

Metalinguistic activity in a collaborative writing task in Primary Education

La actividad metalingüística en una tarea de escritura colaborativa en Educación Primaria

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Abstract

Several studies have underscored the importance of the metalinguistic activity generated in collaborative writing tasks for the development of students' writing competence. However, few of them have analyzed it in primary education contexts. This paper investigates the focus of the metalinguistic activity generated by nine pairs of fifth graders (10-11 years-old) in the prewriting, writing and revision stages of the collaborative production of a fable after a teaching intervention about this genre. To this aim, the episodes produced in the oral interactions were identified and analyzed in terms of focus and frequency. Results show that most episodes deal with textual and mechanical aspects, and that their focus varies according to the aims of the different stages of the task: text organization in the prewriting stage, and correction –focused merely on spelling– in the revision stage. The results obtained are discussed in relation to the effects of the intervention, the students' cognitive maturity and the kind of correction usually made at school. Pedagogical recommendations are also given.

Resumen

Diversos estudios destacan el valor de la actividad metalingüística que se genera en tareas de escritura colaborativa para el desarrollo de la competencia escrita del alumnado. Sin embargo, pocos la han analizado en el contexto educativo de primaria. Este artículo investiga el contenido de la actividad metalingüística que nueve parejas de 5º curso (10-11 años) generan en las fases de preescritura, escritura y revisión de la producción colaborativa de una fábula tras una intervención didáctica sobre este género textual. Para ello, se identificaron los episodios metalingüísticos generados en las interacciones orales, y se analizó su contenido y su frecuencia. Los resultados muestran que la mayor parte de los episodios se refiere a aspectos textuales y mecánicos, y que su contenido varía de acuerdo al objetivo propio de cada fase de la tarea: la organización textual en la fase de preescritura, y la corrección, meramente ortográfica, en la fase de revisión. Los resultados obtenidos se discuten en relación con los efectos de la intervención didáctica, de la madurez cognitiva del alumnado y del tipo de corrección habitual en la escuela. Finalmente, se ofrecen algunas recomendaciones didácticas.

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Introduction

Many studies have focused on collaborative writing, especially in the field of second/foreign languages (L2/FL) (see Storch, 2013). Collaborative text production is defined as an activity that involves (1) interaction among participants in the process; (2) a final product that cannot be described as a mere sum of various contributions; and (3) a sense of shared authorship among participants therein (Storch, 2016). Research in this field has shown that co-construction and co-authoring activities are beneficial to student learning (Storch, 2005; 2013) for several reasons. Firstly, they encourage debate and offer students opportunities for meaningful interaction, which favours their performance in writing (Khatib & Meihami, 2015; Bueno-Alastuey & Martínez de Lizarrondo, 2017; Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2019). Secondly, such activities reduce anxiety and increase students' confidence, involvement and autonomy (McDonough, 2004). Likewise, from a socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1986), it can be stated that the interaction between participants in joint text production reflects, promotes and enriches their writing skills.

Much of this work (Fernández Dobao, 2012; Storch & Aldosari, 2013; Basterrechea & García-Mayo, 2013; McDonough, De Vleeschauwer & Crawford, 2018; Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2019; Calzada & García-Mayo, 2020; *inter alia*) analyses the discursive activity generated in the interaction and in which students pay attention to the different linguistic levels (spelling, punctuation, lexical, morphological, syntactic and textual) involved in the act of writing. These studies are part of what is known as *metatalk* (Swain, 1998), that is, the use of language to reflect on one's own language in teaching-learning contexts. The so-called *metatalk* is, in short, one of the metalinguistic uses that speakers make (Loureda, 2009) and that language allows thanks to its reflexivity or capacity to refer to itself (Jakobson, 1960; Rey-Debove, 1978).

