Writing as a Social Act in English Brazilian Language Teacher Education: Possible Contributions to Future Teachers’ Language Capacities Development

A escrita como agir social na formação de professores brasileiros de língua inglesa: possíveis contribuições para o desenvolvimento de suas capacidades de linguagem

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Abstract: This research is related to foreign Language Teacher Education based on the study of genres. It aims at investigating the types of correction used by the teacher-researcher and their role in the development of future teachers’ language capacities through writing taken as social act. It is grounded on Socio-discursive Interactionism and the procedure of didactic sequence. The data collecting was constituted by three versions of a Comment written by a future teacher in the English Language III course, during the implementation of a Didactic Sequence and the teacher-researcher’s correction types on their texts. The data analysis techniques were based on the identification of the correction types and the language capacities. Considering the three steps of writing in the didactic sequence implemented: i. initial production; ii. revising and rewriting; iii. final production and the correction types identified, this investigation presents an alternative to provide future teachers with a unique experience that can contribute to the process of English learning as well as to the student’s language capacities development.

Keywords: Teacher education; Study of genres; Writing.
Introduction

Teaching English through genre-based approaches in Language Teacher Education has become a guideline considering the different official documents that rule Language Teaching Programs. Taking this into account, it becomes necessary to encourage students in performing genre-related language operations so that they can act in the world either through orality or writing conceived as forms of social act (Bazerman, 1994), stating a relation to the work with language as a social practice.

Regarding the possible contributions coming from Socio-discursive Interactionism (SDI) (Brockert, 2007), we aim at investigating the types of correction used by the teacher-researcher and their contribution to the development of future teachers’ language capacities (LC) (Dolz; Pasquier & Brockert, 1993) through writing as social act.

Teaching English based on the genre will help future teachers to appropriate diverse ways to act in the world and will also allow their human development. Given the premises of writing as a form of social act along with some lack of studies in this area in Foreign Language Teacher Education, we conducted this research focusing on the LC development of a group of undergraduate students who were being prepared to be English Language teachers. So, this paper aims at answering two research questions: i. What types of corrections were used by the teacher-researcher? ii. In what aspects can distinct types of correction contribute to the LC development of the future teacher during the process of writing, correction, revising and rewriting?

This text is organized into four sections. Firstly, we discuss the main theoretical considerations. Secondly, we describe the methodological framework and then we expose and discuss the research findings to point out contributions from the results of this research to the English learning and teaching process and teacher education as well. Finally, conclusions are drawn and a view to opening avenues for further studies arises.
Theoretical Considerations: Language Capacities and Pedagogical Tools

According to Dolz, Pasquier and Bronckart (1993, p. 30), LC is related to “required skills for the production of a text in a determined situation of interaction”. These authors distinguish the LC in action capacities, discursive capacities, and linguistic-discursive capacities. Action capacities deal with the context of production and are related to situational objectives. Discursive capacities are related to the text’s organization and refer to discursive objectives. Linguistic-discursive capacities are related to linguistic units and the discursive-linguistic parameters that help construct the text.

Based on the work done by Dolz, Pasquier and Bronckart (1993), Cristovão and Stutz (2011) propose the significance capacities which make it possible for individuals to construct meanings from the representation and/or knowledge, about social practices (e.g., ideological, historical, sociocultural, economic contexts). Lenharo (2016) defines multisemiotic capacities as forms of understanding different semiosis that constitute all non-verbal elements.

To achieve the purpose of a DS Dolz; Noverraz & Schneuwly (2004) proposed a DS basic structure which consists of the following steps: presentation of the situation, initial production, module one, module two, module “n” and final production. This structure takes into consideration the relevance of developing the students’ LC during the process of producing texts either orally or written. The research group Language and Education adapted the basic scheme of the Didactic Sequence, as shown in Figure 1.

