

Alina Galvão Spinillo  
Carmen Sotomayor *Editors*

# Development of Writing Skills in Children in Diverse Cultural Contexts

Contributions to Teaching and Learning

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*Editors*

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# Chapter 7

## Grammatical Choices and Narrative Quality in the Collaborative Writing of Primary School Students



Inês Cardoso, Rosa Lúcia Coimbra, Eduardo Calil, Luciana Graça, and Luísa Álvares Pereira

### 7.1 Introduction

Collaborative writing has been experienced and pointed out as a strong pedagogical tool leading to dialogues when students make their grammar and text choices explicit, discuss and refine their linguistic knowledge within the process. When put into place at an early age, advantages shall increase in what concerns metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of writing.

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In the present study, we are then putting together different axes related to grammar and writing learning and teaching. Although no one would doubt that a better text would rely on a wider grammar knowledge and performance, the relation between these language domains isn't still clear until today in what concerns language teaching. Therefore, we bring to our reflection not only the value of metalinguistic knowledge but also the place it has had in our country (in the years of our data collection until today), considering the official language teaching guidelines. Not only we will consider grammar but also writing and the pedagogical relationship recommended officially.

Considering the impact of metalinguistic knowledge in the quality of writing leads us to reflect on complex parameters guiding the evaluation of a specific text, affiliated with a particular genre.

In the present study, we will be interested then in looking at the development of metalinguistic knowledge in children, by observing their writing process, as well as in assessing the quality of their writing, by observing their written products. The same students were recorded while writing stories in pairs at grades 2 and 4, in the classroom. Data were collected through a multimodal capture system – the Ramos system (Calil, 2020) – which provides us with information of the writing process as well as the written final texts.

Data samples of this corpus have been selected to study specific dimensions, such as the elaboration of titles (Barbeiro et al., 2020), lexical density (Costa et al., 2020), the recognition of spelling mistakes (Calil & Pereira, 2018), metalinguistic categories and terms emergent in the writing/revision processes, and how these are (not) translated into textual modifications, considering the discursive or grammatical nature of the operations of language re(construction) (Barbeiro et al., 2022; Calil & Myhill, 2020).

Now our analysis is focused, on one hand, on the occurrence of metalinguistic terms during collaborative writing; on the other hand, we focused on the textual product, the stories effectively written, measuring their quality in what concerns the compositional aspects of writing narratives in the first years of schooling. Therefore, we aim to understand better the relationship between a metalinguistic reflection and the quality of the text.

As Costa and Rodrigues (2019, p. 25) state, “It thus becomes essential to conduct research in at least two fields: research on language development and research on grammar didactics”. The study presented here, following the previous ones mentioned before, is precisely trying to contribute to the field of grammar-writing articulation, by trying to apprehend the dimensions of language and texts that are the object of reflection and decision, by the same children, in two different moments of their basic schooling (grade 2 and grade 4), during the collaborative writing process of a text: Is grammatical knowledge, namely, using metalinguistic terms (MT), activated during the writing process; in relation to which domains; with what functions; and what impact will children's “grammatical dialogues” have on the quality of their texts?

We will address first the several theoretical subjects mentioned to pursue with the methodology and analysis of the data considered for this reflection, oriented to answer the mentioned questions.

## 7.2 Metalinguistic Knowledge and Metalinguistic Activity

Recent studies, from a functionalist (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1986) perspective, argue that grammar learning is related to the ability of observing, manipulating and reflecting about the written text (Chen & Jones, 2012; Fontich, 2016; Myhill, 2011). These and other studies on grammar teaching understand that explicit instruction is an essential component to highlight grammar as an object of knowledge to be analysed. This object is based on two pillars: (a) knowledge of the “grammar structure”, identifying and analysing the linguistic elements that compose it; (b) and the understanding of “grammar as choice”, which will allow the articulation of linguistic elements with the meaning effects they produce in the text. Both involve the explanation of metalinguistic knowledge, equally regarding knowledge of technical terms and their uses and functions.

These two pillars support the need for an intensification of learners’ metalinguistic activities, mediated by the teacher (Myhill et al., 2012) or favoured by collaborative work among peers (Camps et al., 2000; Gil & Bigas, 2014). These activities indicate the way in which teachers and students take the language as an object of analysis, talking about it and its functioning. In this perspective, the situation of collaborative textual production has been highlighted as a school task of great importance, as it favours students, on the one hand, to identify problems related to certain linguistic elements during the writing process and, on the other hand, to explain the way of thinking about these problems.

Camps et al. (1997) propose that these metalinguistic activities can occur without being verbalized but also can occur through utterances of nontechnical terms or utterances, in which there are explanations of technical terms. In the works of Calil (2017) and Calil and Pereira (2018), some metalinguistic activities were identified during collaborative textual production, when pairs of students from the 1st and 2nd year of primary education write a single text. These activities are associated with metalinguistic returns made by writing students when they recognize some type of graphic, linguistic or discursive problem.

Calil (2012) characterized these occurrences as “tension points” between elements to be graphed or linearized on the sheet of paper. These recognitions can produce erasures or be associated with student’s comments about these elements. Calil and Pereira (2018) show, for example, comments on the use of capital letters, when a 2nd year student is about to spell the name of the character “Branca de Neve” (“Snow White”). The writer student expresses doubts about the capital or small form of the initial letter, giving her dictating partner the opportunity to respond: “No. No. It’s capital, too.” (Calil & Pereira, 2018, p. 106). In this comment, the MT was verbalized, but no explanation was presented to support or justify her assertion. However, the comment indicates that the student has implicit knowledge about capitalization rules. Another form of occurrence of metalinguistic comments brings a greater verbalization of the student’s knowledge, however, without using MT. For example, in the comment made by a student, in response to his partner’s spontaneous question about which article to use in a character’s speech, he

says, emphasizing the indefinite article: “it was A boy. We don’t know which boy it was.” (Barbeiro et al., 2022, p. 66). This suggests that the commentary, despite not indicating the knowledge of the specific MT, explains the student’s metalinguistic knowledge about the value and the meaning effect produced by the indefinite article, thus avoiding the inscription of the definite article and, consequently, the referencing problem that the use of the definite article could produce in the sense of the text (and in the reader).

### 7.3 Teaching Writing and Grammar in Portugal: Guidelines Since 2009

In the teaching of Portuguese, one of the issues that has provoked and still raises debate is the question of the status and functions of grammatical knowledge in language learning. In the context of this study, it is about making known what objectives and functions are attributed not only to grammar but also to writing, having as reference the Portuguese Programs of Basic Education, in general, and of the 1st Cycle of the Basic Education, in particular. In this way, we seek to put into perspective the teaching of these two skills and the articulation that the programs provide. We will consider the program in force at the time our data were collected (2015 and 2017), which were the *Programas de Português do Ensino Básico* (Reis et al., 2009) and those that replaced them, in 2015: *Programa e Metas Curriculares de Português do Ensino Básico* (Buescu et al., 2015). From an accumulation of references (Costa, 2020), a reform began, in line with international guidelines, expressed in the *Perfil dos alunos à saída da escolaridade obrigatória (PA)* [Profile of students leaving compulsory education] (Martins et al., 2017), with which the *Aprendizagens Essenciais (AE)* [Essential Learning goals] later articulated, by subject and year of schooling (Direção-geral da Educação, 2018). These AE are currently the national curricular references; however, we will mention them more briefly because, at the time of the fieldwork that is important here, they had not yet been brought to existence.

