

The Use of Punctuation by Primary School Students Writing Texts Collaboratively: A Franco-Brazilian Comparative Study

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Abstract : This work aims to analyze and compare the punctuation marks (PM) in school texts of Brazilian and French students and the comments on these PM made spontaneously by the students during the ongoing text. Assuming textual genetics as an investigative field within a dialogical and enunciative approach, we defined a common methodological design in two 1st year classrooms (7 years old) of the primary school, one classroom in Brazil (Maceio) and the other one in France (Paris). Through a multimodal capture system of writing processes in real time and space (Ramos System), we recorded the collaborative writing proposal in dyads in each of the classrooms. This system preserves the classroom's ecological characteristics and provides a video recording synchronized with dialogues, gestures and facial expressions of the students, the stroke of the pen's ink on the sheet of paper and the movement of the teacher and students in the classroom. The multimodal register of the writing process allowed access to the text in progress and the comments made by the students on what was being written. In each proposed text production, teachers organized their students in dyads and requested that they should talk, combine and write a fictional narrative. We selected a Dyad of Brazilian students (BD) and another Dyad of French students (FD) and we have filmed 6 proposals for each of the dyads. The proposals were collected during the 2nd Term of 2013 (Brazil) and 2014 (France). In 6 texts written by the BD there were identified 39 PMs and 825 written words (on average, a PM every 23 words): Of these 39 PMs, 27 were highlighted orally and commented by either student. In the texts written by the FD there were identified 48 PMs and 258 written words (on average, 1 PM every 5 words): Of these 48 PM, 39 were commented by the French students. Unlike what the studies on punctuation acquisition point out, the PM that occurred the most were hyphens (BD) and commas (FD). Despite the significant difference between the types and quantities of PM in the written texts, the recognition of the need for writing PM in the text in progress and the comments have some common characteristics: i) the writing of the PM was not anticipated in relation to the text in progress, then they were added after the end of a sentence or after the finished text itself; ii) the need to add punctuation marks in the text came after one of the students had 'remembered' that a particular sign was needed; iii) most of the PM inscribed were not related to their linguistic functions, but the graphic-visual feature of the text; iv) the comments justify or explain the PM, indicating metalinguistic reflections made by the students. Our results indicate how the comments of the BD and FD express the dialogic and subjective nature of knowledge acquisition. Our study suggests that the initial learning of PM depends more on its graphic features and interactional conditions than on its linguistic functions.

Keywords : collaborative writing, erasure, graphic marks, learning, metalinguistic awareness, textual genesis

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