

Paired fiction writing: the dialogal text as a structure that triggers “verbal erasure”

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This study is inserted in the field of studies on Textual Genetics (GRÉSILLON, 1994) and Enunciation Linguistics (AUTHIER-REVUZ, 1995) and is aimed at analyzing the recursiveness that occurs in the writing process of a story made up by two Brazilian pupils. Having assumed “haphazardness” and “dialogism” as the central phenomena of this process, I relate erasure to the points of tension that emerge during the “dialogal text” (BRES & NOWAKOWSKA, 2006) established by the pupils as they discuss and write the story they have invented. The dialogal text is thus characterized starting from two essential points: i. the alternation of groups *in praesentia* (which evidently assumes an entire visual, auditory, gestural and interactional apparatus pertaining to a classroom) in which previous dialogues are succeeded by and linked to subsequent dialogues; and ii. The temporal flow of the instance of utterance (management of transactional places, pauses, phatic and regulatory realizations, completives, etc.) shared by the speakers. These forms of return occurring in the flow of co-writing the current text echo from certain points of tension in the writing process, reflecting the possibilities of configuration of the final text. I therefore understand the point of tension in the writing process – and the erasure that gives it visibility – based on the dimension of interlocutory dialogism and of interdiscursive dialogism. This approximation between dialogism and erasure is justified by the simple fact that every return over a text in the process of being written points to a “difference” in the narrative flow between what was stated and what is going to be stated. In this sense, erasure carries within it, implicitly or not, another form of stating that influences a “previously expressed” statement. This observation is fundamental to the explicitation of the nature of the “verbal erasure”.

Respecting methodological ethnolinguistic characteristics, the writing process was filmed in a classroom in the city of São Paulo (Brazil), and its transcription was supported by the Eudico Linguistic Annotator (ELAN) program. In addition,

the methodological procedure has two other important characteristics: a) the subjects are six- to eight-year-old pupils who have only recently learned to read and write, i.e., pupils who are writing their first texts; and b) the collected data covering the entire development of the classroom activity is recorded with a camcorder (Handycam). This resource allows for access to the natural context that an audio recording does not provide. By filming the scene in which the practice of textualization is established, one gains access to the time and space of its occurrence. This form of registration ensures the documentation not only of the classroom's physical space (walls with posters, notices, drawings, alphabets on the blackboard, the arrangement of the work tables, etc.) but also of its social aspect constituted by the actors involved (the forms of teacher-student and student-student interaction, presentation of the assignment, organization and distribution of the students in the classroom, etc.). Through the adjustment of the dyad during the creation and writing process one also obtains a real record of the dialogue and everything that characterizes the face-to-face interaction in these school conditions: from facial expressions, gestures, looks, position of the pen upon the paper to the interaction with the teacher or with nearby classmates. During two years 19 production situations text of the same pair of students were filmed. Were identified and classified all forms of recurrence set out by these two students.

In view of this methodological design and the enunciative perspective adopted, I propose an expansion of the understanding of the phenomenon of erasure. It would no longer be limited to the marks left upon a sheet of paper, when one considers the fact that writing is done in pairs. If the erasure reflects a return to a point of tension of the ongoing text, the returns of the co-writers over these points may be considered a form of erasure, a form of "verbal erasure." I describe three kinds of verbal erasure accompanied by diverse commentaries, characterized as "pragmatic," "textual," and "autonymic modalization." The analysis emphasizes, on the one hand, haphazardness and the instant of its occurrence and, on the other, the way in which what the pupils say is related to interdiscursive dialogism and to interlocutive dialogism. The intersubjective disagreement identified in the dialogal text highlights a term, suspending it, questioning it and commenting upon it, which may be substituted, inscribed or suppressed from the final text.

The haphazardness and dialogism typical of the enunciative action are related to the writers' returns over what was said, and the verbal erasure is testimony of the subjective positions that singularize both the writing process and their school text. These points are characterized co-enunciatively and materialize, via the dialogal text, the play of meanings that is established in the time and space of the (re)flux of shared stating. Haphazardness accompanies the emergence of these points, with verbal erasures occurring either through the direct substitution of elements that have already been stated or through returns marked by comments and annotations concerning diverse elements (graphic visual, orthographic, pragmatic, syntactical, lexical, semantic, textual), which may (or not) be part of the final configuration of the text. From these points the verbal erasures irradiate, echo, reflect: unpredictable returns over the flow of co-enunciative statement, revealing in the process of creation the directions towards other discourses and, at the same time, what enabled the establishment of the finished text itself.

References

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