The DS resignification offers mobility and articulation that allows language teachers to analyze the students’ oral or written productions to check if the progress expected by the teachers and the stu-

![Figure 1. Resignification of the DS Scheme](image)

Source: Adapted from Miquelante (2019, p. 85).
dents has been achieved. If the expected progress does not happen, despite all the notions and instruments studied during the modules, likewise the mediation occurred through the teacher’s correction made in the different versions of a text, it is the teacher’s responsibility to decide regarding the purpose to contribute to the development of students’ LC.

Taking that into account and the fact that writing practices, defined as forms of social act, can function as a lever for several activities within the school environment (Dolz; Gagnon; Decândio, 2010), it is indispensable to consider the roles of the teacher, the students, the text to be produced, additionally the place of interaction in which the teaching process takes place.

Writing is a central task in various levels of education because producing and understanding a variety of written texts is one of the objectives of language teaching. For Dolz; Gagnon; Decândio, (2010), writing is a complex activity and “developing writing skills implies a transformation in the student’s knowledge and language capacities” (p. 31). Thus, we understand that text production is more than merely organizing words and language structure. It is also about being able to master specific knowledge of the conditions of production such as the purpose, the interlocutor, the genre, the content, the support where the text will circulate/be published, and the tone to be used by the text producer.

When producing a text, students can consider it as an object “to be worked on, revisited, redone and even be rejected, until the moment when it can be displayed to its reader” (Dolz; Noverraz; Schneuwly, 2004, p. 112). Agreeing with this position, we argue that to avoid a lack in the writing process the students need to understand the relevance of revising and rewriting a text after the teachers’ correction.

These steps are considered by Dolz; Gagnon and Decândio (2010) as one of the operations for the production of a text, together with the checklist as a guide for the students’ revising and rewriting. However, the aforementioned authors do not discuss the types of correction teachers can use as a mediation tool. With the intent to investigate the role of teachers’ correction in the students’ LC development, and relying on the studies of Brazilian experts, such as Ruiz (2013) and Menegassi and Gasparatto (2016), we assume the types of correction as a nodal mediation tool in the writing process.

Ruiz (2013) investigated the impact of types of correction used by the teachers in students’ texts and pointed out the relevance of revising as part of the rewriting task. For her, the types of correction may vary according to the strategies used throughout the process. This author starts from Serafini’s (1995) proposal, which presents three perspectives that may be performed by teachers: resolutive, indicative and classificatory and then Ruiz (2013) proposes the textual-interactive correction.

According to Ruiz (2013), the resolutive correction leads to accurate solutions to errors identified in the text by teachers’ assessment. This type can be done through the following strategies in the text body: i. addition; ii. substitution; iii. displacement; iv. suppression. At the text margin, teachers write alternative forms to correct the identified errors. Another strategy used in resolutive correction is the post-text, in which words with error(s) are written correctly. The indicative corrections are performed by iconic symbols, which highlight the problems in the text. The classificatory corrections encourage students to rewrite the text based on a group of metalinguistic symbols that are known by them. The textual-interactive corrections take place using feedback at the end of the text, enabling the teacher to guide the text, make suggestions, talk to the students, and give them the opportunity of having an active role in the process of revising and rewriting their texts. Ruiz (2013) asserts the process of cor-
rection has the potential to be highly dialogical if teachers prioritize the indicative, the classificatory or the textual-interactive corrections. These types can help students to solve problems in their writing that they would not notice through the resolutive correction.

Ruiz’s proposal (2013) about textual-interactive correction is expanded by Menegassi and Gasparotto (2016) who introduce three different possibilities for this type of correction: i. questioning – used to raise students’ awareness of problems identified in the text, aside from guiding them to a reflection; ii. Noting – frequently done through imperative sentences is used to show what must be revised and how to do it; and iii. commenting – made through a more complete correction that covers the other two textual-interactive correction forms, creating an opportunity for a dialogue among the teacher, student, and the text.

The perspective of correction previously presented seems to be a methodological alternative that meets what is expected in the DS proposal. Thus, it is possible to understand that correction, revising, and rewriting procedures imply various positions taken by both, the student, and the teacher. From our point of view, this study advances our knowledge to the extent that it allows us to rethink formative practices related to writing as social act and the types of correction teachers can use as a mediation tool.