This metalinguistic discourse that takes place in the interactive context of the classroom is also known as *metalinguistic activity* in the field of Romance languages (Dolz & Meyer, 1998; Guasch & Milian, 1999; Camps & Milian, 2000; Ribas, Fontich & Guasch, 2014; Fontich, 2016; Fontich & García-Folgado, 2018; *inter alia*). This paper falls within this line of work focusing on the analysis of metalinguistic activity generated on a social level and in the educational context, specifically in the interactions that take place in collaborative writing activities. According to Fontich and García-Folgado (2018), collaborative writing is a manipulative activity that encourages debate, so that the analysis of the metalinguistic activity generated in it will help to understand and improve the teaching-learning process.

Several studies conducted in the field of L2/FL teaching-learning show that, unlike university students (Fernández Dobao, 2012), younger students who write in collaboration pay attention to mechanical aspects such as spelling (Kim & McDonough, 2011; Calzada & García-Mayo, 2020; Villarreal & Munarriz-Ibarrola, in press). The scarce existing works on collaborative writing in L1 show that teaching interventions and resources supporting planning and revision enrich the metalinguistic activity of students and address it towards structural or semantic-global aspects in secondary education (Camps, Guash, Milian, & Ribas, 2000; Tormo Guevara, 2017) and in primary school (Madeira, 2015; Montanero & Madeira, 2019), where students seem to show less capacity to deal with such aspects (Barbeiro & Brandão Carvalho, 2006).

This research arises from the interest in knowing the aspects that primary school students pay attention to in the collaborative writing of texts in Spanish L1, a context that has not yet been researched, in order to obtain a diagnosis that allows for the guidance of the teaching of this competence in the classroom. Likewise, we believe it is important to analyse

whether this metalinguistic activity varies according to the phases of the task (pre-writing, writing and revision) that are recommended to students (Camps, 1994; 2003; García-Parejo, 2011) on the basis of various studies (see Graham, McKeown, Kihara & Harris, 2012 & Chanquoy, 2001). It is also relevant to check whether this activity corresponds to the objectives that each student should set in each one of these phases: to plan the text –in particular to arrange the ideas according to the genre structure, one of the three operations of this process (Flower & Hayes, 1981)–, to produce it and to revise it.

Metalinguistic activity in writing

Writing texts necessarily involves some kind of metalinguistic activity (Tolchinsky, 2000; Fortune, 2005; Myhill, 2011), that is, people who write need, to a greater or lesser extent, to pay attention to the language they use. Indeed, in text production, written language becomes an artifact and, as such, the object of speech, study and reflection (Mertz & Yovel, 2010). Metalinguistic activity, which can be defined as the process in which individuals reflect on language (Dolz & Meyer, 1998; Camps & Milian, 2000), is closely related to the so-called metalinguistic function (Jakobson, 1960) or reflexivity of natural languages, as well as to the capacity human beings have to reflect on them (Benveniste, 1974). For this reason, this activity, which is especially interesting for language acquisition and teaching, has also been studied from the linguistic (Rey-Debove, 1978; Casado, González & Loureda, 2005; Loureda, 2009; *inter alia*) and cognitive (Karmiloff-Smith, 1992; Gombert, 1992; Sebastián & Maldonado, 1998; *inter alia*) perspectives.

In this paper, the term *metalinguistic activity* is used to refer to the discursive activity that takes place in social interaction in the classroom and whose object is language itself (Dolz & Meyer, 1998; Bigas *et al.*, 2001; Camps & Milian, 2000; Ribas *et al.*, 2014; Fontich, 2016; Fontich

