reading) ...behind a giraffe: **That had not a ne...**
4. M: (Reading) ...neck...
5. M and S: (students reading) ...that suddenly...
6. M: (Reading) ...appeared a: huge snake that was passing by close to the giraffe: but...

<sup>19</sup> When the student's name appears underlined is indicative that he is writing in that moment.

7. S: (suggests M to erasure “that”) **No. Take this “that”:: ne::ck.**

8. M: (Keeps reading) ...that suddenly...

9. S: ...that (M interrupts the reading, holding S’s hand and the students erasure [that]) neck::of: **Take this one: Gee!:: This “that” look:: There are so many, look:: “that” look::...** (S reading) a long time ago there was a giraffe that: had no neck::...

10. M: (Reading) ...su: dden...

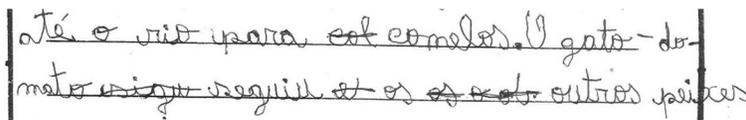
11. S: ...”that” suddenly, no (she speaks “no” shaking her head, seeming to confirm the erasure of “that”).

(Dialog 2: “Why does the giraffe have a long neck?”, *Corpus Criar & Recriar* 2012).

**Source:** Author’s elaboration with data from the Laboratório do Manuscrito escolar, 2017.

The passage of the manuscript below refers to dialog 3, which will show in the sequence:

**Figure 3** – Excerpt from the story “Why do the fish live in the sea, river and lakes?”, written by C and R on 06.13.12



**Source:** C and R (on 06.13.12).

Dialog 3:

1. I: I have a better idea. The cat followed the other fish until:::::

2. C: River... until the lake!

3. I: (Reading) the cat fo- followed:

4. C: Followed them up the river.

5. I: They followed up the river to eat them... (Re-reading) the cat... **The cat folowd::** (writing [foloed])

6. C: (interrupting). **Followed... It is FOOLLOWED** (correcting)

7. I: **Followed?**

8. C: (spelling) **This is.. This is.. .. (I erased [foloed])**

9. I: (writing [follow].) F... O...

10. C: **It is good that you remember that followed is not “foloed”-“folowd” it is it is similar to “folled”, but it is with “w”.**

11. I: Followed (showing what wrote to C) **is with “E” or “I”?**

12. C: **Followeed** (pretending to write on the table “E” with the finger) e-e, **I think that it is “e”. It is “e”** (Whispering) e, **I think that it is “e”.**

In dialogs 2 and 3 we see discussions involving textual issues and spelling, respectively. In the dialog 2, when they reread what they had written so far, S, was annoyed with the presence of the second “that” in “a giraffe that had no neck that suddenly,” suggests its erasure. It is noted that S feels more estrangement that, right after starting rereading pauses (part 3), although M continues reading normally. This pause lasts about 13 seconds, enough for S reevaluate and say, in part 7: “No. Take this “that”:: ne::ck. However, as M continues by reading the “that” (Part 8), S stops again, to say emphatically: “Take out this one here: Gee!:: this ‘that’: there are so many look:: “that” look::... She cannot explain why they need to remove the “that”, that remains there, only saying at part 9, that “there are many, look... “that” look::...

The Dialog 3 brings a recognition of C for an orthographic problem and a C’s doubt, remedied by C. In the first situation, C underlines “folloed” (for “followed”) and C stops and corrects orally (part 6) by saying “followed... It is Foolowed”. After the correction, C still makes a reflective return by saying (Part 10) that “it is good that you remember that followed is not ‘foloed’ - ‘folloed is similar, but only with “w.” Then, in part 11, C asks C if “followed” writes with “e” or “l” and C responds: Followeed (pretending to write on the table “E” with the finger) e-e, I think that it is “e”. It is “e” (Whispering) e, I think that it is “e”.

Especially in situations of collaborative writing, the writers are attentive to the choice of lexical units, their spelling, the semantic issues, punctuation, choice about which they ask themselves and ask their partner, invoking possible substitutions, putting in evidence the paradigmatic axis of language. In this sense, a greater number of erasures in the form of collaborative writing can be interpreted as the result of two glances, two listening, of adjustments between co-enunciators during the writing process. The enunciator, sensing the need to avoid or to specify, and formal issues that disturb his or her saying/writing, recognizes that there is a lack: lack of sense, an imperfection on the trace, spelling mistake, punctuation, etc., and that is when the erasure enters, as an essential element of any writing.

To Fabre (1990), author of the first important survey on traces left in manuscripts by students between 6 and 10 years, all erasure is a manifestation of meta discursive activity of the subject, in the sense that the erasure implies a job on the speech, producing a change that leaves the traces of this reflection.

Thus, erasure is characterized by being a strictly reflective form, which corresponds to the recognition of a (possible) error by the student. The texts produced by students newly literate, novice writers, have some fundamental characteristics: are unpredictable and very heterogeneous. The resulting errors are interpreted in the perspective adopted here, as a result of relationships produced by the proper functioning of the language at any given moment of its path as a writer. Our data showed that, just as well as the erasures, the number of errors was also higher in collaborative productions, 10%, indicating a directly proportional relationship to the textual extension in most of our sample.

