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Text production and literacy learning

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ABSTRACT. This article aimed to analyze the production of texts by children starting the nine-year elementary education, with a focus on the children's attitudes face the proposals and recipients chosen for their texts. It reflects on the possibilities children have while producing texts in early literacy. This is a qualitative research with socio-historical approach and uses as data production technique text production proposals with children. It can be concluded that, as they produce texts, children build their speech from their interlocutors, indicating that text production needs to become essential in the teaching learning process of reading and writing in early literacy.

Keywords: Literacy, text production, elementary school, childhood.

Produção de textos e processo inicial de alfabetização

RESUMO. Este artigo objetiva analisar processos de produção de textos no início do ensino fundamental de nove anos com ênfase nos posicionamentos das crianças diante das propostas e dos destinatários escolhidos para seus textos. Reflete sobre as possibilidades de as crianças produzirem textos no início da alfabetização. Constitui-se em uma pesquisa qualitativa com enfoque sócio-histórico e utiliza, como técnica de produção de dados, proposições de produção de textos. Conclui que as crianças constroem seu discurso a partir dos seus interlocutores, anunciando a necessidade de a produção de textos se tornar elemento essencial do processo de ensino aprendizagem da leitura e da escrita na fase inicial de alfabetização.

Palavras-chaves: alfabetização, produção de textos, ensino fundamental, infância.

Producción de textos y proceso inicial de alfabetización

RESUMEN. Este artículo tiene el objetivo de analizar procesos de producción de textos en el inicio de la enseñanza primaria de nueve años con énfasis en los posicionamientos de los niños ante las propuestas y los destinatarios seleccionados para sus textos. Reflexiona sobre las posibilidades de que los niños produzcan textos en el inicio de la alfabetización. Se constituye en una investigación cualitativa con enfoque socio-histórico y utiliza, como técnica de producción de datos, proposiciones de producción de textos. Se concluye que los niños construyen su discurso a partir de sus interlocutores, anunciando la necesidad de que la producción de textos se vuelva elemento esencial del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje de la lectura y de la escritura en la fase inicial de alfabetización.

Palabras clave: alfabetización, producción de textos, enseñanza primaria, infancia.

Introduction

The reflections contained in this article result from a broader research whose purpose was to analyze text production situations experienced with children in the initial stage of literacy. Thus, we aimed to analyze text production processes with children starting the nine-year elementary education, with an emphasis on their attitudes face the proposals and the recipients chosen for their texts.

The possibility of children producing texts in the initial stage of literacy, especially in the first year of elementary education, is not consensual among teachers and scholars in the literacy learning field. As evidence of this lack of agreement, when we began our research in the school, we heard questions such as: 'What do you mean? Do they write texts? They are still learning, how are they supposed to be writing texts?' It seems to us that this is a strong doubt in schools that derives from the belief that children will only be able to write their first texts when they finish the last lesson proposed by the literacy method and/or book adopted for teaching reading and writing, or when they master the alphabetic writing.

For those who defend and use methods, especially related to synthetic gait, the child first carefully studies the language distributed in syllables or phonemes and their graphic representations, then learns to link these units, forming words and phrases, and finally writes texts. For many proponents of more modern views in the field of literacy, children construct hypotheses about correlations between the oral and the written. In this process, they elaborate syllabic, syllabic-alphabetic and alphabetic hypotheses. By constructing this last hypothesis, they are prepared to write texts.

To a certain extent, these ways of understanding the teaching of written language are present in the school and in the discourse of educators, helping to strengthen doubts about the possibilities for children to write texts without having learned the whole sequence of lessons or gone through the different levels of writing. In this line, the researches carried out by Souza (2010) and Costa (2010) on literacy practices show that text production is the dimension that is less emphasized by teachers in literacy classes. The authors point out that the practices focus on the writing of words, phrases and texts that they know by heart.

Our research and its theoretical and methodological foundations

In order to provide a theoretical basis for the study of the production of children's texts, we will discuss the notion of utterance, as elaborated in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin. According to this author, the utterance is always addressed to an interlocutor, because even "[...] each person's inner world and thought has its stabilized social audience that comprises the environment in which reasons, motives, values, and so on are fashioned." (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 112-113). In this way, the utterance is neither an individual production nor the product of a linguistic system. On the contrary, it exists as a function of, in relation to an interlocutor. The word, as Bakhtin (2004, p. 112) points out, "[...] is oriented toward an addressee, toward who that addressee might be: a fellow-member or not of the same social group, of higher or lower standing (the addresse's hierarchical status), someone connected with the speaker by close social ties (father, brother, husband, and so on) or not."