& García-Folgado, 2018; *inter alia*). In collaborative writing situations, language is used as a tool for referring to itself while solving the problems involved in this activity (Guasch & Milian, 1999; Camps *et al.*, 2000). Co-construction and co-authorship activities of written texts (Storch, 2013) promote metalinguistic activity insofar as they oblige students to speak about the language they are using, to see it as an object, and to reflect on it together, conveying and justifying their choices for the text (Swain & Watanabe, 2012; Storch, 2013). From a socio-constructivist vision (Vygotsky, 1986), the metalinguistic activity generated in collaborative writing not only reflects the participants' metalinguistic knowledge, but also constructs and enriches it. Thus, the interactions that occur in these writing situations have a great potential as a learning tool and as triggers for "acquisitional activity" (Guasch & Milian, 1999; Barbeiro & Brandão Carvalho, 2006). In this sense, some studies in L2/FL teaching-learning contexts (McDonough & García Fuertes, 2015; McDonough *et al.*, 2018) found that, thanks to the metalinguistic activity generated in interaction, texts written in collaborative activities are grammatically more correct than those produced individually. In short, negotiation about language that takes place while students are co-constructing meaning is considered a source of linguistic learning and development (Guasch & Milian, 1999; Swain & Watanabe, 2012; Storch, 2013).

As stated above, most work focusing on the study of metalinguistic activity in collaborative writing processes has been developed in the field of L2/FL teaching-learning (Fortune, 2005; Gutiérrez, 2008; Fernández Dobao, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009; Storch & Aldosari, 2013; Basterrechea & García-Mayo, 2013; McDonough *et al.* 2018; Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2019; Calzada & García-Mayo, 2020; *inter alia*). The unit of analysis used in this body of work is the episode (Storch, 2005), mainly the so-called *language related episodes* (LREs) –of a grammar, vocabulary or mechanical nature–

which are defined as any part of the dialogue in which students speak about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or another person (Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

The work conducted with adult students (Fernández Dobao, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009) concludes that they mainly pay attention to vocabulary and grammar aspects, and less to mechanical aspects of writing (spelling and punctuation). However, studies carried out with primary and year 1 secondary school students (Kim & McDonough, 2011; Villarreal & Munarriz-Ibarrola, in press) show that, unlike adults, children do not deal with grammar aspects but they do with spelling. This finding is related to their cognitive maturity and the fact that their metalinguistic awareness is not yet fully developed (Muñoz, 2014). Finally, in a study conducted as part of a teaching sequence in Catalan with native and non-native pupils in year 6, Guasch and Milian (1999) found that the metalinguistic reflections that emerged in group interaction focused on vocabulary aspects and, to a lesser extent, on spelling aspects and problems linked to text cohesion.

Research analysing metalinguistic activity in the interactions of students who jointly write a text in their mother tongue has mainly been carried out in the context of secondary education (Camps, Ribas, Guasch, & Milian, 1997; Camps *et al.*, 2000; Tormo Guevara, 2017) and includes a previous teaching intervention on the text genre. Tormo Guevara's work is particularly interesting, as it combines the analysis of the metalinguistic activity generated in the interaction with that of the planning, textualisation and revision writing processes (Flower & Hayes, 1981) carried out by the students in the different sessions established in the task. The results obtained in these studies show that students focus on text structure (Camps *et al.*, 1997; Camps *et al.*, 2000), which is the learning objective of the teaching intervention carried out, and that they do so especially when planning the text

(Tormo Guevara, 2017). This result is positive, as it shows that the students, thanks to the intervention, focus their planning on relevant aspects such as the structure of the text genre. Likewise, this study also reveals that students are very concerned about spelling and punctuation issues, especially while reviewing the text. This is in line with the tendency to make more spelling or grammar changes than changes in meaning, which can be seen in revisions carried out individually by both children and adults (Fitzgerald, 1987; Chanquoy, 2001).