In the 2009 Portuguese Programs (Reis et al., 2009), grammar appears as an autonomous competence, contrasting with the more instrumental and transversal vision of the previous programs (Ministério da Educação, 1991). This difference is not unrelated to the designation adopted in 2009 for grammar, “explicit knowledge of language” (CEL, abbreviated in Portuguese), when, in 1991, it was called “language functioning”. This conception of grammar assumed in the 2009 guidelines, following the National Curriculum for Basic Education (CNEB) of 2001 (Ministério da Educação, 2001), restores grammar as an essential competence alongside other competences, emphasizing its specificity, without disregarding its transversality already highlighted. Effectively, in this domain, it was advocated the evolution of students from the implicit knowledge that they already had about the language to an explicit knowledge, understood as “the reflected ability to systematize units, rules

and grammatical processes of the language, leading to the identification and correction of the language error” (Reis et al., 2009, p. 16). It was recognized, then, that explicit knowledge can only be based on formal instruction, implying the development of metacognitive processes. Thus, it was recommended that grammar classes create conditions for the development of such linguistic knowledge, with a progressive ability to use the language proficiently, anchored in the ability to describe and analyse its functioning:

A análise e a reflexão sobre a língua concretizam-se quer em actividades nos domínios do modo oral e do modo escrito, quer em trabalho oficinal. Trata-se, deste modo, de desenvolver a consciência linguística, no sentido de transformar o conhecimento implícito em conhecimento explícito da língua. (Reis et al., 2009, p. 23)

Our translation: *The analysis and reflection on the language take the form of oral and written activities, as well as in workshop work. It is, therefore, about developing linguistic awareness, in the sense of transforming implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge of the language.* (Reis et al., 2009, p. 23)

In terms of written communication, the 2009 Guidelines emphasize its multimodality and multifunctionality, genre and typological diversity, as well as the requirements in terms of grammatical correction and the high metacognitive management that it entails, namely, the subprocesses that lead to textual production (planning, textualization, revision). The complexity of this competence justifies the role assigned to the teacher, organizer and regulator of teaching-learning activities of writing. It is also recommended to articulate the “writing work with the different plans of the CEL” (Reis et al., 2009, p. 44), in stages that involve:

i) a observação, manipulação e comparação de dados para descobrir regularidades no funcionamento da língua; ii) a sistematização e explicitação dessas regularidades com recurso oportuno à metalinguagem e iii) a mobilização dos conhecimentos adquiridos na compreensão e produção de textos orais e escritos. (Barbeiro et al., 2022, p. 50)

Our translation:

i) the observation, manipulation, and comparison of data to discover regularities in the functioning of the language; ii) the systematization and explanation of these regularities with timely use of metalanguage and iii) the mobilization of acquired knowledge in the understanding and production of oral and written texts. (Barbeiro et al., 2022, p. 50)

Suggestions of activities for the different grammatical domains are included (Ministério da Educação, 2008); it is assumed to be essential the work in a workshop mode and a “scientific” reflection about the language, in oral and written communicative situations, emphasizing that the language regulations are at the service of communication and cannot be neglected or taught in a watertight way and focused on the memorization of concepts (Barbeiro et al., 2022).

In the 2015 Program (Buescu et al., 2015), which was in force until the end of the 2020/2021 school year, the CEL gave way to the designation of “grammar”, in a perspective that was once again more instrumental in terms of knowledge and the ability to reflection on the regularities of language, those being subsidiary to the autonomy in the use of rules in situations of oral and written comprehension and

production. It is hoped, therefore, students develop a metalinguistic awareness that will allow them for a reflective knowledge of their mother tongue (Buescu et al., 2015, p. 8).

In terms of writing, the following values are highlighted again: the transversality of linguistic correction; the different purposes attached to different genres, on which different thematic, textual and discursive developments depend, with emphasis on expository and argumentative genres; and the stages of textual production, which will open doors to reflection on the language that some programmatic documents advocate.

The current programmatic references (PA and AE) corroborate the idea of the gradual development of linguistic awareness through reflection and discovery, leading to the mastery of rules governing the various oral and written uses. They emphasize both the curricular articulation and the complementarity of domains of language use – here we are interested in writing and grammar – and the need to work each one in its specificity.

As several studies have pointed out, the main challenge seems to be precisely knowing how to teach the specific knowledge of each domain, in this case, grammar and writing, effectively articulating them (as well as other skills) (Barbeiro et al., 2022; Bulea Bronckart, 2015; Chartrand, 2017; Pereira, 2000; Rättyä et al., 2019; da Silva, 2016). Integrative didactic methodologies have recently emerged, based on classroom interaction, with the teacher being the most qualified mediator to stimulate metalinguistic discussion (Fontich, 2014; Myhill & Jones, 2015) as well as, among us, some investigation about the didactic possibilities of articulation between grammar and other domains (Costa & Batalha, 2019). For our part, we will look for the data that emerge from the collaborative writing processes of children to provide clues for the teaching of these domains.

## 7.4 Collaborative Writing

As previously mentioned, the complex nature of the writing process, as a cognitive activity, has long been indisputable, since this process does not result from the simple sequential addition of units until the final product is reached. Learning to write a coherent and effective text represents an arduous and time-consuming achievement of cognitive development, contrary to what happens with the acquisition of speech, hence the importance of adopting specific and productive paths that help the student to follow his/her path in the writing learning process. One of these paths has been, precisely, the collaborative writing – in pairs, in groups or with the entire class – which research has shown that has been very fruitful helping students identifying and correcting mistakes (Chanquoy, 2009).

Research, articulating writing with grammar, has also explored this pedagogical-didactic procedure of collaboration, analysing the way in which each writer can consciously operate these units, making strategic and appropriate choices (Myhill, 2018). Collaborative writing thus leads to a more thorough reflection, which requires

the presentation of justifications in terms of the grammar of the language and texts, leading students to a more explicit grammatical knowledge, which allows them to become more aware of the language itself (Myhill, 2018), skill which will later be accessed in other individual writing situations.

Therefore, collaborative writing represents the process that offers participants the possibility to explore, discuss, cooperate and develop learning skills (Fernández Dobao, 2012; Heidar, 2016; Noël & Robert, 2004). As Vygotsky said, social interaction precedes development, with consciousness and cognition being the final product of socialization and social behaviour. Collaborative writing is thus based on the Vygotskian idea of the vital importance of cooperation with others, so that there is an exchange of ideas and, consequently, quality learning and solid growth (Heidar, 2016). Then, collaborative writing is a way to enable access to the metalinguistic activity (Camps, 2019).

In fact, the situation of collaborative writing, in a larger or smaller group, offers unique possibilities for interaction and for the construction of knowledge – about writing, in our case. Although students, from an early age, have this ability to reflect and discuss different writing alternatives, the teacher's action can really be decisive in the development of this metalinguistic competence, stimulating and guiding the students to go further in the goal activity (Camps et al., 2000; Myhill et al., 2020).

## 7.5 Evaluating Writing Quality at School

Evaluating and pondering are everyday activities that have implications for our decisions, our view of the world and our positioning towards ourselves and the others. We constantly evaluate actions, and this includes the production of discourse, whether in the form of oral transmission or in its written form. It is in school that the process of evaluating discourse becomes even more systematic, consequential and fundamental, especially in language classes. The evaluation of the quality of the writing of a text is a complex process, not limited to the verification of the grammatical correctness of the sentences that compose it:

*A gramática pode (e provavelmente deve) ser estudada e avaliada em si mesma. Mas quando o objeto de análise é o texto, o que importa saber (compreender, saber fazer) e avaliar é o que cada estudante ou cada pessoa é capaz de fazer com os instrumentos gramaticais de que dispõe. (Coutinho, 2019, p. 116)*

Our translation:

Grammar can (and probably should) be studied and evaluated in itself. But when the object of analysis is the text, what matters to know (understand, know how to do) and evaluate is what each student or each person can do with the grammatical tools at his/her disposal. (Coutinho, 2019, p. 116)

In the teaching-learning process of writing, several possible strategies have been pointed out (e. g. Barbeiro & Pereira, 2007; Pereira & Cardoso, 2013), focusing on the multiplicity of skills required in the several stages of the construction of a good

quality written text. To this complexity, one must add the consideration of the conditions of textual elaboration, such as the objectives of the production, its implicit reader, the space of circulation of the text, the level of formality, the textual genre (Marcuschi, 2007, p. 63).

Narrative sequences have their own properties and macro-propositional structure. Adam (1992, pp. 57–66) proposes that a narrative sequence is composed of the following macro-positions: initial situation (in which the general framework, the characters, the time and the space in which the action takes place are presented), complication (includes the triggering node that alters the balance and stability of the initial situation), (re)actions (encompasses the episodes triggered by the perturbation), resolution (phase that includes the climax followed by the reduction of the tension) and final situation (which frames the protagonist in a new stable context). In addition to mastering the textual structure and the plot of the story, the students' narrative skills include the harmonious interconnection of the various categories of narrative, such as the characters and their characterisation, space and time and the narrator.