The impossibility of the existence of an abstract interlocutor, as opposed to real interlocutors who live in the lives of children, is one of the essential elements for understanding the text production processes that will be analyzed in the next topic. Likewise, understanding how the interlocutors to whom utterances are directed influence the written productions of children will contribute to our investigation. However, this place of the other in the communication process was not, in Bakhtin's view (2006, p. 270)[1], well understood by the linguists of his time, because, despite variations in points of view, "[...] it is still typical to underestimate, if not altogether ignore, the communicative function of language. Language is regarded from the speaker's standpoint as if there were only one speaker who does not have any necessary relation to other participants in speech communication."

From this perspective, the participation of the other in the construction of utterances is minimized, that is, the interlocutor takes on the role of a listener, who only passively assimilates the words spoken or written by the speaker. In contrast to this view, Bakhtin (2006, p. 271) stresses that the listener, as he listens to and understands the discourse of the other, always takes a responsive position: "[...] He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on."

Thus, any utterance is always a process in which subjects position themselves in relation to each other's points of view, taking into account the position or possible answers of interlocutors. In this sense, responsiveness is not just the 'listener's'; the speaker is also a respondent in that he is not

> [...] the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe. And he presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances – his own and others' – with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another [...] (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 272)

In addition, the utterances that follow. Thus, the utterance is a response to previous and subsequent utterances in a constant dialogue within the uninterrupted chain of discursive communication.

The texts elaborated by the children, which will be discussed in this article, are units of discursive communication, as they are produced within a communication situation. They reveal the children's discursive intentions and, in this context, evidence how they use the resources of written language to produce meaning. Bakhtin (2006) distinguishes utterance and units of language. The first, as pointed

[1] Text from 1926

out, is "[...] 'a link in the chain of communication'" (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 274, emphasis added). The second are repeatable, reiterable elements, but that alone do not say or respond to an interlocutor. In this sense, he emphasizes that, regardless of the differences between the utterances, in terms of volume, content, compositional aspects, they have common peculiarities and, more specifically, 'absolutely precise limits' that differentiate them from the units of language.

With regard to these limits, he points out that utterances are defined, first of all, by the alternation of the speaking subjects, which occurs precisely because the announcer said (or wrote) everything he wanted to say in a moment and under precise conditions (Bakhtin, 2006). Thus, each replica of the dialogue, "[...] each rejoinder, regardless of how brief and abrupt, has a specific quality of completion that expresses a particular position of the speaker, to which one may respond or assume, with respect to it, a responsive position [...]" (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 275), that is, within discursive communication. The replica does not exist, for Bakhtin (2006, p. 275), "[...] among units of language (words and sentences), either in the system of language (in the vertical cross section) or within the utterance (on the horizontal plane)". It only exists in full utterances, in the dialogical relations between speakers or writers.

As for sentences, the author highlights that they can become full utterances only when framed on one side and another by other utterances. The same can occur with words, but cannot happen with letters, phonemes, and syllables. "... Therefore here we do not understand the meaning of a given word simply as a word of a language; rather, we assume an active responsive position with respect to it (sympathy, agreement or disagreement, stimulus to action)." (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 291). Thus, a word or a sentence becomes an utterance depending on the communicative situation in which they are used. Thus, "if an in-dividual word is pronounced with expressive intonation it is no longer a word, but a completed utterance expressed by one word" (Bakhtin, 2006, 290). Expressive intonation gives a concrete meaning to the word, which stops being a mere unit of language to become an utterance.

In this sense, texts produced by children are utterances if we place them in the context of discursive communication, and only then we understand them as responses to other utterances that preceded them and as elements of the discursive chain, that implies other possible responses. From this perspective, the children's texts with which we will dialogue throughout this article are thought of in the scope of dialogical relations. In the course of our dialogue about the process of text production by children, the notion of utterance was fundamental to understand a series of elements that involved these productions, that is, our focus was not on the alleged faults, with respect to conventional writing , that is, what the children did not know about alphabetic-orthographic writing, but on their discursive intentions and, above all, what they know about writing, considering that in order to produce the texts, they used the formal elements of language.