As for primary school students who write in their L1, the only studies found providing data on this subject are those carried out in Portugal by Barbeiro and Brandão Carvalho (2006), Madeira (2015) and Montanero and Madeira (2019). The first of them reports on the writing processes that students in different school years focus on while writing collaboratively (specifically, in groups of three). The authors conclude that students are mainly involved in planning and writing, but they do not specify the linguistic levels they pay attention to in each of these processes. On the other hand, Madeira (2015) and Montanero and Madeira (2019) compare, after a teaching intervention, the metalinguistic activity generated by students in different writing subtasks and with different resources to support text planning and revision. Work on planning shows that primary school students tend to focus on generating ideas rather than arranging texts (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; McCutchen, 2006). However, Madeira (2015) and Montanero and Madeira (2019) conclude that following guidelines with questions in planning helps students to focus on structural or semantic-global aspects. It also concludes that the use of a rubric helps to ensure that the review does not exclusively focus on mechanical writing aspects such as spelling, which are easier to detect and correct (Butterfield, Hacker & Plumb, 1994) and which are probably most often given importance by teachers (see Birello & Gil Juan, 2014).

Objectives and research questions

As mentioned above, this study aims at providing data on the metalinguistic activity carried out by primary school students in Spanish L1, a linguistic and educational context that has not yet been researched. More specifically, the study aims at analysing the content of the metalinguistic activity generated in a task of writing a fable in pairs carried out after a teaching intervention on this text genre.

The specific objectives of this research are to identify the linguistic aspects (spelling, punctuation, lexical, morphosyntactic or textual) students pay attention to in their oral interactions; to study whether these vary according to the phase of the task (pre-writing, writing and revision); and to check whether there is a correspondence between the aspects that are the object of attention and the objectives of each phase, namely the planning of the text, its writing and its revision.

This paper therefore aims at answering the following research questions:

1. What is the content of the metalinguistic activity generated in the production of a text written in pairs by primary school students? What language levels (spelling, punctuation, lexical, morphosyntactic or textual) do students pay attention to in this activity?
2. Does the metalinguistic activity vary in the different phases of the task (pre-writing, writing and revision)? Does it correspond to the objectives set for each of them?

Methodology

This study seeks to answer the two research questions through the qualitative analysis of metalinguistic episodes and the quantification of their frequency.

Context and participants

The participants are 18 students (nine boys and nine girls) from the only year 5 (10-11 years old) group in a primary education public school located in a town in Navarre of about 3,000 inhabitants. The school has Spanish as its working language. This educational level was chosen because, generally, students at this age have already automatized the use of the graphic code, which allows them to focus their attention and effort towards higher order processes (Flower and Hayes, 1981).

Instruments and design

The writing task in pairs consisted of the production of a fable, a text genre included in the official curriculum and belonging to the narrative typology primary school students are most familiar with (Kamberelis, 1999). Data collection was carried out on a day in which the students had two consecutive sessions of Spanish Language, so the teaching intervention was carried out in the first part and the writing activity was performed in the second part. This intervention consisted of an oral presentation by the teacher on the characteristics of the fables (characters, structure and parts of the genre, and format of the dialogues) and the recommendation to plan before writing (generate the ideas and arrange them) and to review the text before handing it in. After this first explanatory session, the teacher made pairs at random and asked the students to write a fable taking into account what had been said in the previous session. Each pair carried out the writing processes autonomously, without support resources and without any kind of guideline or time limit for each of them.

Analysis

The oral interactions of each pair were recorded with audio recorders and analysed using the Atlas.ti 8¹ qualitative data analysis program, with an inter-coder agreement rate of 91.88%.

The episode (Storch, 2005) is the unit of analysis used to study both metalinguistic activity and the processes carried out by students. The episodes were delimited according to the content of the interactions, that is to say, they were considered to end when the conversation changed its focus of interest, so they could be made up of one or several utterances.

In the analysis of metalinguistic activity –corresponding to our first research question– the characterisation of episodes was initially based on linguistic levels (spelling, punctuation, lexical, morphosyntactic and textual). During the analysis, new codes were created within the textual level which served to characterise the metalinguistic activity of learners more precisely, namely the codes “genre parts”, “genre characteristics”, “paragraphs” and “principles of textuality” (see table 1).