Method

This study is guided by the qualitative approach and by the conception that a research is craftwork, a permanent and unfinished process that enables the understanding of the social reality investigated (Minayo, 2002). It is part of an intervention based on the Formative Didactic Experiment, whose groundwork comes from Vygotsky (Davidov, 1988; Aquino, 2014) and collaborators. It assumes the (re)organization of the study, the practice of new teaching procedures, “with the purpose of evaluating to what extent the experimental didactic systems facilitate the appropriation of knowledge as well as conduct to the mental and integral development of students […]” (Aquino, 2014, p.3). This kind of research allows an investigation that considers the specificities of the English Language Teacher Education context, the planning of the teaching activities conducted and the study of the impact of such practice concerning LC development.

Site of the Study and Participants

This research was conducted at a Public University in the State of Paraná, Brazil. At this university, Language Teacher Education is offered for undergraduate students to become teachers of Portuguese and English Languages as well as their respective Literature.

The first author was immersed in the context of investigation as a teacher-researcher and, even though all the (fifteen) students had been invited to take part in the study and signed the post-informed consent, four of them were selected to have their written texts analyzed. However, for this paper, the sample is composed of three versions of the Comment written by Rafael Zeferino de Souza¹. The

¹ Rafael’s real name is used under his own permission given on the Free Consent Form.
results were analyzed in terms of the implication of the writing, correction, revising, and rewriting process concerning the advances of the future teacher’s LC. In a text written by Rafael, as one of the data collection instruments, he described his English study trajectory. He wrote he had always studied at public schools and, according to him, his greatest difficulty was in accomplishing listening tasks. He mentioned that it was not difficult for him to accomplish grammar and reading tasks and translation of short texts and statements. He did not mention anything about writing.

**Data Source and Analysis Procedures**

The data collection occurred in the first semester of 2014 in the English Language III course, in the third year of a Language Teacher Education Program. This data came from the implementation of a DS entitled “Poem: reading beyond the words”. This DS centers on the study of the following genres: Poems, Short Story, and Comments. The DS was one of the mediation instruments that composed the Teacher Education Sequence. The DS is divided into nineteen modules. These modules focus on communicative context, study of genres, content, contextual, discursive, and linguistic-discursive elements, critical thinking, and concerning writing, the DS focuses on the production of a Comment on the poem “The road not taken” to be published at <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-road-not-taken/>. The methodological procedures used in this research involved a systematic way of writing, correcting, revising, and rewriting.

To identify the correction types, we took the criteria postulated by Serafini (1995), Ruiz (2013) and Menegassi and Gasparotto (2016) as previously discussed. These types of corrections enable the researchers to identify future teachers’ learning needs. We used Dolz, Pasquier and Bronckart (1993), Cristovão and Stutz (2011), and Lenharo (2016) LC categories to evaluate the future teacher’s productions.

After having described the methodology of this research, we will discuss the research findings in the next section.

**Research Findings and Discussion**

First the proposal of the writing process in the DS implemented is presented. Subsequently, the types of correction conducted on the future teacher’s different versions of the written Comments. Finally, the possible advances on the last version of the future teacher’s text are brought to discuss the implication of these corrections in LC development through the process of writing planned as part of the DS activities.

**Presenting the Writing Process and the Teacher-Researcher’s Types of Correction**

Initial production was conducted in class right after the presentation of the communication situation (see Figure 2). At that moment, we explained the situation of communication to the future teachers so that they could write the first version of the Comment which would be published on the website PoemHunter.com as a task in the section Concluding the unit. The texts were collected by the teacher-researcher for further correction.
Figure 2 demonstrates the task instructions for the DS writing process. Then, under the proposal of the DS resignification, after the initial production, the teacher-researcher worked with a few modules which aimed at offering the students tools that could contribute to overcoming problems identified in the initial production (Dolz; Noverraz; Schneuwly, 2004). In the investigated material, there is a module focused on three Comments about the poem “The road not taken.” It is organized into the following tasks: a) reflecting on the genre; b) reflecting on the content and the context; c) reflecting on the language and d) evoking critical thinking.