The recognition of the (likely) error, by the student, passes through the estrangement (FELIPETO, 2008), the moment in which the subjects listen to a difference in his or

her writing/speaking. This is the moment in which hesitations and corrections may happen, emerging, then, in the marks of this process, the erasures. It is advisable to point that not always the “correction” brings up “success”. The most important thing at the moment is the student’s displacement, the moment in which he or she begins to reflect on his or her own writing and/or others.

In a situation of interaction, as is the case of collaborative writing, many changes occur in response to questions from the other partner-collaborator, pointing to the role and importance of the collaborative writing, unlike what happens in the individual writing: the fact that, in writing, the student is faced with written forms that differ from his or her, that leads to interrogating and questioning the other.

## Conclusion

The study, by analyzing quantitatively the product data, through the analysis of what occurs in the process, brought interesting findings to the extent that focused on individual and collaborative productions. It showed that newly literate students, in a collaborative situation, wrote 34% more than in individual situation, in contrast with the studies of Storch (2005). This leads us to think that the dialog, upon occupying part of the time that it would *a priori*, be intended for writing, can also print a greater productivity and creativity generating of new conflicts, characters, events. The overlays of speech and interruptions, described by Vass *et al.* (2008) as highly relevant in the context of collaborative creative writing seem to instigate the free association and the generation of ideas and lead students newly-literate, novice writers, to produce more extensive texts collaboratively than individually.

The big difference of occurrences of erasures written in two formats, about 170% more than in collaborative format, can be seen from the point of view of didactics, as a measure to evaluate the quality of interaction and the students’ learning, although only a study about what erasures fall on may show more certainly that learning is in progress at any given time. We said that this result with respect to the erasure was already expected, since writing in pairs might enhance and favor the irruption of metalinguistic reflections. As Calil (2016, p. 550) points out,

The intersubjective nature of writing in pairs gains prominence when a speaker notes differences in the way of thinking and writing of his or her interlocutor. To “convince” the other about the need to write x or y, it is necessary to submit arguments. These arguments may contain important metalinguistic reflections and, at the same time, explain how they think when proposing alterations to what will be written or for what has already been written<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> “O caráter intersubjetivo da escrita a dois ganha relevo quando um locutor observa diferenças no modo de pensar e de escrever de seu interlocutor. Para “convencer” o outro sobre a necessidade de se escrever x ou y, é necessário apresentar argumentos. Estes argumentos podem conter importantes reflexões metalinguísticas e, ao mesmo tempo,

Thus, the tasks of collaborative writing can be favorable to learning because they encourage students to reflect about the language, as they need to agree not only on *what to say*, but also on *how to say*. In addition, as stated by Dobao and Blum (2013), upon gathering their individual resources, they are able to achieve a level of performance that is beyond the level of individual competence and that is what seems to indicate the analysis that we undertook on the orthographic errors. They show the occurrence of a smaller number of spelling errors in the 2nd individual writing, after two situations of collaborative writing. A broader investigation to determine whether the writing in pairs produces immediate benefits, in subsequent individual writing, however, would be necessary.

Further studies will have as a goal to test a larger group of subjects, observing how the generation of ideas and the role of the other as a collaborator in the direction of gazing, and questioning interfere in what the partner writes.

FELIPETO, S. Escrita colaborativa e individual em sala de aula: uma análise de textos escritos por alunos do Ensino Fundamental. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v. 63, n.1, p.141-160, 2019.

- *RESUMO: A escrita colaborativa por díades em sala de aula é uma situação didática que coloca alunos dialogando para construir um único texto, ao contrário da escrita individual, em que normalmente se escreve sozinho e em silêncio. Filiado à Genética Textual, a partir de uma abordagem enunciativa, este trabalho desenvolveu um estudo comparativo com o objetivo de evidenciar as vantagens e/ou desvantagens da escrita em colaboração. Três categorias serviram de parâmetro analítico: a) a extensão textual, medida através do número de palavras; b) a incidência de erros ortográficos; c) o número de rasuras. A amostra do estudo foi definida por conveniência e compreende 8 manuscritos, sendo 4 produzidos individualmente e 4 produzidos em duplas. Os alunos são do 2o ano do ensino fundamental, com idades entre 7 e 8 anos. Os dados foram coletados durante o desenvolvimento de um projeto didático intitulado “Contos do como e do porquê” no ano de 2012 em uma escola privada, respeitando as condições ecológicas do contexto escolar. As análises mostraram que, colaborativamente, os alunos escreveram, em média, textos 34% mais longos do que individualmente, produziram 170% a mais de rasuras e 10% a mais de erros que no formato individual.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Interação. Manuscrito escolar. Erros. Rasuras.*

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explicitar o modo como pensam quando propõem alterações para o que será escrito ou para o que já foi escrito.” (CALIL, 2016, p. 550).

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