Given the importance of texts as means of communication, vital for proper social integration, it is essential that teachers are able to identify their pupils' writing difficulties as soon as possible, in order to prevent failure and demotivation from the very start of schooling, not only in language classes but also in all other school subjects. Thus, it is important for teachers to have an idea, from the outset, of what to expect at each age level and school stage of their students. Hence the importance of longitudinal studies in order to monitor learners' school progress and assess their written achievements. In Portugal, in addition to the instruments and indications provided by the Ministry of Education and by IAVE, the Institute for Educational Assessment, some researches have emerged proposing and testing assessment instruments and criteria for the various learning cycles, considering several parameters of writing quality. It is the case of MACE, Written Composition Assessment Measure, “a measure of observation built to evaluate the written composition of narrative texts in elementary education” (Oliveira et al., 2019, p. 570), which include the following six criteria: structure/organization, content, vocabulary, audience, grammatical conventions and originality (2019, p. 576).

To the complexity inherent to the process of assessing the written product, it is necessary to consider the writing process, especially in primary education:

Há que ter presente que na avaliação da capacidade de expressão escrita se deverão considerar dois aspetos complementares e relacionados: o produto escrito, ou os textos que um aluno é capaz de escrever, e o processo de composição, ou o método de trabalho [...] para produzi-los. Nos alunos do primeiro ciclo, o processo é muito importante, já que é nas suas idades que se fomentam e se formam os hábitos e as atitudes de composição. (Pereira & Azevedo, 2005, p. 101)

Our translation:

It should be borne in mind that in assessing the ability of written expression two complementary and related aspects should be considered: the written product, or the texts that a student is able to write, and the composition process, or the working method [...] to produce them. In primary school students, the process is very important, since it is at their age that

the habits and attitudes of composition are fostered and formed. (Pereira & Azevedo, 2005, p. 101)

In the present work, as mentioned before, we try to make a link between process and product, considering some aspects observed in them at two different school years in the same students. In particular, we were interested in observing the use, during the writing process, of specialized terms, evidence of an explicit knowledge of the language and to gauge a possible connection with a better final textual quality.

## 7.6 Methodology

### 7.6.1 *Didactic Protocol and Data Collection*

The material analysed in this study is part of a database built from the development of two Luso-Brazilian international cooperation projects (InterWriting project, 2015 and DIADE project, 2017). During the execution of the InterWriting project, six textual production tasks of a 2nd year basic education class (20 pupils) were recorded on video, through the Ramos System (Calil, 2020), during January and March 2015, in an urban school in the city of Aveiro. In the DIADE project, data were collected between January and March 2017, with the same class (18 children in 2017<sup>1</sup>), at that moment already in the 4th primary school year. Six textual production tasks were also recorded.<sup>2</sup>

In both moments (2nd year/2015 and 4th year/2017), the same didactic protocol was followed:

1. The class teacher presented the textual production proposal: to write, in pairs, an invented story.
2. The pair of students orally agreed on the story they were going to write.
3. After the combination, they asked the teacher for the smart pen and the sheet of paper to write the invented story (one of the students was responsible for writing and the other for dictating and, with each new task, these roles were alternated).
4. When they finished, they called the teacher to hand in the sheet of paper (depending on the didactic time of the class, if other students were still writing, the teacher could also ask them to reread what they had written, or draw a free drawing, until all the classmates had finished the task).

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<sup>1</sup>Four students left the class due to emigration or other reasons, the remaining 16 from the original class. Two new pupils have joined the class and contributed to form the dyads. Nevertheless, only the eight dyads with no changes were considered for comparison.

<sup>2</sup>We thank all those involved in the two data collections. The collected material is part of the database of the ProTextos Group and the School Manuscript Lab (LAME) of the Federal University of Alagoas.

In all eight tasks presently considered, four collected in 2015 and four in 2017, equipment was installed for each pair of students (handcams positioned in front of the pair's desk, lapel microphones and digital recorders). Thus, for each pair, in both school years, we obtained material collected under the same technical and didactic conditions: same teacher, same class of students, same instruction (writing an invented story in pair work), same technical protocol for the filmic recording of the writing process in real time and same classroom space. All audiovisual material captured simultaneously – video and audio of the pair, film of the pen (manuscript in progress) and school manuscript – were synchronized, and a single media was generated (synchronized film). The multimodal characteristic of the synchronous-film makes it possible to register the pauses, erasures, verbalised linguistic terms, comments, rereadings, glances, gestures and the teacher's movements around the classroom, at the exact moment when the school manuscript is being constructed.

In this way, we have as object of analysis both the finished school manuscript and what was said by the students about the manuscript under construction.

### ***7.6.2 Material and Categories of Analysis***

For this study, we then selected part of the material of two pairs: the first (001) and the last (006) textual production of pair 3 (D3) and pair 5 (D5), carried out, respectively, in 2015 (2nd year) and 2017 (4th year).

The corpus composed of the filmic record of the four productions from D3 (2°D3T1, 2°D3T6, 4°D3T1, 4°D3T6) and the four from D5 (2°D5T1, 2°D5T6, 4°D5T1, 4°D5T6) was subjected to two types of analysis.

For the first analysis, a collection was made of the occurrences of metalinguistic terms (MT) verbalized by the students, from the transcription of the dialogue captured by the filmic record of each pair. As Barbeiro et al. (2022) proposed, the MT identified and quantified were subdivided among the following domains:

1. Text, genre and speech
2. Grammar
3. Spelling
4. Punctuation
5. Graphics

The second analysis established the narrative quality of the manuscripts, with the following five items as criteria:

1. Introduction with reference to “place” and “time”
2. Characterization of the characters
3. Conflict, actions and events
4. Use of dialogue
5. Outcome or conclusion

**Table 7.1** Items analysed by the judges and respective evaluation criteria

Evaluated item	Assessment criteria		
	0 points	1 point	2 points
1. Introduction with reference to “place” and “time” (Defines an initial situation with marking of textual genre, indication of place and narrative time)	Does not provide any introduction	It only says when the story took place Or it only tells where the story took place Or only the character(s) of the story are mentioned	It tells when and where the story took place
2. Characterization of the characters (A physical and/or psychological description of the characters is given)	Characters are named but never described	There is physical description Or psychological	There is physical and psychological description
3. Conflict, actions and events (Starting from a triggering and destabilising element, events in which the characters get involved and which have consequences are reported)	The story is a mere compendium of descriptions of place and characters	There are conflicts and actions but no consequences	At least one conflict and one action are clearly explained as well as its consequence(s)
4. Use of dialogue (There are interventions of characters or dialogues between them)	There are no interventions or dialogue	There are interventions and/or dialogues but no punctuation marks or inadequate punctuation marks	There are interventions and/or dialogues with the correct punctuation marks at least at one point in the story
5. Outcome or conclusion (Ending of the story in coherence with the events lived by the characters or final situation established according to the events described)	The outcome does not exist or there is no finalisation of the story	The outcome is not consistent with the events described in the course of the story	The outcome is consistent with the events reported

These criteria were used for the judgement of ten qualified and anonymous judges (primary school teachers and teacher trainers). The judges were not informed to which school level nor to which pair each text corresponded to.<sup>3</sup> The judges scored each of the above items from a Likert scale (0–2). Grade 0 (zero) characterized the nonoccurrence of aspects related to the referred item; grade 1 (one) characterized the occurrence of at least one aspect related to the item, and grade 2 (two) characterized the detailed occurrence of each of the items – see Table 7.1 for more details. Thus, at most, each text could score 10 points (2 for each of the five criteria).

Within the scope of this study, we will further refer to the technical terms and nontechnical terms or expressions relating to the domain “text, genre and speech”

<sup>3</sup>Four texts of each dyad: T1D3, T2D5, T3D3, T4D5, T5D3, T6D5, T7D3 and T8D5.

and “punctuation”, as these domains are related to the narrative quality, scored by the 10 judges.

The emergence of MT about text, genre and speech as well as about punctuation and overall quality of the narrative are two aspects here confronted, in order to observe possible relations between the quality of the narrative and the verbalization of metalinguistic terms. Our hypothesis is that there may be some form of relationship between the quality of the narrative and the verbalizations of these MT.