After these tasks, the initial production was given back to the future teacher so that he could revise and rewrite it based on the teacher-researcher’s corrections, as well as on the task instruction for revising and rewriting presented in Figure 2.

In a second moment, the teacher-researcher chose to make a more detailed correction, using Word’s Track Changes features. The corrections were done in the first language for our understanding that using the English Language could make the accomplishment of the task more difficult.

The task instruction for the final production directed the future teacher to observe the second version of his text by making use of the checklist (See Figure 2) which is proposed by Dolz, Noverraz & Schneuwly (2004) as a systematic register of knowledge acquired by students along with a DS. However, at that point, the student had also received the second version with a more detailed correction made by the teacher-researcher.

**Figure 2.** The tasks instructions for the process of writing

Source: Adapted from Miquelante (2019).
The analysis of these task instructions indicates a lack in the DS implemented that can be a contribution to the resignification of other DS productions. This lack refers to the fact that it is necessary to present a clearer writing task instruction since the initial production includes the checklist elements which call attention to the LC.

As seen in the theoretical framework, the Genevan authors proposed the writing process in two steps: the initial production and the final production. According to them, this proposal allows the students and the teachers to practice the formative evaluation. It also defines what must be done so that the students’ LC can be developed. However, in this study, the Genevan proposal is extended it to three steps, initial production, revising and rewriting and final production. One more step was added because we consider the interaction promoted by such action would contribute to the students’ awareness of writing as a conscious, planned, and rethought work.

Because our research participants were future teachers, we intended that in each step they could recognize their learning difficulties and act upon them. In this sense, we agree with Garcez (2010) when pointing out the relevance of intensive participation of the other for the creation and incorporation of effective procedures to reread and analyze the text in progress.

Bearing in mind the types of correction used by the teacher-researcher as a valuable mediation tool, we analyzed Rafael’s initial and second version productions to get a wider view of the way the texts were corrected, which is illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.

These data show the teacher-researcher made use of diverse types of corrections in Rafael’s text.

**Figure 3. Initial production and types of correction**

Source: Adapted from Miquelante (2019).
By analyzing Rafael’s initial production, we can observe the use of the resolutive/suppression correction, once a crossed-out circle suggests the elimination of lexical items. Besides, there is the use of indicative correction in the text body. The teacher-researcher underlined specific words, wrote a number under them, and gave feedback referring to the number at the end of the text. The way this feedback was done goes along with the textual-active/noting correction (Menegassi; Gasparotto, 2016). Finally, there is the feedback that questions the social function of the Comment, aiming at getting “a verbal behavior in response” (Ruiz, 2013, p. 70). This kind of correction is classified as textual-interactive/questioning (Menegassi; Gasparotto, 2016). Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of the types of correction used by the teacher-researcher.

The findings evidenced the teacher-researcher was more concerned with the microstructural problems of the text than with the possibility of creating an interaction involving the future teacher so that he could feel encouraged to improve his text (Ruiz, 2013; Menegassi; Gasparotto, 2016).

Rafael’s partial success makes us corroborate with the Genevan authors as to the fact that the initial production allows the students to find out their potentialities and what they still must learn. It also indicates the aspects teachers should intervene in (Dolz; Noverraz; Schneuwly, 2004). These findings also point to the relevance of the systematized study developed during the DS implementation.

As a sequence of the representative sample, we evidence the second version produced by Rafael to identify the types of correction used by the teacher-researcher.

Rafael started his second version by adding the genre social function fostered by the teacher-research feedback. This reveals he had accepted the teacher-researcher’s corrections. This acceptance
can be confirmed by other changes in his text which indicate the dialogical process occurred once the systematized work implemented allowed that.

With regards to the types of correction, we have observed that the teacher-researcher chose not to solve the problems detected but questioned Rafael, demanding him to retake topics he had already studied. Considering the participant was a future teacher, we evaluate the correction to make him aware of the importance of being autonomous in his actions. In this version of the text, we identified the use of the types of correction as illustrated in the percentage in Figure 4.