Based on the notion of utterance, outlined by Bakhtin, we understand that qualitative research with socio-historical focus is the most adequate one for our purposes. For Freitas (2002), theoreticians such as Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Luria pointed out that research must involve "[...] the art of description complemented by explanation, [...] the understanding of phenomena from their historical event, in which the particular is considered an instance of social totality" (Freitas, 2002, p. 21). From this perspective as well, research is conceived as a relationship between subjects and not a mere subject-object relationship. Therefore, research is eminently dialogic, because researcher and researched, as subjects creators of knowledge, dialogue with each other.

Discussing the differences between the object of the human sciences and of the exact and natural sciences, Bakhtin (2006, p. 312) stresses that

> [...] The human sciences are the sciences of man in his specificity, and not the sciences of a voiceless thing and a natural phenomenon. Man, in his human specificity, is always expressing himself (speaking), which is always creating a text (though it may remain in potentia). Where human being is studied outside of the text and independently of it, we are no longer dealing with the human sciences (but with human anatomy, or physiology, etc...)[2].

The author, then, disagrees with scientific productions that have the human being as object of study, thus eliminating his condition of a subject who speaks, who utters his saying responsively. In this sense, to think about the subjects of our research, we resume Bakhtin's (1997) discussion of Dostoyevsky's work. For Bakhtin (1997, p. 63), "[...] the major emotional thrust of all Dostoyevsky's work, in its form as well as its content, is the struggle against a reification of man, of human relations".

[2] Text from 1979.

The fight against the objectification of human beings, and therefore of children, to which Bakhtin refers, appears in Dostoyevsky's novels, if we take into account the way in which he perceives the hero and the character in the novel. The latter is not simply a 'puppet' in the author's hands. For this reason, Bakhtin (1997) understands that Dostoyevsky constructed a new artistic position of the author with respect to the hero. Recovering Bakhtin's words (1997, p. 63), in Dostoyevsky's polyphonic novel we find "[...] a fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero".

Taking as metaphor the character-author relationship in Dostoyevsky's work, we dare to think of children as Dostoyevsky imagines them: subjects, that is, a 'you' with whom we dialogue in research. To paraphrase Bakhtin (1997), the researchers' words about children are organized as words of someone who listens to the researchers and responds all the time. In this way, children are not mere 'objects'; on the contrary, through dialogue and text production, they take a stand, distrust proposals and deal with them in an unexpected way, which makes us review our own positions all the time.

Children and text production

How do children who are beginning the process of appropriating writing deal with this new form of language to relate to others? How does the interlocutor is made present in the text written by the children? These and other questions motivated the text production proposals with the children. In the search for answers to these questions and to understand the children's positions regarding the recipients chosen for their texts, we will analyze a proposal made with three children in the library of the school where we developed the research. Text production occurred after reading of the book *The Jolly Postman*, in the classroom[3].

We started the conversation with the children Caua, Bea and Mari[4], remembering that, in this book, Goldilocks, after making a lot of mess in the house of the three bears, sent a letter to them apologizing and inviting them to her birthday party. Taking this text from the book as reference, we asked the children if, like Goldilocks, they would like to write to someone. Face the teasing, Bea asked:

> BEA: are we going to write a letter too?
>
> R: Yes,... would you like to write a letter?
>
> MARI and BEA: I... YES... ((They nod))[5],
>
> BEA: I had an idea... we can write a letter... then she writes to him and he writes to me
>
> R: but what if... what about this... would you like to write a letter to one of the characters from the story I read... to one of the characters?

The initial conversation with the children revolved around the idea of writing to someone. For this reason, as mentioned, we used the example of Goldilocks, who wrote to the three bears to apologize and invite them to her birthday party. Bea responded to the teasing, asking if they would write a letter too. When asked if they would like to write a letter, two children, Mari and Bea, said yes, and the second one suggested that they wrote letters to each other. Face the suggestion; we proposed that they wrote a letter to one of the characters in the book *The Jolly Postman*. In the following passage, we show how the children reacted to this proposal:

> MARI: they live in the book ((makes a hand gesture to show it is somehwere distant)) CAUA: and how are we going to be in the book?
>
> MARI: they are from somewhere here... but they want to be actors... so they have to travel... to there (..)
>
> [
>
> BEA: to their lives
>
> MARI: so they will appear ON TV
>
> R: so do you think your letter would not be delivered for him to read?
>
> MARI: no... ( )

Face the proposal of writing a letter to a fictitious interlocutor, Mari said the characters live in the book, and her friend Caua asked, 'And how are we going to be in the book?' In her turn, Mari argues that the characters are from a place, want to be actors and are always traveling to appear on television. At

[3] In this book, the authors Jannet and Allan Ahlberg tell the story of a postman who delivers letters to various characters from fairy tales. The letters delivered by the postman are written by some characters from these short stories that send and receive letters. Jack, for instance, did not have time to thank the giant, and sent a letter thanking him for the great vacation his golden-egg hen gave him. Goldilocks caused trouble to the bears when she ate the porridge and broke their bed. It was necessary to apologize. She does so by sending a letter apologizing and inviting them to her birthday party. The postman also delivers mail to Cinderella, the Big Bad Wolf, Little Red Riding Hood and others. The book comes with several letters, it has postcards, booklets and invitations, with envelope and everything. Our purpose in the reading of this book was to establish, in the context of the classroom, the writing of texts to each other.