## 7.7 Results

### 7.7.1 Children’s Metalinguistic Activity

In a previous study (Barbeiro et al., 2022), the first collaborative writing task (001 in 2015, grade 2, and in 2017, grade 4) by D3 and D5 was analysed (4 texts). Within this research, we have decided to compare the pupils’ performance in their first time writing together, with the one exhibited in the last collaborative task (006), in both grade 2 and 4, coming to a total of more 4 texts each dyad, as previously shown.

We revised the transcriptions of the dialogues between the students and reviewed the synchronized videos. We have conducted a survey of metalinguistic terms (MT) that occurred during the writing process, which comprises the entire text production task, that is, from step 1 of the didactic protocol (presentation of the proposal by the teacher) to step 4 (inscription and linearization of the invented story on the sheet of paper). The analysis included not only the speech of the students, in each task, but also the teachers’ speech, either when, at the beginning, presenting the instructions for carrying out the task or in later moments of possible interaction with the students of the dyads for clarification or assistance in solving problems. Results for teachers and students will be broken down. We have considered official metalanguage mentioned by all participants, as well as other terms that they refer with a grammatical nature, which are of consensual understanding within the task, although they do not correspond to grammatical terms. Table 7.2 presents the results of the quantitative

**Table 7.2** Total of metalinguistic terms that occur in the interaction within the first collaborative writing task (001) in both years

Domains	Grade 2			Grade 4			Subtotal		Subtotal – S		TOTAL
	D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	S	T	2nd	4th	
Text, genre and speech	7	7	7	29	14	36	57	43	14	43	<b>100</b>
Grammar	7	2		15	21	8	45	8	9	36	<b>53</b>
Spelling	30	40	2	34	60		164	2	70	94	<b>166</b>
Punctuation	16	11		61	26		114		27	87	<b>114</b>
Graphics		8	1	5	1	4	14	5	8	6	<b>19</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>452</b>

Adapted from Barbeiro et al. (2022, p. 61–62)

analysis regarding the occurrence of MT distributed by domains – text, genre and speech; grammar; spelling; punctuation; and graphics – by the writing processes analysed; according to each dyad (D3 and D5) and year of schooling (2nd or 4th); and by the authorship of the utterance in which the metalinguistic term is integrated (teacher, T, or students, S).

These results were previously disclosed (Barbeiro et al., 2022), but we will make a summary in order to compare them with the last collaborative writing task. One can observe in the table that the domains in which the occurrence of terms in the process is more frequent are spelling (166 occurrences) and punctuation (114 oc.) and the domain related to text, genre and speech (100 oc.), although in this last case, a considerable part of the occurrences (43 out of 100) is produced by the teachers, fundamentally integrated in the moment of presentation of the instructions for the accomplishment of the task. This explains the rise of terms such as “story” and “text” (Table 7.3). In the domain of spelling (Table 7.4), the terms corresponding to the indication of the name of the letters predominate (124 oc.), being only one

**Table 7.3** Metalinguistic terms related to “text, genre and speech” that occur in the interaction within the first collaborative writing task (001) in both years

Domains and terms		Grade 2			Grade 4			Subtot. S vs. T		Subtot. S 2nd vs. 4th	Tot.	
		D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T					
Text, genre and speech	Story	2	5	4	9	3	9	19	13	7	12	32
	Little story	1						1		1		1
	Text	1		2	5	3	12	9	14	1	8	23
	Title	1	2	1	2		4	5	5	3	2	11
	Free text					3	7	3	7		4	10
	Idea				5			5			5	5
	Creative writing						1		1			1
	Question	1				1		2		1	1	2
	Speech in a dialogue				2			2			2	2
	Comics					2		2			2	2
	Subject				1			1			1	1
	Story of adventure					1						
	Story of war				1			1			1	1
	Horror story				1			1			1	1
	Terrorist story				1			1			1	1
	Inside the story				1			1			1	1
	Writing						1		1			1
	Romance	1						1		1		1
	Storyteller				1			1			1	1
	Well-structured story						1		1			1
Oriented story						1		1			1	
Character					1		1			1	1	
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 7.4** Metalinguistic terms related to “spelling” that occur in the interaction within the first collaborative writing task (001) in both years

Domains and terms		Grade 2			Grade 4			Subtot. S		Tot.		
		D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	Subtot. S vs. T	2nd vs. 4th			
Spelling	Letter names	20	33	1	17	53		123	1	53	70	124
	Letter				11			11			11	11
	Accent	3			1			4		3	1	4
	Cedilla		2			1		3		2	1	3
	“Hat” (circumflex accent)	2						2		2		2
	Big (letter)	1				2		3		1	2	3
	Small (letter)					1		1			1	1
	Initial (letter)				4			4			4	4
	Uppercase		1		1	1		3		1	2	3
	Written together		1					1		1		1
	Trace	3	2			1		6		5	1	6
	Little leg (referring to the design of letters)		1					1		1		1
	Part					1		1			1	1
Little dash	1		1				1	1	1		2	
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>60</b>		<b>164</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>166</b>

performed by the teachers. Regarding punctuation (Table 7.5), the terms “period”, “comma” and “dash” have a higher frequency.

The domain of grammar (Table 7.6) has a much lower frequency than the previous ones (53 oc., 8 produced by the teacher and 45 by the students). In this domain, the most frequent term is “noun”, with 32 occurrences (31 made by students), followed by “phrase” (7 oc.) and by “word” (5 oc.), even if with incomparable less mentions. The graphical configuration (Table 7.7) is the domain with the lowest number of occurrences, 19: 14 from the responsibility of the students and five performed by the teacher.

When comparing the two levels of schooling, a quantitative increase in the number of MT mentioned in the interaction during the writing process can be observed, globally (from 128 oc. to 266 oc.). This increase occurs in most domains, except for spelling. The domain that registers the biggest raise is that of the punctuation (from 27 oc. to 87).

As for the diversity of MT, the comparison between the 2 years of schooling shows, in some domains, a widening of the range of terms cited. The domain in which this expansion is most notably observed is that of punctuation; in addition to the terms “full stop” or “period”, “comma” and “dash”, which occur in the 2nd grade, we testify the use of terms, such as paragraph, quotation mark, parentheses, exclamation mark, question mark and semicolon. In turn, in the grammatical domain, from the occurrences of the term “noun” (to refer to given names, students or characters), “word” and “sound”, we move on to the inclusion of a set of other

**Table 7.5** Metalinguistic terms related to “punctuation” that occur in the interaction within the first collaborative writing task (001) in both years

Domains and terms		Grade 2			Grade 4			Subtot. S 2nd vs. 4th		Tot.	
		D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	Subtot. S vs. T			
Punctuation	Full stop/period	12	9		10	6		37	21	16	37
	“Stop”	2			2	1		5	2	3	5
	Little dot				1			1		1	1
	Comma	1	2		15	6		24	3	21	24
	Dash				13	5		18		18	18
	Paragraph				7	3		10		10	10
	Two points				6	1		7		7	7
	Quotation marks				3			3		3	3
	Parentheses					2		2		2	2
	Exclamation mark				2	2		4		4	4
	Question mark				1			1		1	1
	Semicolon				1			1		1	1
Trace (=dash)	1						1				
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>61</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>114</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>114</b>

**Table 7.6** Metalinguistic terms related to “grammar” that occur in the interaction within the first collaborative writing task (001) in both years

Domains and terms		Grade 2			Grade 4			Subtot. S S vs. T		Subtot. S 2nd vs. 4th		Tot.
		D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T					
Grammar	Noun	6	1		9	15	1	31	1	7	24	32
	Phrase				4		3	4	3	4	7	
	Word	1					4	1	4	1	5	
	Surname				2			2		2	2	
	Future					2		2		2	2	
	Present					2		2		2	2	
	Past					1		1		1	1	
	Rhyme					1		1		1	1	
	Sound		1					1		1	1	
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>53</b>	

**Table 7.7** Metalinguistic terms related to “graphics” (graphical configuration) that occur in the interaction within the first collaborative writing task (001) in both years

Domains and terms		Grade 2			Grade 4			Subtot. S S vs. T		Subtot. S 2nd vs. 4th		Tot.
		D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T					
Graphics	Line		8	1	1	1	3	10	4	8	2	14
	Letter (handwriting)				2			2			2	2
	Page				1		1	1	1		1	2
	Handwriting				1			1			1	1
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	

terms, although not very broad, such as “phrase”, “surname”, “present”, “future”, “past” and “rhyme”.