Given that the same episode could receive several codes relating to different aspects, it was deemed appropriate to carry out a codification in two layers: a first layer referring to the linguistic levels, and a second layer corresponding to the principles of textuality, which, although they constitute metalinguistic activity at a textual level, may also involve other linguistic levels. For this reason, episodes where there was co-occurrence of codes were counted as different episodes.

To answer the second research question concerning the correspondence of the metalinguistic activity generated with the objectives of each phase of the task (pre-writing, writing and revision), a delimitation of each phase was

made by identifying the statements that clearly marked the beginning or the end of textualisation such as “A1: Start, start, come on. Once upon a time...” or “A1: I am telling Marta we are done. A2: No, no, no, there still are spelling mistakes”.

Results

The analysis of the frequency of metalinguistic episodes shows a predominance of episodes in which students talk about the textual aspects that were dealt with in the teaching intervention –the parts and characteristics of the genre, the separation into paragraphs–, as well as those dedicated to mechanical aspects of writing –spelling and punctuation– (see table 2). The linguistic levels students pay the least attention to are lexicon, morphosyntax and the principles of textuality –coherence, cohesion and adequacy–. However, variation between couples is very high.

In relation to the second research question, in global terms, metalinguistic activity varies according to the phase of the activity (see table 3): in the pre-writing stage, it focuses on the textual aspects worked on in the teaching intervention (parts and characteristics of the genre and paragraphs), and in the revision stage it focuses on mechanical aspects (spelling). However, students generate most of the metalinguistic episodes, which are of diverse content, in the writing stage.

In the pre-writing stage, some couples talk about the need to give the story a title, although most decide to do it at the end. Half of the couples also refer to the moral, so that it guides, in some way, the story they are going to build. Revision is identified with spelling correction, mainly of accent marks. However, it should be noted that there is a lot of variability between couples with regard to the length of pre-writing and revision. While all the couples discuss before starting to write, only two couples review the text (see table 4).

Table 1
 Metalinguistic activity. Categories of analysis

Code	Example
Spelling	A1: <i>Érase</i> has an accent, doesn't it? A2: <i>Eraséee</i> is not right; <i>era</i> , I don't know. We will figure it out later. <i>Érase</i> is one or two words? A1: <i>Érase</i> does have an accent! Because it is stressed on the third-to-last syllable A2: <i>É-ra-se</i> , but <i>erase</i> A1: <i>Éeeerase</i> (Couple 4)
Punctuation	A1: That is it. Period A2: Never again... A1: No, no, no; period, period (Couple 1)
Lexical	A2: No, when the whistle sounded A1: The siren [<i>sirena</i>] A2: (LAUGHTER) A1: The shark's friends A2: Cause the siren goes uhhhh uhhhh A1: But the siren [<i>sirena</i>], the siren is a mermaid [<i>sirena</i>] who lives underwater A2: (LAUGHTER) It is true, since there are no sirens underwater, the mermaid [<i>sirena</i>] sings. When the mermaid sang (LAUGHTER) A1: When the mermaid sang (Couple 1) ¹
Morphosyntactic	A1: On the basis of this, we learn about that... A2: That, not about that A1: That (Couple 7)
Textual	Genre parts A2: I guess we should include a moral now A1: And the title! A2: We should think about the moral and the title, let us see, the moral (Couple 4)
	Genre characteristics A2: Orca, not a human name A1: Yes, because it is a fable and fables... (Couple 2)
	Paragraphs A1: In another, another paragraph (Couple 8)
	Principles of textuality Coherence A2: [...] he was swimming in the sea A1: Now me, and he comes across a swordfish, right? A2: And he came across (Couple 3)
	Cohesion A1: When he came, the challenge was, and we say what the challenge was A2: No, no, no, here you wrote, one day the shark was ready to challenge him, next day... that is how we start A1: He challenged him A2: Yeah, right (Couple 7)
	Adequacy A1: She took off the decorations and put in whatever she felt like; no, it sounds bad; the one she wanted. (Couple 5)

¹ The word *sirena* in Spanish has two meanings: siren and mermaid.