[4] As per the protocol (Free and Informed Consent Form) established with the professionals of the school and with the children's parents, we will use only the childrens' initials to guarantee their anonymity.

[5] For the transcriptions of the oral texts, the Transcription Norms elaborated by the researchers of the NURC Project/ SP were used. According to these norms, the use of two parentheses occurs when the transcriber makes descriptive comments.

the same time, this argument minimized the impediment to the letter reaching the characters in the book, it indicated the attempt to make the interlocutors less abstract, that is, and they are distant but have a concrete existence.

In this context, it is necessary to return to the initial considerations about the place of the interlocutor in the process of discursive communication. Bakhtin (2006), opposing to structuralist linguistics that proposed to think communication through the interlocutor or speaker - message - receiver or listener scheme, states that the listener takes a passive position from this perspective. In contrast, the author considers this way of understanding the communication process a fiction of linguistics because, in reality, the other not only listens but also assumes a responsive position. The one who speaks speaks because he wants the understanding and the answer of the other. This is primarily the desire of the speaker who ends his speech or writing to let the other speak. Thus,

> [...] the speaker himself is oriented precisely toward such an actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his or her own idea in someone else's mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth. (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 272).

In other words, for the author, the speaker, from the beginning, waits for the response of the other, expects him to understand what was said or written so that, in this way, he can also respond to what has been spoken/written. The utterance is constructed, directed to the response of the interlocutor, so Bakhtin points out that addressing is one of the essential features of utterance. In the dialogue between the researcher and the children - children and children - it is clear that, from an early age, the speaker understands that his saying is a bridge between him and the other and a two-way bridge where the word passes between speakers or writers.

Thus, for children, an interlocutor who cannot respond lacks an essential characteristic that allows discursive communication - responsiveness. Therefore, the characters in the story could not be interlocutors because they could not respond to the letters the children would send them. In this sense, without a 'true' interlocutor, the texts produced by the children would not be concretized as utterances, because "[...] the boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a change of speaking subjects, that is, a change of speakers." (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 275).

Thus, the estrangement of the children face the proposal is understandable in the context of Bakhtin's propositions in relation to utterances. How could Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack (from Jack and the Beanstalk), Goldilocks, Snow White, respond to the children? The possibility of alternating the subjects of discourse, even if it is not immediate, as it occurs when writing letters, is, for Bakhtin (2006), the first peculiarity of utterances.

It becomes even clearer that the concreteness of the utterance is precisely in the alternation of the subjects of discourse. This aspect is, for Bakhtin (2006), the solid mass of the utterance, which explains the children's annoyance in writing to fictitious interlocutors. The letter genre further imposes the need of the recipient. Bakhtin himself (1997, p. 206), on the epistolary genre, used by Dostoyevsky in his book *Poor Folk*, says that "[...] the letter, like a rejoinder in a dialogue, is addressed to a specific person, and it takes into account the other's possible reactions, the other's possible reply." Therefore, the recipient has an enormous influence on the construction of this genre. Thus, in the analyzed communication situation, the children's desire for a response is linked to the fact that they understand that there can be no abstract interlocutor, confirming that they understand very early, how interactive relations are given through the written language.

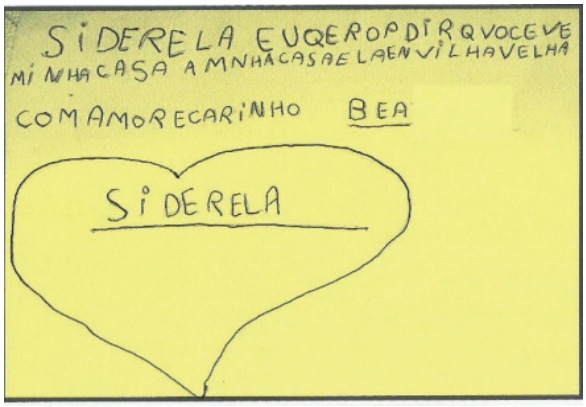
Back to the dialogue with the children, we observed that after Mari said that the characters wanted to be actors, that they were always traveling to appear on TV shows, Bea is convinced that she could write a letter to Goldilocks, as long as she could put her letter in the mail and the mail carrier sent it to her recipient. That is, there is still the idea that her letter should be read. Let us take a look at another part of the dialogue:

> R: so... whom do you want to write a letter to?
>
> BEA: I'll put... I'll write a letter... then I'll go home... then when I arrive... when my dad comes to pick me up... I'll put my letter in the mailbox... then I'll write to Goldilocks... then the mail carrier will take it and deliver it to Goldilocks

As per the transcript, Bea said she would write a letter to Goldilocks and, when her father came to pick her up, she would put the letter in the mailbox. Then she decided to write to another recipient, Cinderella. Caua said he would write to Jack, from Jack and the Beanstalk. Mari, on her turn, said that she would write a letter to her father.

When Bea pointed out that she had finished writing her letter, we asked her to read the text. In the letter, Bea invites Cinderella to go to her house.

Bea reads: "I want to ask you to come to my house. With love and affection, Bea." We suggested, at the end of the reading, that she signed the letter so Cinderella would know who had invited her to the visit. Caua showed he had not understood the message of his classmate's letter when he asked, "Is it her house here?" Therefore, he asks where Bea's house is, because he was certainly worried about the receipt of the response and about informing where his classmate lived. The question, however, immediately produced a response in Bea, who added to her message the phrase "My house is in Vila Velha", that is, with his friend's question; she realized that she needed to tell her interlocutor where she lived. We have, next, the letter written by Bea (Figure 1).



SIDERELA EUQEROPDIRQVOCEVE MI NHA CASA A MNHACASAE LAENVILHAVELHA
COM AMOR ECARINHO BEA
[CORRECT SPELLING: CINDERELA
EU QUERO PEDIR QUE VOCÊ VENHA EM MINHA CASA
A MINHA CASA É LÁ EM VILA VELHA
COM AMOR E CARINHO BEA]
[TRANSLATION: CINDERELLA, I WANT TO ASK YOU TO COME TO MY HOUSE. MY HOUSE IS IN VILA VELHA. WITH LOVE AND AFFECTION, BEA]

Figure 1. Letter from Bea to Cinderella.

Unlike other children who throughout the research asked for help during the writing process, Bea did not request our intervention and showed that she already had mastery of the writing system. As mentioned, the phrase 'My house is in Vila Velha' was written after the question from her classmate Caua. Therefore, she reduced the size of the letter to put the phrase in the second line of the text. It is important to note that in producing the text, with respect to the formal aspects of language, the child leaves very clear evidence of what she knows about writing and what she still needs to learn. However, what she does not yet know does not prevent her from wanting to say, from wanting to write the letter, from experiencing writing as a process of interaction with the other.

Regarding discursive aspects, the interaction between the children, during the writing process, collaborates with the production, since the text is elaborated in the relationship with immediate, close interlocutors. Thus, writing the dialogue with the researcher and her classmates, her immediate interlocutors, contributed to the completion of the text. Still on Bea's text, it is important to emphasize that, when signing the letter, she underlines her name. We can infer that this emphasis is an important mark of authorship because, when writing to an interlocutor who did not know her, highlighting can help in the process of identifying the sender. At the end of the letter, Bea wrote 'Siderela'[6], the name of her interlocutor. She then draws a heart around the word 'Cinderella', which suggests that Bea has a desire to express to her interlocutor the feeling of affection she has for her.

Even after writing the letter, Bea expressed doubts about Cinderella's existence and asked, "But does Cinderella exist?" We answered by returning the question: "What do you think?"

> BEA: I think... yes... she's a person who dresses like this ((the child makes a hand gesture to show how she imagines the character's clothes to look like))...
>
> [
>
> MARI: but she is going to take too long, she has to go to the airport there... then to the airport here... then she comes
>
> [
>
> BEA: she lives there THERE ::: THERE::::
>
> [
>
> MARI: there in Rio
>
> BEA: where Disney castle is