The activation of metalinguistic terms acquires a functional nature during the text writing process. In the field of spelling, these functions may consist of giving indications as to the spelling of words or questioning the writing colleague about the orthographic form. In the field of punctuation, the functions also include giving indications as to the punctuation marks to be entered, questioning the punctuation to be performed or its justification. As punctuation admits in many cases different solutions, contrary to what happens in terms of the orthographic form, it is often associated with making choices.

In the field of text, genre and discourse, MT are associated in the students’ speech with choices regarding the subgenre, the control of the progress of the writing process and with decisions regarding textual elements or categories, such as the title, characters or to regulate the intervention of these narrative/textual categories (Calil, 2016; Calil, 2021). In the graphic domain, the line count emerges above all to control the length of the text. Some examples of these utterances and their different functions can be seen at Barbeiro et al. (2022).

We will now analyse the MT that occurred when the children were producing the last collaborative writing task, one at grade 2 and the last one at grade 4. Results are patent in Table 7.8, which we firstly show as a picture, to have a panoramic view, and then split into as many parts as the domains analysed.

A first look at Tables 7.8 and 7.9 reveals us a huger amount of MT, which now we needed to organize into two different categories: one for technical and nontechnical terms as exactly mentioned by children, like we have previously done, and the other to summarize relevant comments and topics that nurtured discussions of a metalinguistic nature, although no specific terms were mentioned to name the language phenomena that motivated the give-and-take. We continue to present the number of occurrences according to (i) who mentioned it (students, D3 or D5, or teacher) and (ii) when (at grade 2 or grade 4), indicating the subtotal “students vs. teacher” and comparing both school years as well as providing the total for each language domain examined (Tables 7.9, 7.10, 7.11, 7.12, and 7.13).

When writing together in the last collaborative task, students produce more MT related to text, genre and speech (Table 7.9 – 160 oc.), which, at the first writing task, had the 3rd place:

**Table 7.8** Total of metalinguistic terms that occur in the interaction within the last collaborative writing task (006) in both years

Domains	Grade 2			Grade 4			Subtotal		Subtotal – S		TOTAL
	D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	S	T	2nd	4th	
Text, genre and speech	62	23	7	30	14	24	129	31	81	44	<b>160</b>
Grammar	8	6	0	2	0	4	16	4	14	2	<b>20</b>
Spelling	31	69	0	6	15	2	121	2	100	21	<b>123</b>
Punctuation	13	0	1	25	6	6	44	7	13	31	<b>51</b>
Graphics	36	36	11	10	21	20	103	31	72	31	<b>134</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>488</b>

**Table 7.9** Metalinguistic terms related to “text, genre and speech” that occur in the interaction within the last collaborative writing task (006) in both years

Domain	Technical and nontechnical terms	Comments and metalinguistic topics	Grade 2 – 2015			Grade 4 – 2017			Subtotal		Subtotal		Total
			D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	S	T	2nd	4th	
			Text, genre and speech	Story(stories)		8	16	4	3	4	11	31	
	Short story		3						3	0	3	0	<b>3</b>
	Text		8			2	1	2	11	2	8	3	<b>13</b>
	Title (mentioning it with other words)					1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
		Text planning						1		1			<b>1</b>
	Idea(s)		5			4	1	2	10	2	5	5	<b>12</b>
	The end/to finish the text		3			1	1		5	0	3	2	<b>5</b>
	Big text					1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
		Character (reasoning about its characterization, even not mentioning this term)	2			1			3	0	2	1	<b>3</b>
	Past					1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
	(main) character		2	4	2	1	1	7	8	9	6	2	<b>17</b>
		Implicit allusion to the narrator (pragmatic concern)				1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
		To repeat/repeat (implicitly)				2			2	0	0	2	<b>2</b>
		Vocabulary (discussion about lexemes)	5			7	2		14	0	5	9	<b>14</b>
		Direct/indirect speech (they make use of both, but not of these terms)	2			1			3	0	2	1	<b>3</b>
	Character talk		1			1		1	2	1	1	1	<b>3</b>
	Dramatic text					1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
		Sequence of actions (coherence implicitly)	2			1			3	0	2	1	<b>3</b>
		Likelihood	2			1			3	0	2	1	<b>3</b>
	Environment						1		1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
	Title		9	3	1		1		13	1	12	1	<b>14</b>
		Someone mentions that the text is not good/ needs to be improved	4						4				<b>4</b>
		Text addition	2				1		3	0	2	1	<b>3</b>
		Topic disambiguation					1		1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
	Theme		4						4	0	4	0	<b>4</b>
	Question		1						1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
	Part (of the story)		1						1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
	Thriller		1						1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
	Free (activity/text)							1		1			<b>1</b>
	Oriented (text)							1		1			<b>1</b>
	Adventures							1		1			<b>1</b>
	Imagination							1		1			<b>1</b>
	Where will it happen							1		1			<b>1</b>
	To invent							2		2			<b>2</b>
	Reader							1		1			<b>1</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>62</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>160</b>

**Table 7.10** Metalinguistic terms related to “graphics” that occur in the interaction within the last collaborative writing task (006) in both years

Domain	Technical and nontechnical terms	Grade 2 – 2015			Grade 4 – 2017			Subtotal		Subtotal		Total	
		D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	S	T	2nd	4th		
Graphics	Right/crooked sheet				2			2	0	0	2	<b>2</b>	
	Page				1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>	
	Space (“right together with comma”)				1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>	
	“Leg” of a letter				1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>	
	Line	2	3					5	0	5	0	<b>5</b>	
	To write	18	17	1	2	18	6	55	7	35	20	<b>62</b>	
	Written	2						2	0	2	0	<b>2</b>	
	Little scratch/scratch (=erasure)	3	1					4	0	4	0	<b>4</b>	
	To scratch (erase)	1						1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>	
	To delete	3						3	0	3	0	<b>3</b>	
	Rubber/little rubber	6			1			7	0	6	1	<b>7</b>	
	Pen	1	11	9	2	3	6	17	15	12	5	<b>32</b>	
	Sheet		3	1				4	3	5	3	0	<b>8</b>
	Letter (=handwriting)		1					1	1	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
	Paper							2	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
To write down							1	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>	
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>134</b>	

When no “comments and metalinguistic topics” were found, we do not include this column

### Example 7.1

Estamos a escrever sempre ‘era uma vez’; Por que é mesmo que temos que escrever sempre ‘era uma vez’? (2015\_D5\_006)

Our translation:

We are always writing “once upon a time”; Why do we even have to write “once upon a time”?

Noticeable enough is also the fact that in this case the students are the main protagonists of MT (129 occurrences vs. 31 by the teacher). Let us recall that, within 001, the teacher talked predominantly before students start writing about instructions and procedures to comply with research protocol.