After noticing the teacher-researcher used diverse types of correction during this revising and rewriting process, we evidenced the use of indicative, besides the presence of textual-interactive commenting, noting, and questioning. These results allow us to see the teacher-researcher’s attempt at putting into practice what is expected from a dialogical teaching practice that comprehends correction to empower the students to think about their text (Ruiz, 2013).

Although we have classified some of the corrections made by the teacher-researcher as resolutive, we may also consider them as textual-interactive. We assert that because we are dealing with a foreign language, whose content required by the student to accomplish a task is always recognized as scientific knowledge (Vigotski, 2009).

The use of distinct types of correction can be related to the theory proposed by Dolz, Gagnon and Decândio (2010) in which they mention teachers’ responsibility in being mediators in students’ learning process and in raising their awareness concerning the language as a tool to communicate.

At last, we present Rafael’s final production which was published on the website PoemHunter.com following the agreement signed at the presentation of the situation.

**Figure 5.** Final production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUÇÃO FINAL - 102 palavras</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment by Rafael Zeferino – 2ª 10/06/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I loved this poem. It’s very nice, It became one of my favorites. The poem shows we have choices in life and that we must choose what is the best for us. The lyrical I, he had to make a decision about which road he would choose in life. Both ways could have a satisfying result, but only one was chosen. I believe that in periods of my life I always have to choose what’s the best for me, or at least, try to pick what I think will be the best because whatever I choose for sure will make me happy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correção da professora-formadora</td>
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<tr>
<td>What – which</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERSÃO PUBLICADA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rafael Zeferino (7/27/2014 10:54:00 PM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I loved this poem. It’s very nice, It became one of my favorites. The poem shows we have choices in life and that we must choose which is the best for us. The lyrical I, he had to make a decision about which road he would choose in life. Both ways could have a satisfactory result, but only one was chosen. I believe that in periods of my life I always have to choose which the best for me, or at least, try to pick what I think will be the best because whatever I choose for sure will make me happy. Rafaí - Brazil I Delete this message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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This sample demonstrates the relevance of student responsiveness and autonomy when engaging in teaching and learning as proposed by the Geneva School. It is possible to affirm the dialogical interaction that occurred along with the process of writing, revising, and rewriting through the diverse types of corrections used by the teacher-researcher.

This interaction allows us to consider the possible contributions from the types of correction analysis referring to the future teacher’s LC development, since the results show evidence related to advances between the initial and the final product about the lack of mobilizing the LC, in the first moment. Thus, we emphasize the necessity of continuous rereading, revising, and rewriting, mostly in the context of English Language Teacher Education.

As we can see in, Rafael’s partial accomplishment of LC reveals he could understand the situation of communication, even though his text indicates he had not mobilized, in some manner, the LC, due to a lack of knowledge of the target genre and a lack of linguistic-discursive aspects.

When analyzing the second version of the text revised and rewritten based on the teacher’s feedback, and on the LC that had not been fulfilled by Rafael in the initial production, we can notice an enlargement of the text content concerning the fulfillment of LC. This enlargement can be attributed to Rafael’s predisposition to experience a challenge as a future teacher.

However, despite the evidence content enlargement, we observed difficulties concerning LDC elements, as well as some aspects related to grammar and orthography (See Figure 6) once the identified problems are not only related to the genre Comment but also involve the future teacher’s different learning needs. This evidence emphasizes the importance of work beyond the levels of language structure presented in the target genre, which is named by Dolz, Gagnon and Decândio (2010) as transversal dimensions to writing. According to them, these kinds of needs must be dealt with in class once these dimensions will help students to understand where and how grammar contents and accurate word spelling may help them to be successful in different interactions they may participate in their social milieu.