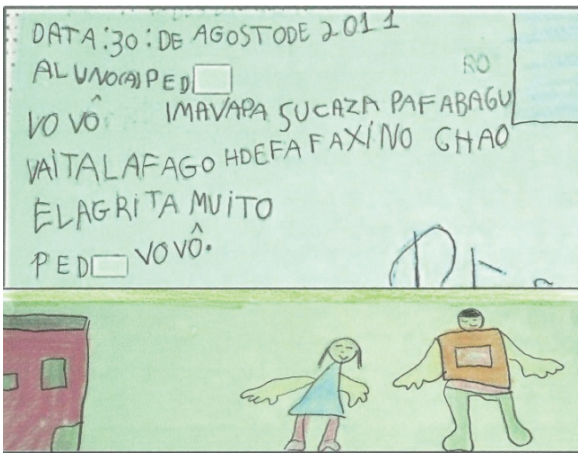
The dialogue reveals a mix of fantasy and reality. Cinderella, in Bea's opinion, is a person, not a fiction. Her friend, Mari, said that Cinderella will take a long time to arrive, since she lives in Rio de Janeiro and has to go through two airports to reach

[6] We maintained Bea's spelling of the word. This Pact consists of a group of material actions and curricular and pedagogical references to be made available by the Brazilian Education Ministry [*Ministério da Educação*] MEC, having as main axis the ongoing formation of literacy teachers. The National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age [

the city where Bea lives. Imagination or fantasy is a sphere of the symbolic activity of humans. According to the Vygotskyan perspective, the creation process takes place through one's ability to imagine, constituting in the real something inaugural. We also understand, from this theoretical perspective, that the psychological process, whose central element is creation and imagination, is not separated from the concrete conditions of human life, its desires and needs. In this direction, creative activity is based on experience, that is, on how the subject perceives the world. Thus, to meet a need, the constitution of a concrete interlocutor, children fantasize, imagine and, from their experiences, create a 'Cinderella' that, for Mari, lives in Rio de Janeiro.

As said, during our insertion in the classroom, we put ourselves at the disposal of the children to help them during the writing of their texts. So even when there was no specific request for text production, they came to us when they wanted to write to someone. In general, in those moments, they chose people with whom they had some kind of affective relationship (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, friends and others). In this sense, the principle of otherness was very present in the writing process of the children: the emergence of the other about whom they had some knowledge or with whom they had some kind of relationship was some sort of propelling spring for the writing of their texts. Thus, even without the mastery of conventional writing, many children agreed to write, because they wanted to say something to someone they knew, that is, they had a project of speech or a desire to speak.

At one of these moments, Ped decided to write to his grandmother. During the production of his text, Ped told us about what motivated his writing: his grandmother was taking care of his cousin, a baby that was really difficult and would not let her cook, for instance. As he mentioned in the text, his cousin would make a lot of mess, wear a lot of diapers, pee on the floor and yell a lot. When he started writing his text, he asked if he should start with the date. Thus, he began to write the text in the same way that he began his daily activities in the classroom, writing the header that contained UMEF (*Unidade Municipal de Ensino Fundamental*, Municipal Elementary Education Unit, and the name of the school), the date (August 30, 2011) and his name (Figure 2):



UMEF (The child wrote the name of the school)
DATE: AUGUST 30, 2011
VOVÔ IMAVAPA SUCAZA PAFABAGU
VAITALAFAGO HDEFA F AXINO CHAO
ELAGRITA MUITO
[CORRECT SPELLING: VOVÓ MINHA PRIMA VAI PARA SUA CASA FAZER BAGUNÇA
VAI TE ATRAPALHAR A FAZER COMIDA GASTA FRALDA E FAZ XIXI NO CHÃO
ELA GRITA MUITO
PED VOVÔ]
[TRANSLATION: GRANNY, MY COUSIN GOES TO YOUR HOUSE TO MAKE A MESS. SHE WON'T LET YOU COOK. SHE WEARS TOO MANY DIAPERS AND PEES ON THE FLOOR. SHE YELLS A LOT. PED GRANNY]

Figure 2. Letter from Ped to his grandmother.

During the production of his text, Ped talked to the researcher, seeking information on sound-letter and letter-sound relations. Below is an excerpt from this dialogue:

> PED: MI::: ((he writes IM))...a "MI"... "NHA"... "PRI"... "MA"... ((he finishes writing "*minha prima*", meaning "my cousin", as follows: IMA))
>
> P: priMA:::
>
> PED: PA::: PA::: ... RA::: RA::: ((he writes "PA" to represent the word "PARA", meaning "TO"))
>
> R: PARA ((she reads the word the child wrote))
>
> PED: SU::: SU::: SU::: ((he writes "SU" to represent the word "SUA", meaning "YOUR"))
>
> R: sua ((she reads the word the child wrote))
>
> PED: CA::: CA::: is it "K"?
>
> R: the sound of the letter "K"... but we write with the letter "C" ((she explains to the child how to spell the word "CASA", meaning "HOUSE"))
>
> PED: ca::: sa::: hey... miss, what letter comes after "A"?
>
> T: CA::: SA::: now comes "SA"...