Graphics (Table 7.10) is now the second domain to be mentioned (134 oc.), with comments referring to the organization of the text in the writing sheet and the usage of writing instruments, as well as observations concerning legibility and revising/editing:

### Example 7.2

Mas, primeiro ele tem que salvar para depois pôr o Lobo nesse sítio (2017\_006\_D3)

**Table 7.11** Metalinguistic terms related to “spelling” that occur in the interaction within the last collaborative writing task (006) in both years

Domain	Technical and nontechnical terms	Comments and metalinguistic topics	Grade 2 – 2015			Grade 4 – 2017			Subtotal		Subtotal		Total
			D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	S	T	2nd	4th	
Spelling	Letter names		18	65		1	2		86	0	83	3	<b>86</b>
	(Capital) letter		1	1		2			4	0	2	2	<b>4</b>
	Doubt (o or u, and others)					1	1		2	0	0	2	<b>2</b>
	Correction (upper case vs. lower case)					1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
	Correction (readability)						1		1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
	Error (spelling correction)		2	2			7	1	11	1	4	7	<b>12</b>
	Accent		4				2		6	0	4	2	<b>6</b>
	Hat (circumflex accent)		1						1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
	Big letter		2						2	0	2	0	<b>2</b>
	Dash (=hyphen)		1			1	2		4	0	1	3	<b>4</b>
	Little dash (=hyphen)			1					1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
		Reference to the slope of the graphic accent (not mentioning its technical designation)	2						2	0	2	0	<b>2</b>
	Spelling rules							1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>	
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>31</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>123</b>

**Table 7.12** Metalinguistic terms related to “punctuation” that occur in the interaction within the last collaborative writing task (006) in both years

Domain	Technical and nontechnical terms	Grade 2 – 2015			Grade 4 – 2017			Subtotal		Subtotal		Total
		D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	S	T	2nd	4th	
Punctuation	Period(s)	3		1	3	3	1	9	2	3	6	<b>11</b>
	Comma(s)	1			8		1	9	1	1	8	<b>10</b>
	Quotation marks	3			2			5	0	3	2	<b>5</b>
	Paragraph(s)				4	1	2	5	2	0	5	<b>7</b>
	Two points				1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
	Dash	4			4		1	8	1	4	4	<b>9</b>
	Exclamation mark				2	2		4	0	0	4	<b>4</b>
	Little dot (period)				1			1	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
	Question mark	1						1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
	Trace (dash)	1						1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
	Idea per paragraph						1	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>51</b>

**Table 7.13** Metalinguistic terms related to “grammar” that occur in the interaction within the last collaborative writing task (006) in both years

Domain	Technical and nontechnical terms	Comments and metalinguistic topics	Grade 2 – 2015			Grade 4 – 2017			Subtotal		Subtotal		Total
			D3	D5	T	D3	D5	T	S	T	2nd	4th	
Grammar	Inflection (verbal, form of address)					1			1	0	0	1	1
	Inflection (verb tense)					1			1	0	0	1	1
	Noun		2	6					8	0	8	0	8
	Word		5					3	5	3	5	0	8
		They discuss sentence building	1						1	0	1	0	1
	Writing rules							1	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>

Our translation:

But first he has to save and then put the wolf in that place.

This is an interesting phenomenon, since this was the less frequent domain in the first tasks, which may lead us to suppose students can now accommodate a huger reflection combining more variables to put a text together: not only they talk about textual genre issues but also they interact about writing configuration and spelling:

### Example 7.3

(Continua escrevendo enquanto B. fala, soletrando as palavras) [Ca] Ca-pu [pu] chiii [chi] nho [nho], es-taaa-va [estava], aaa-cor-ren [acorren] ta [ta] da [da] [2017\_006\_D3]

Our translation:

(Continues writing while B. speaks, spelling out the words) [Li] Li-ttle Reeeeeeed Ri [ri] ding Hood waaaaaas chai-ned.

### Example 7.4

Não é com esse, é vô! (Ele pega a caneta da mão de S. e tenta escrever, mas ela o impede) [2015\_D5\_006]

Our translation:

It's not like this one, it's grandpa<sup>4</sup>! (He takes the pen from S.'s hand and tries to write, but she stops him)

This latter domain indeed conquers the third place in students' dialogue (123 oc.), still with the name of different letters high above other MT (Table 7.11). Other than that, different types of corrections are made related to the use of capital letters,

<sup>4</sup>He is indicating, in Portuguese, which type of written accent to use, circumflex.

accents and diacritics and to common doubts due to the non-univocal correspondence phoneme-grapheme in Portuguese, as well as an urge to make handwriting clearer. Punctuation (Table 7.12.), which was a big concern for students at the beginning, collects now only 51 occurrences, with “period”, “comma” and “dash” still storing the upper incidence. The fact that the students are writing stories – narrative texts – has certainly to do with this, since punctuation also has to do with the textual genre.

MT related to grammar (Table 7.13) are again the less stated (total of 20), with “noun” at the top and also “word”.

We are to compare the students’ performance in 2 years, and we observe that there is only one domain in which students produce more MT: punctuation. Let us recall though that this was, at this point, one of the less common mentioned. Previously, at the first collaborative processes, punctuation also experienced a great rise. Other than that, a significant decrease of MT is observed in grade 4 (129 compared to 280 oc. in the 2nd year), exactly the opposite trend when compared to the writing processes of the first collaborative tasks. These facts make us suppose that:

- Even if punctuation doesn’t collect massive references, it keeps being a problematic issue when students write.
- It seems to have happened what we may call a “task saturation”, given that the students performed better in terms of having writing conversations – considering that mentioning a bigger amount of MT indicates that students are discussing what they are writing – at the first collaborative tasks. In fact, we consider a high amount of MT a sign of writing engagement in the task.
- We may also hypothesize students at grade 4 may be more “school sick” and may invest less in their tasks; in spite of this radical statement, there seems to exist specific reasoning about certain topics, like shown above.
- Another relevant interpretation is that the abundance of MT reflects students’ doubts: the decrease of MT may indicate as students get older, they feel more confident and have less questions. They may have automatized some writing subprocesses and may be questioning and discussing more detailed issues, like hypothesized above.

We may also relate these last two hypothesis with the biggest variety of MT in some domains mentioned in 006 productions:

- Text, genre and speech: from 22 different MT (in 001) to 35, considering technical, nontechnical and comments with no specific terms but directing to important concepts
- Grammar: 9 MT in 001 and 6 in 006
- Spelling: 14 MT in 001 and 13 in 006
- Punctuation: 13 in 001 and 11 in 006
- Graphics: 4–16 in 006

In fact, in what concerns text, genre and speech, students reflect about more issues than before, also being able to conciliate that with the graphical organization and clarity of the text. In the other domains, the decrease observed is reduced.

### 7.7.2 Narrative Quality and Metalinguistic Activity

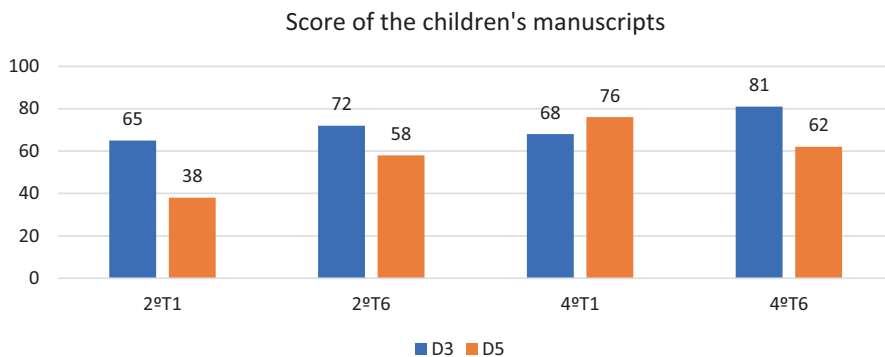
According to the evaluation of the judges, the narrative quality of each text obtained the score below (Graph 7.1).

As we can see, the narrative quality of D3 (286) was better than the narrative quality of D5 (234), both in the 2nd year ( $D3 = 137 \times D5 = 96$ ) and in the 4th year ( $D3 = 149 \times D5 = 138$ ). Only the 1st production of the 4th year made by D5 scored slightly higher. Likewise, the MT verbalizations of D3 were also in greater numbers. As indicated in the previous section, in total 427 MT were verbalized by D3 and 380 MT by D5. This difference remains in the verbalizations included in the “text, genre and speech” domain and in the “punctuation” domain, both more directly related to the items evaluated by the judges. D3 verbalized 243 MT, while D5 verbalized only 101 MT.

The dyad with the highest number of MT, particularly associated with the domains linked to the parameters evaluated by the judges – text, gender and speech and punctuation – is also the dyad that collects the best scores in narrative quality, according to the judges’ evaluation. Considering the verbalization of MT (technical or not) and/or topics related to metalanguage as a reflection of some metalinguistic competence, the fact that the dyad with better texts has more MT seems to confirm our hypothesis that a greater metalinguistic competence translates into in higher textual quality.

Regarding the way in which the MT verbalizations occur, there are different aspects to be observed. The first concerns the recognition of the textual object. For example, during the linearization of Little Red Riding Hood’s request for help (2nd D5T6), D5 writes without any verbalization of MT related to the character’s speech or punctuation marks that may characterize this speech: “Ela gritou: Socorro! Socorro!” (“She shouted: Help! Help!”).