Table 2
Episodes of metalinguistic activity and data on variability between couples

	No. of episodes	Variability between couples		
		Average	Standard deviation	Variation coefficient
Genre parts and characteristics	135	15	6.38	0.43
Paragraphs	18	2	1.41	0.70
Spelling	66	7.33	8.29	1.13
Punctuation	76	8.44	6.44	0.76
Lexicon	28	3.11	3.44	1.11
Morphosyntax	14	1.56	1.24	0.79
Principles of textuality	14	1.56	1.24	0.79

Table 3
Distribution of the metalinguistic episodes according to the phases of the task

	Pre-writing	Writing	Revision	TOTAL
Genre parts and characteristics	25	109	1	135
Paragraphs	2	16	0	18
Spelling	0	42	24	66
Punctuation	0	76	0	76
Lexicon	0	28	0	28
Morphosyntax	0	14	0	14
Principles of textuality	0	14	0	14

Table 4
Time spent by each couple and number of total episodes of textual and spelling aspects

	Total time	Pre-writing time	Revision time	Episodes of textual aspects	Episodes of spelling	Total episodes
Couple 1	24'	4' 20"	0	12	5	38
Couple 2	28'	2' 10"	0	21	15	52
Couple 3	24'	2'20"	0	18	1	33
Couple 4	31' 10"	2' 15"	3' 40"	32	18	61
Couple 5	27'	5' 55'	4' 55'	16	21	41
Couple 6	35'	2' 30"	0	19	4	50
Couple 7	30' 15"	1'	0	24	1	49
Couple 8	9'	1' 35"	0	5	1	9
Couple 9	18'34"	1'55"	0	16	0	18

Additionally, as can be seen in table 4, despite the fact that in global terms pre-writing is devoted to text-level metalinguistic discussions and revision to spelling, there is no clear correspondence between the time spent on pre-writing or revision and the number of metalinguistic episodes of one kind or another. That is, there are couples who, despite not spending time on revision, generate many spelling episodes (couple 2), and there are couples who generate a high number of text-level episodes despite spending little time on pre-writing (couple 7).

Discussion and conclusions

With regard to our first research question, that is, what is the content of the metalinguistic activity that takes place in the interactions, results show several interesting facts.

First of all, in our research we found numerous episodes referring to the textual level, specifically to the parts and characteristics of the fable and its arrangement in paragraphs, contents dealt with in the teaching intervention. However, episodes referring to the principles of textuality, which were not the subject of the intervention, are very rare. In this sense, our results are in line with those observed by Camps *et al.* (1997, 2000) and Tormo Guevara (2017), who highlight the influence that the teaching intervention -in those cases, a didactic sequence- has on the metalinguistic activity of students. Although it is true that this influence cannot be demonstrated in this research, since it does not present an adequate experimental design for this purpose, it would be reasonable to think that these episodes would probably not have been so numerous in the absence of a teaching intervention on the text genre.

Secondly, there are a large number of episodes relating to spelling and punctuation levels, reflecting the concern of students at these ages with the mechanical aspects of writing. This result is very similar to those obtained by

Tormo Guevara (2017) in the context of secondary education and those obtained by Kim and McDonough (2011) and Villarreal and Munarriz-Ibarrola (in press) in L2/FL. The high frequency of this type of episodes can be related to the cognitive maturity of students at these ages, since their metalinguistic awareness is developing (Muñoz, 2014). However, in our analysis it can be found –although not in a high number of episodes– that students have certain metalinguistic knowledge about some textual, morphosyntactic and lexical aspects, as can also be inferred from the study by Guasch and Milian (1999).