Rafael’s final production set forth progress concerning the LC, and his engagement in accomplishing all the required tasks from the initial production to the final one goes along with Ruiz’s proposal (2013), as she asserts that when correction occurs through teachers and students’ interaction it can help them to master writing more effectively. This author presents factors involved in the process of writing, revising, and rewriting. Among them, we point out “the empathy in relation to the teacher, the language and the specific writing task; the students’ engagement with their writing and rewriting process; their accomplishment with their text theme, with the text purposes and with the virtual reader.” (Ruiz, 2013, p. 183).

The scraps in Figure 6 illustrate Rafael’s interactions with the corrections proposed by the teacher-researcher in his different versions of the text, as well as the teacher-researcher’s notes.

Figure 6 allows us to assess the mediation process during the operation of writing, correction, revising, and rewriting demonstrating Rafael’s progress. This figure also shows the interaction that occurred and the relevance of teaching a language guided by “a language approach that considers the speaker and all the social aspects involved in the specific tasks of using, building, and interpreting the language” (Ruiz, 2013, p. 179). Following this perspective of writing, Bazerman (2013, p. 52) states that “by learning to write in the typified forms available at one’s time and social place, one learns not only means of participation but the very motives and objects one might have”.

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To summarize, the process of writing, correcting, revising, and rewriting the Comment seems to confirm our defense of the mobility and plasticity of the work done through the DS procedure, as well as the LC continuous and articulated movement. Another important aspect refers both to the possibility of accompanying the student’s development and the opportunity to intervene, through the diverse types of correction on the difficulties presented during the text production process. We emphasize the importance of raising awareness of the contributions of a genre-based approach for future interactions in different social contexts, and the types of correction teachers use as a mediation tool, which is a strong and relevant aspect of the study.

**Conclusion**

We have discussed writing as a social act and the types of correction as valid and reliable mediation tools that can help students in developing their LC, once, this research emerged from the necessity to promote a discussion on foreign Language Teacher Education and learning, based on the study of genres and the possibility of the student’s LC development through the process of writing, correction, revising and rewriting under the SDI perspective.

Regarding the research question about the types of correction used by the teacher-researcher, we ratify the premise that the use of textual-interactive commenting, noting, and questioning provides an opportunity for dialogical teaching practice. Under this view, we identified the use of the textual-interactive type of correction, which can be seeing as a promising a coherent proposal to the future teachers’ learning needs according to the DS procedure.

Concerning the second research question about the possible contributions of the types of correction to future teachers’ LC development, this study reinforces the need of taking mediation as a relevant tool in the writing process when it is understood as a social act once the data revealed such contribution. We assume this perspective collaborates to the appropriation of language practices and
the mediation tools used in this study facilitate this appropriation. Thus, a key strength of this study is the fact that it enabled social participation through text production and circulation.

Regarding limitations, the results can not be generalized, but they provide insights into the area of the possible contributions in supporting the theoretical framework underlying the SDI for teaching and learning practices, the DS procedure, and the types of correction as mediation tools for teaching a foreign language.

Although a concern for the transversal dimensions is held and the way teachers and professors can deal with this difficulty when preparing DS, it was feasible to observe how writing is considered a social act and involving external readers makes it both purposeful and meaningful for the students. This practice was also a way of preparing the future teacher for his career.

With regards to the field of Foreign Language Teacher Education, this study’s results have various implications. First, it is necessary to promote an approach in which the teacher educator can prepare their teaching material based on the future teachers’ needs. Second, writing as social act implies arduous work, due to its specificity, considering the objective (teaching context) and the subjective conditions (the possible interest/motive of the future teacher in accomplishing the activities once he could meet a necessity in his process of Foreign Language Teacher Education).

We urge to deepen the studies about writing in English Language Teaching, emphasizing the operation of correction, revising, and rewriting, since the results have shown it is necessary to rethink and enhance the formative practices in Language Teacher Education. Last, there is a need to continue investigating ways to become writing as social act as a challenging element to other professional practices related not only to educational and formative processes, but also to the development of other research, providing possible reconfigurations and resignifications in order to contribute to the LC development of the English future teachers.

References


*Submetido: 12/09/2022
Aceito: 09/11/2022*