Student SA, when linearizing the Little Red Riding Hood cry for “help”, just uses the comma to separate the repeated lexicon, without mentioning any MT. During the construction of this speech, neither the writer student nor the dictating student verbalized MT associated with punctuation or dialogue, such as “capital letter”, “dash”, “colon” or “exclamation”. This lack of verbalization referring to the



**Graph 7.1** Score of children’s manuscripts

“punctuation” domain is also indicated in Table 2.4. This duo, in 2015, had not verbalized any punctuation marks during the manuscripts under construction. It is worth noting that the school manuscript “O dia na floresta” (“The day in the forest”), in addition to the single “comma”, uses only four capital letters and two full stops. The lack of verbalization of these MT, associated with the low occurrence of inscriptions of punctuation marks, would suggest little knowledge and/or non-automation of textual objects related to this domain.

During this same textual production activity, the other pair (D3) indicates a differentiated metalinguistic knowledge. Let’s see how this occurs in the text-dialogue (TD)<sup>5</sup> transcribed below.<sup>6</sup>

TD1: 00:16:51–00:17:59: D3, linearizing the Bad Wolf’s speech (“Where is Little Red Riding Hood going?”), during the writing of the school manuscript “Little Red Riding Hood and Spiderman”, written on March 3rd, 2015.

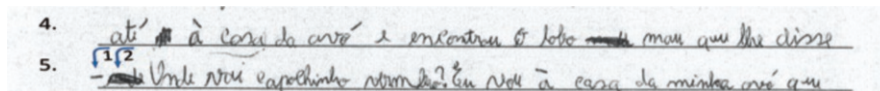
258. BE: **Éé...** (Ditando) ‘Onde que tu vais, Capuchinho?’ (Olhando NI começando a escrever, no início da linha 5, a fala do Lobo Mau, sem o travessão: “onde” [on]). Falando com ênfase) **Não!** (Apontando o início da linha. Explicando o uso do travessão) **Quando estás a falar, põe-se um tracinho.** (Ainda apontando com o índice o início da linha 5) **Aí, travessão.**
259. NI\*<sup>1</sup>: **Um travessão?**
260. BE: **Sabes o que é que é isso?**
261. NI\*: (Mexendo negativamente a cabeça) **Não!**
262. BE: **Põe um tracinho aqui à frente.** (NI escrevendo o travessão [ ] no início da linha 5, antes de [on]) **Certo.**
263. NI\*: (Continuando a escrever ‘onde’) ...on... de [de]...
264. BE: **Olha, e tens que pôr com letra maiúscula... porque isto é igual a ponto final, igual ao ponto de interrogação...** (NI rasurando [onde] e escrevendo [Onde]. BE voltando a ditar) ‘On-de... vais Capuchinho... Vermelho?’ (NI escrevendo [vai Capuchinho<sup>2</sup> vermelho?])

<sup>1</sup>The asterisk indicates which student is writing. The other student is responsible for dictating.

<sup>2</sup>Spelling mistake by students: it should be “Capuchinho” (Little Red Riding Hood).

<sup>5</sup>TD is the text-dialogue, as proposed by Calil (2016). TD is characterized by indicating the time, the dialogue and what was effectively linearized in the current manuscript. We highlight in red the verbal recognition of the textual objects; in blue, the spontaneous comments about these textual objects; and in the green block, what was inscribed on the sheet of paper, when it was inscribed. In bold, we indicate the verbalized MT.

<sup>6</sup>The TD are not translated since our comments after point out the main points to be observed. Moreover, students’ hesitations and strategies to spell it out in the Portuguese language are harder to imitate in English; also, inter-comprehension strategies might be put into place.



**Fig. 7.1** Fragment of the manuscript “Little Red Riding Hood and Spiderman”, with arrows 1 and 2 indicating the recognized textual objects (2D3T6)

We highlight in Fig. 7.1, with arrows 1 and 2, the two tension points that indicate the students’ returns which will result in the erasure identified in the word “onde” (“where”). These returns were due to the recognition of the textual object “dash” and then “capital letter”.

The recognition of the first textual object appears as soon as NI starts writing the speech of the Big Bad Wolf character, at the beginning of line 5. BE, seeing that NI did not make the dash, returns to this point, highlighting the lack of this punctuation mark, verbalizing his/her name. About this textual object, there are two metalinguistic comments that express the student’s way of thinking and contribute to the quality of the narrative, in the item “diálogo”/“dialogue”. The first comment, in addition to verbalizing the MT, both the technical term “dash” and the nontechnical term “dash”, explains its rule of use: “quando estás a falar, põe-se um tracinho. Aí, travessão” (“when you are talking, put a dash. There, a dash.”) (turn 258, BE). This metalinguistic activity has the status of a textual revision on what had already been linearized by NI. For the same reason, about this textual object “dash”, there is yet another comment, this time indicating its graphic-spatial aspect: “Põe um tracinho aqui à frente [antes da sílaba “on”]. Certo.” (“Put a little dash here ahead [before the syllable “on”]. Right.”) (turn 262, BE).

Right after the addition of the dash by NI, during turn 262, the student continues the linearization of writing the word “onde” (“where”), keeping [on] as it was inscribed (with a lowercase letter) and adding only the syllable [de]. In another subsequent scriptural action of a revisional nature, the dictating student BE recognizes the presence of the lowercase letter, verbalizing the MT “letra maiúscula” (“capital letter”) and explaining: “porque isto é igual a ponto final, igual ao ponto de interrogação...” (“because this is equal to the full stop, equal to the question mark...”) (turn 264, BE). When explaining, she does not justify the need for use, mentioning her basic rule: at the beginning of the sentence, she must use a capital letter. However, her metalinguistic activity mobilizes another very interesting argument. BE spontaneously compares the use of the capital letter after the “travessão” (“dash”) with the use of capital letter after the “period” and after the “question mark”, characteristic common to the uses of these punctuation marks.

In Table 7.12, we have 13 MT verbalizations about punctuation, by D3, in the 2nd year. In the narrative quality dialogue item, evaluated by the judges, this story (2nd D3T6) got a score of 13/20, while the story 2nd D5T6 was scored 8/20.

The interactional dynamics involving these returns, recognitions and comments, despite having been established in the brief chronological space of 68 seconds, suggests that the verbalization of names of punctuation marks would be associated with their use and function. When the verbalization of the MT is accompanied by

comments, we can observe the way in which students explain or justify the use and/or function of the MT in question.

Another mode of occurrence of MT can be related simply to the fact that the story is being written, without there being any doubts or questions about its use or function, as we will show in the dialog below.

TD2: 00:21:25–00:21:28: D5, linearizing Little Red Riding Hood’s scream (“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!”), during the writing of the school manuscript “Little Red Riding Hood 2”, written on March 2nd, 2017.

- 104. SA\*: (Lendo o que escreveu nas duas primeiras linhas) Um dia... a Capuchinho ia passear... mas apareceu...o lobo-mau... lobo-mau... **dois pontos** [!]
- 105. CRI: Eu posso trocar esse... (SI) (Apontando com o indicador a palavra ‘mas’, escrita ao final da linha 2. SA escrevendo no início da linha 3 [A]) ...‘mas’ por ‘e’... por ‘e’... ‘apareceu o Lobo mau’.
- 106. SA\*: (Batendo levemente e afastando a mão de CRI) Não!

Student SA from D5 is also the one who writes, as she was in 2nd D5T6. However, 2 years later, the student no longer writes without using the proper punctuation to mark direct speech. Now, when introducing Little Red Riding Hood’s speech, she simply mentions the name of the punctuation mark (colon). Subsequently, when starting the linearization of the character’s scream, the student makes the dash and capital letter without even verbalizing them. There is, at that moment, no tension in her inscription (Fig. 7.2).

This indicates two differences from the two previous examples. The first one is the proper use of punctuation marks related to the introduction of direct speech in the fictional narrative. The second difference lies in the fact that this use and its function are learned and automated by the student, not generating more questions about its pertinence or suitability for the manuscript under construction, as it had also occurred during the manuscript produced by D3 in the 2nd year (2nd D3T6).