By means of the second research question, we aimed at determining whether the content of the metalinguistic activity varies according to the stage of the task students are at and if such content corresponds to the objectives of each stage: planning –or more specifically arranging ideas according to the genre structure– when pre-writing, writing and revising the text. It was found that, in the pre-writing stage, metalinguistic activity is focused on the textual level, so this does correspond to the objective of this phase, namely, planning the text. As it could be expected, the object of planning refers to the text as a whole and not to specific sentences. The post-writing stage –the phase students spend less time on, as in the study by Barbeiro and Brandão Carvalho (2006)– is devoted to the revision of the text. Within it, the metalinguistic activity is mainly focused on the spelling level, as occurs in individual revision according to different studies (Fitzgerald, 1987; Butterfield, Hacker, & Plumb, 1994; Chanquoy, 2001). The fact that the final revision is merely devoted to spelling may be due to two factors. On the one hand, errors of this kind are the easiest to detect and correct (Butterfield *et al.*, 1994), especially for students of this age group who, as already mentioned, are developing their metalinguistic awareness (Muñoz, 2014). On the other hand, it would also be reasonable to think that, as Tormo Guevara (2017) states, the students' concern for

the mechanical aspects of writing derives from the fact that teachers identify good writing with writing without spelling errors (Birello & Gil Juan, 2014) and that, throughout Primary Education, the type of feedback and corrections they receive are mainly of a spelling nature. In this sense, Madeira (2015) and Montanero and Madeira (2019) point out that the use of rubrics that deal with other non-mechanical aspects of writing help students to diversify their revision.

Despite the fact that the content of metalinguistic activity is predominantly on a textual level before writing and on a mechanical level after writing, most episodes of metalinguistic activity relating to the textual level (characteristics and parts of the genre) and mechanical level (spelling) occur during textualisation. This is because, as pointed out by Flowers and Hayes (1981) *inter alia*, planning and reviewing processes are recursive and can occur during textualisation. In fact, during textualisation we find many moments when students stop to generate ideas and distribute them in different parts of the text (typical planning tasks), moments when they stop writing and read part or the whole text written to make remarks for spelling or punctuation, or moments when one partner is checking the writing of the other and detecting potential errors (typical revision activities). The fact that students plan and revise during textualisation may explain the variability between couples and the mismatch between the time spent on pre-writing or reviewing and the number of metalinguistic episodes devoted to each aspect.

Thanks to the research presented, we have now valuable information to advance in a deeper understanding of the processes involved in children's writing and to support the design of teaching interventions that target this competence in primary classrooms. Firstly, our results support the idea of carrying out teaching interventions focused on a text genre, as suggested by several works (Camps, 2003; Dolz-Mestre & Gagnon, 2010; Tormo Guevara, 2017), as these

can have a positive influence on the type of metalinguistic activity that takes place in interactions by encouraging exchanges related to the textual level. Secondly, the fact that not all couples review the text after writing and those who do limit their discussion to spell-checking, shows that it is necessary to explicitly work on the process of textual revision in order to encourage and diversify it, in line with the general recommendation of Chanquoy (2001). It would also be advisable, in line with Madeira (2015) and Montanero and Madeira (2019), to use resources to support revision, directing the attention of students of these ages to non-mechanical aspects of writing such as the principles of textuality (coherence, cohesion and adequacy), which are hardly present in our data.

However, we are aware that the descriptive and non-experimental nature of this research does not allow us to explain to what extent our results are conditioned by the teaching intervention carried out or by the previous writing experience of the students. In addition, due to the great variability between pairs and the limited size of the sample (nine pairs), generalisations about metalinguistic activity or about the writing processes that students carry out at this age and in this type of task cannot be made. Therefore, after this first descriptive approach, we believe it is advisable to design wider experimental studies in which the impact of teaching interventions can be checked. These experimental studies should incorporate other research instruments (questionnaires or interviews) aimed at recording the teaching methodology or the writing experience of the students, and could focus on other ages and other textual genres.

Notes

1. Atlas.ti (version 8) is a programme for qualitative data analysis developed by Scientific Software Development GmbH <https://atlasti.com/>

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