PED: it's the "Z"... right? SA::: SA::: SA::: "Z"... "A"...

As we observed in the transcript, in order to identify the letters that should be used to write the utterance he was producing, the child would often appeal to the researcher, asking questions, for instance, to know if 'casa', meaning 'house', is written with the letter 'K'? Still in relation to the word 'casa', after writing the syllable 'ca', he asked about the letter that would come after 'a'. Then, when he began writing the word 'fazer', meaning 'do', he asked if he should write the letters 'f' and 'a', but wrote only the syllable 'fa'. Thus, he used only one syllable for the word 'fazer'. To spell the word 'bagunça', meaning 'mess', he had no doubt when he wrote the syllable 'ba'. As for the syllable 'gun', he asked 'gun ... what letter is ça? Writing the word 'xixi', meaning 'pee', he asked if it was with an 'x' and spelt the syllable 'xi' only. He also questioned whether the word 'grita', meaning 'yells' was written with a 'g' and an 'o'. In this context, answering the request of the child, we indicated the orthographic form of the spelling of the words: chão (floor), grita (yells) and muito (a lot).

Dialoguing with the researcher, asking about spelling, the child showed his doubts, his questions, his way of understanding the sound-letter and letter-sound relations. In this context, the interaction and interlocution of the researcher with the child enabled the dialogue that involved the meaning of the text and the knowledge about the writing system. At times, he wrote from the knowledge of the acrophonic principle. At others, he relied on his knowledge of the syllables studied in the classroom (the syllables 'fa' and 'ca'). During the production process of his text, Ped showed an active quest to understand the sound-letter and letter-sound relations, 'performing actions with and on written language'. In this sense, the work of understanding the functioning of written language is not mechanical and repetitive, but reflective, because its meaning encourages him to reflect on the language in search of using the proper characters for the production of his utterance.

We can infer that the child wrote 'from his grandmother', when he narrated his daily life, and also wrote *to his grandmother*, when he addressed to her his way of understanding this routine. From this perspective, as Bakhtin (2006) points out, the role of the other is exceptionally large in the construction of utterances, because the child's saying is largely populated by the way he understands or evaluates his grandmother's daily life. Writing made sense to the child and this sense allowed him to become the true author of his text, for "[...] writing is not an activity that follows anticipated rules, with anticipated results beforehand. Writing a text always requires the subject to expose himself in it, because it results from a creation" (Geraldi, 2010, p. 98). At another time, Ped wrote again to his grandmother. On that occasion, he wrote the following Christmas card (Figure 3).

VOVÓ. FELIZ NATAL!
VOVÓ. QUADO VC XG VAINA
PEDACBO E UQILEVA MINA
PIMA PED
[CORRECT SPELLING: VOVÓ QUANDO VOCÊ CHEGAR A GENTE VAI NA
PEDRA DA CEBOLA EU QUERO LEVAR MINHA PRIMA
PED]
[TRANSLATION: GRANNY, WHEN YOU ARRIVE WE'LL GO TO PEDRA DA CEBOLA PARK. I WANT TO GO WITH MY COUSIN TOO]

Figure 3. Christmas card from Ped to his grandmother.

We can say that the affective involvement of the child with his grandmother and his cousin gives the utterance an expressive tone, loaded with feelings that the child nourishes for them. When he writes again to his grandmother, he mentions his cousin again. Thus, although his cousin is a baby who requires a lot of care from an adult, Ped expressed the wish that she went to Pedra da Cebola park with him. To change his attitude toward his cousin, it is possible that, face some comment on the latter, he has been reprimanded by an adult. Therefore, in spite of all the hard time she gave his grandmother, he had to say that he wanted her cousin's company. Thus, the phrase 'I want to go with my cousin too' suggests a certain anticipation to a possible answer,

because if we take as reference the previous text, in which the child narrated the hard time and the difficulties of taking care of his cousin, it is possible to infer that Ped was anticipating the response of his interlocutor. Thus, "[...] the individual manner in which a person structures his own speech is determined to a significant degree by his peculiar awareness of another's words, and by his means for reacting to them." (Bakhtin 1997, p. 197). Let us look at an excerpt from the dialogue between the child and the researcher during the writing of the Christmas card to his grandmother:

> Ped: Vovó... ((He decides to write vovó, meaning granny, and tries to remember the letters that are used to spell this word)) how do I spell... ((he asks himself)) ah... I rememBER... "v"... "o"... "v"... "o" ((he erases it and writes it again)) here... miss... ((he shows it to the researcher))
>
> Ped: ((he touches his cheek with his hand like someone who is thinking)) let me THINK... then here I have to DRAW?
>
> T: not neceSSARILY... only if you want it... Mari... drew at the bottom... like ... she wrote... then she drew... but... if you don't want to... no problem... it's up to you... the way YOU prefer...
>
> Ped: ah... I'll granny (vovó)... ((he writes granny separately and comments)) ah... I write sepaRATED every time... ((erases and writes granny together)) miss...

Thus, according to the transcript, Ped started talking to himself, asked how he wrote the word vovó (granny). Then he said that he had remembered, and mentioned the letters that make up the word vovó. He put his finger on his cheek, making the gesture of someone who was thinking and said, 'Let me think'. He asked if he could draw. We replied that he was free to choose whether he wanted to draw or not. He wrote the word vovó at the beginning of the card, separating the syllables, and commented that he always wrote it separately, erased and wrote the word correctly. The production of the text was permeated by the egocentric language that had as purpose to help him organize the relations between sounds and letters and between letters and sounds.

Vygotsky (2000, p. 36) believes that "[...] egocentric speech is inner speech in its functions; it is speech on its way inward". In this sense, this type of language has, in Vygotsky's view, a correlation with the transition from interpsychic functions to intrapsychic functions. In other words, "[...] the egocentric language arises in the course of the social process, when the social forms of behavior, the forms of collective cooperation, move to the sphere of individual functions of the child" (Gontijo, 2002, p. 258). When the child said "Ah I write it separated every time", referring to the spelling of the word vovó and then erased the word and wrote it correctly, the language was directed to itself, guiding its activity.

Final considerations

We started this article by announcing our main objective: to analyze text production processes involving children at the beginning of the nine-year elementary education, with emphasis on the children's attitudes face the proposals and the recipients chosen for their texts, especially considering the doubt about the possibilities for children to write texts at the beginning of the schooling process, when they do not yet master conventional writing. We think we can achieve our goal and build elements to reflect on text production processes in schools.

In this line of reflection, it is important to resume the study by João Wanderley Geraldi, first published in 1991. For this author, text production is the point of arrival and departure of the work of teaching language. He also stresses that it is through this type of production that language is learned as form and as interdiscursive activity. Another very relevant aspect of this study is the fact that, in order to produce texts, it is necessary for subjects to have what to say, goals and reasons to say, to whom, and can, from these first elements, to choose the strategies to say, among them, the genre appropriate to the discursive purpose. Our research has shown to some extent that the definition of the interlocutor, or whom to say, as Mikhail Bakhtin points out, is central to the process of producing texts.

We are therefore concerned about the way in which writing is handled in schools, particularly in the initial stage of literacy. Disbelief in children's ability to write texts causes the written language to be learned as an activity without relevance to children's lives. To create other literacy practices, we believe, like Geraldi (1991), in the centrality of working with texts, in working with the production of texts in schools.

Increasingly, it is now more difficult to defend this proposal when it comes to teaching and learning to read and write, especially in public schools, since literacy evaluations, in particular *Provinha Brasil*, have led to practices based on the sequence teaching of letters, syllables and phrases, without due attention to the production and reading of texts,

forgetting that language learning is eminently discursive, that is, we learn to use written language in the relationships we establish with others. Our utterances are populated by the words of others that we re-work and re-emphasize.

In the events experienced with the children, the negotiations present in the processes enabled the exchange of knowledge, the reflection on writing, and evidenced the acute need for the child of the other/interlocutor of their text, in a constant interactive process of understanding writing in a game of discursive negotiations and exchange of knowledge (Smolka, 2003). In this way, children have constituted themselves as subjects of discourse and have left their marks, values, opinions, knowledge, ideas and life stories in the uniqueness of the utterance-discourse event occurring in a broader social context, as they are always related to certain chains of discursive communication.

The point is that "[...] in text production processes, in schools, [children] have no one to say what they say, they write the text not to a reader, but to a teacher to whom they must show what they know" (Geraldi, 2010, p. 98), contrary to what our research evidences: addressing is fundamental in text production processes, since the other constitutes the otherness necessary, the flow and movement of the utterance produced.

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