These differences do not seem to allow the establishment of clear relationships between MT verbalizations and narrative quality. We understand that the verbalization or non-verbalization of certain MT during the ongoing manuscript would need to be understood in relation to what is being effectively linearized and recognized as

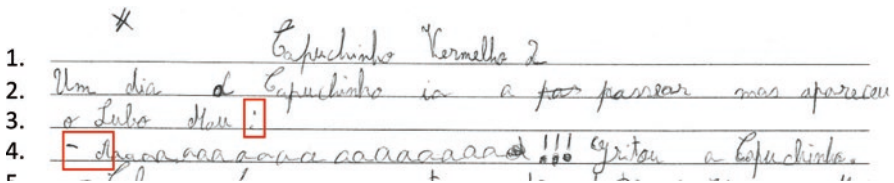


Fig. 7.2 Fragment of the manuscript “Little Red Riding Hood 2”, D5, written in March 2nd, 2017, with highlighted signs introducing the character’s speech (4D5T6)

a textual object. In the first case (2D5T6), we saw that the punctuation marks were not inscribed, nor did the students verbalize any MT when linearizing “*ela gritou socorro, socorro*” (“she shouted help, help”). In the second case (2D3T6), student BE identified the need for two textual objects (punctuation marks), naming them and explaining why they would be necessary. In the third case (4D5T6), there seems to be a more advanced understanding of the use and function of punctuation marks that mark direct speech. This is evidenced by the correct use of those punctuation marks and the absence of the student’s verbalizations about this particular linguistic topic. That is, as the student gets better at understanding the use and function of punctuation marks and accurately registering these punctuation marks, the less he interrupts the writing process with the verbalization of questions or explanations about their use.

However, if we consider the scores of the item “diálogo” (“dialogue”), evaluated by the judges (63 points for D3 manuscripts and 47 points for D5 manuscripts), and the occurrences of MT verbalizations associated with this item, we would have a correlation between the textual quality and verbalizations. In other words, when some MT are in a learning process (before their uses are understood and automated), verbalization seems to indicate a greater concern with the quality of the narrative being produced.

## 7.8 Final Remarks

Within this study, we were able to analyse the writing process of dyads of children while composing eight stories, four in grade 2 and another four 2 years later, in grade 4. The access to the process and to the product made us able to observe their grammatical choices on paper as well as in dialog; also, we had their narrative quality assessed and could put hypotheses and find evidence, either to robust them or to bring more clarity about the need to take into account both the process and the product when it comes to know (the quality of) children’s writing, as we will synthesize.

Globally, at the last collaborative process, students named more MT. Spelling and punctuation at first more abundant gave place to “text, genre and speech” in 006, followed by “graphics” and “spelling”. Children verbalized more MT than the teacher.

Let us now see more in detail a summary and a few examples of students’ writing processes within 006 in grade 4 (2017), analysed for the first time for the study presented here. Regarding D3, there is minimal explicitness, although centred on the lexical dimension, for example, “*assombrado*” vs. “*abandonado*” – “*haunted* vs. *abandoned*”; in fact, choosing one or another of these words is taken up in three major moments, the one when a decision is taken, another one when one child undertakes criticism of her colleague due to her lack of understanding of the words’ difference and, finally, a clarification of the difference by the one who criticized and “*saved the solution*” for later.

We recognize text density and congruence, as well as a coherence between planning and production. A simple narrative strategy is adopted: two opponents and an adjunct, who will help and save those in trouble. D3 takes on multiple reads throughout production, retroactive as well. One can also observe a moment of pragmatic awareness, anticipating how the reader will understand the story. Simultaneously, there is also reasoning according to the knowledge of the world (for instance, when they correct their writing, stating that years of imprisonment are not defined by the prisoner, so the text must convey to the world people know). We would say that the strongest textual values for this dyad are to avoid repetition and the need to vary vocabulary.

D5 performed a retroactive reading mainly located in words; we diagnose, and then this immediate reading does not serve to propel the rest of the narrative. This laconic reading has consequences: the lack of clarity coming from the explanation of a simple inference, cumulative writing without orientation of the role of the characters, redundancy, many ambiguities, illogical and hasty advances. Moreover, one of the mandatory characters to include in the narrative ended up not fulfilling any function (Spider man); indeed, D5 never noticed this problem, neither solved it. The story ends with a succession of unresolved conflicts.

We observed in D5's dialogue an absence of reflection, dispersion and non-continuity of reasoning. The children kept writing while running the pen, very cumulatively, without planning control. References to punctuation and spelling predominate, although there is a noticeable lack of punctuation.

These summaries coincide with the dyads' scores both in textual quality (D3 performed better in almost all writing situations) and "dialogue" (which was relevant in the analysis made here) (D3 again did better). D3 also verbalized more MT. These facts together seem to confirm our hypotheses that more MT might mean a better text. Nevertheless, we made clear that an attention to the process and the product shows that sometimes MT are not mentioned nor used; or MT are mentioned and used; or they are not mentioned, but they are used. This certainly strengthens the importance of having pedagogical devices, which foresee the monitoring of children's writing by the teacher more closely, allowing them to return reflexively to their texts when the need emerges. This being said, one cannot suppose MT are the only sign of metalinguistic knowledge; this knowledge might be guiding the writing at certain aspects when children no longer need to make their options explicit, because they relate to acquired concepts, for instance.

Our conclusions lead us to emphasize the need of putting in action a formative assessment both of process and textual products, since they inform us how to guide the students and plan teaching. Indeed, collaborative writing was/is good on many levels, but under certain conditions of possibility, we might say:

- The importance of class work/writing/metalinguistic reflection that serves as a model for those moments when children write alone or among them.
- Teacher prompting might lead to more student engagement – in many situations, students may perhaps have seen their mistakes if the teacher had drawn their attention to them. This leads us to also suggest students should be instructed to

call the teacher while they are writing, and when they face the need, so that the teacher will be able to help solve dilemmas. We have also seen it is (it would be) beneficial that the teacher shall circulate and read their ongoing work as well, given that they are not always aware of their gaps.

- The possibility to interrupt the dyad's writing, on its own initiative, to ask a question to the entire class.
- The teacher monitoring of the writing process may be so specialized at the point that (s)he may choose an excerpt from a dyad for detailed reading to detect and solve problems – that would be, as we may call it, a “Detailed Reading of Student Text” (DRST, in Portuguese, “Leitura Detalhada do Texto do Aluno”, LDTA). It would also be possible for teacher to present students the comparison between a student excerpt and teacher reconstructed excerpt.
- Students should be motivated to have a paper to write down thoughts while they write, because a difference was observed between what they actually write down and what they had said out loud (what they say varies, and good options are lost, as we have seen while analysing these processes).

Above all, there is an extreme need for the teacher to question students during the writing process. We observed that writing was conducted by children based on their mode of action/knowledge, sometimes resulting in lower-quality texts plenty of easy-to-overcome gaps. Therefore, these collaborative devices should include a very active teacher who is willing and able to know about the children's writing plan, provide guidance, compare “plan” and “accomplishment”, and lead to the rewriting of the text, if necessary; or, at least, to look at a particular part of the text and analyse aspects such as – the evolution of the action; microstructure – incongruities, ambiguities. In this device that we analysed, students were invited to a final reading, but lots of dimensions together make of a narrative a good narrative, and the teacher would be more able to conciliate those, and draw the attention, for instance, to assess the congruence between the conclusion and the rest of the text.

This sample of data analysed here is simply a tiny part of a huge longitudinal study comprising 10 dyads, at grade 2 and at grade 4, who have written individually at the beginning and at the end of the data collection and who have also written collaboratively 6 times in each school year (001 to 006, in grade 2 and grade 4). We have also collected teaching materials and students' handbooks. Of course, this material is endless in terms of the possible analysis, but we would stress out the need to conduct a study whose results could have more statistical significance regarding writing quality and metalinguistic knowledge and the relationship between those. This highlights the need of the finest and quickest analysis instruments, able to focus on specific assessment criteria. Needless to say, this material offers possibilities in other dimensions of teaching work, such as conflict management, which, although in a small sample, proved to be a sore point during the children's interaction considered at this point.

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