Understanding the interaction that occurs during a peer correction activity and its effects on the revision of written texts*

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Resumo

Neste estudo são investigadas as interações realizadas numa atividade de correção dialogada com o intuito de compreender como tal forma de correção interativa influencia a reescrita dos textos escritos por dois alunos do curso de Letras/Inglês da UFG. Os dados demonstram que a atividade de correção com o colega não apenas melhora o texto escrito, mas também serve como um momento de os alunos poderem usar a língua oral e refletir sobre ela.

Palavras-chave: Interação, correção com os pares, teoria sociocultural, aprendizagem colaborativa.

The sociocultural theory and collaborative learning

Although Vygotsky did not focus his studies on second language learning, he formulated ideas about children's learning and development that have important implications for the process of learning/teaching a foreign language[1].

Vygotsky theorized that human consciousness is fundamentally mediated mental activity. Mediation occurs through language and also through artifacts, including mnemonic techniques, algebraic symbols, diagrams and schemes.

According to Donato and McCormick (1994), mediation, in a foreign language classroom, or in the process of learning a foreign language, can take the form of the textbook, visual material, classroom discourse patterns, opportunities for interaction, types of direct instructions, or various kinds of teacher assistance. All forms of mediation are embedded in some context which makes them inherently sociocultural processes.

Vygotsky (1998) argued that the child's psychological development occurs mainly through interaction with a more experienced peer or with an adult. The author formulated a distinction between the child's or novice's actual and potential levels of development. The former characterizes the child's ability to perform certain tasks independently of another person, that is, without help. The latter characterizes those functions that the child can carry out with the help of another person. The difference between what the child, or novice, is capable of doing when acting alone and what he or she is capable of when acting under the assistance of a more experienced person is referred to as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is defined as

> the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.[2] (VYGOTSKY, 1998, p. 112)

Vygotsky actually specifies "more capable peers" but, as has become apparent from a range of studies of group work (Forman and MCPHAIL, 1993; TUDGE, 1990), "the ZPD as an opportunity for learning with and from others applies potentially to all participants, and not simply to the less skillful or knowledgeable" (WELLS, 1999, p. 249).This is partly because most activities involve a variety of tasks such that students who are experts in one task, and therefore able to offer assistance to their peers, may themselves need assistance on another task. But it can also happen that in tackling a difficult task as a group, although no member has expertise beyond his or her peers, by working at the problem together the group as a whole is able to come up with a solution that none could have achieved alone. According to Wells (1997, p. 12), the zone of proximal

development "constitutes a potential for learning that is created in the interaction between participants as they engage in a particular activity together".

Some second-language scholars, like, for example, Richard-Amato (1988) and Shinke-Llano (1993), have suggested a potential connection between Krashen's construct of $i + 1$ and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development because they understand that what Krashen calls i is what Vygotsky calls level of actual development and that $i + 1$ would be the zone of proximal development. However, Dunn and Lantolf (1998) argue that the similarities between the two constructs are superficial and the differences are profound because in Krashen's model, the learner is fundamentally a person who possesses a Language Acquisition Device that does all the acquiring for the individual if the individual receives comprehensible input containing features at $i + 1$. Whether the person interacts with other individuals is more or less irrelevant. Hence, according to Krashen (1982, p. 60), it is "theoretically possible to acquire language without ever talking". But, for Vygotsky, interaction, dialogue, is the key to cognitive development.

According to Vygotsky, the child goes through three stages of cognitive development:

1) object-regulation: the environment exerts its influence on the child;
2) other-regulation: the child is able to perform a task, but only with linguistically mediated assistance from other people, be it a parent or a more capable peer;
3) self-regulation: the child independently develops some strategies to perform a specific task.

The transition from other-regulation to self-regulation is favored by processes known as scaffolding and it takes place in the zone of proximal development where child and adult or more capable peer engage in a dialogic process. Scaffolding is described as a "process that enables a child or a novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal that would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (WOOD, BRUNER and ROSS, 1976, cited in CHEYNE e TARULLI, 1996).

Another important concept in the sociocultural theory is that of internalization. For Vygotsky, cognitive development is the transformation

of socially shared activities into internalized processes, that is, "it is the internal reconstruction of an external operation" (VYGOTSKY, 1998, p. 74). Because it is a developmental process that takes place from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal level, internalization "is simultaneously a social and an individual process" (JOHN-STEINER and MAHN, 1997, p. 9). John-Steiner and Mahn (1997, p. 5) also say that "the process of internalization is transformative rather than transmissive", that is, the development implies changes and transformations which have their origin in interaction.

Vygotsky (1998) believed that isolated learning cannot lead to cognitive development. He firmly maintained that social interaction is a prerequisite to learning and cognitive development, that is, "knowledge is co-constructed and learning involves more than one person" (NYIKOS and HASHIMOTO, 1997, p. 507). Thus, the role of interaction in the second-language classroom is unquestionable (MOSKOWITZ, 1978; LONG and POTTER, 1985; RIVERS, 1996; LYNCH, 1996), as is the importance of collaborative learning.

Collaborative learning, defined by Dörnyei (1997, p. 482) as "the instructional use of small groups in order to achieve common learning goals via cooperation", has been the object of study of some researchers due to the fact that interaction does not help only the less skillful students. It also leads the more capable students to discover new ways of learning. By working together, "learners share not only ideas and information, but also strategies for learning" (DONALDSON, 1990, p. 13). The current emphasis on collaborative learning can be attributed, in part, to the significant role that Vygotsky attributed to peer group activities in fostering learning.

According to High (1993), collaborative learning fosters second language learning because:

1) It maximizes language output – by means of collaborative learning, the students have the opportunity to practice what they have learned with their peers through meaningful interactions, quite differently from a traditional approach in which the students only participate when called on by the teacher.

2) It fosters interactions aiming at negotiation of meaning – fluency in a language is partially a function of opportunity to speak

(HIGH, 1993:VIII). During the process of communication, there is negotiation of meaning since the students have to make an effort to understand one another, modifying or paraphrasing what they said. That is, the students have the opportunity to understand and to be understood.

3) It promotes a supportive environment: By working in groups, the students become less anxious when they have to communicate in the second language. The students learn with one another and they have the opportunity to perceive that some learning aspects are easy or difficult for everybody. By working together the students are engaged in a kind of positive interdependence which aims at autonomy. It fosters the transition of other-regulation to self-regulation.

Having seen a little bit about the sociocultural theory and collaborative learning, I will show, through data, how peer correction is a good way of improving not only the texts written by the students but also their oral/aural abilities, since the students engage in a dialogic process. To do so, I will use as data one student's texts, tapescripts of the interaction between the students and interviews where the students had the chance to give their opinion about this interactive way of correcting errors.

THE STUDY

This case study is still in progress. Ten students from Universidade Federal de Goiás who are in the 5th year of their Curso de Letras/Inglês have volunteered to take part in this study in the school year of 1999. Once a month their teacher asks them to write a text according to the units of their textbook. The students write their texts and in the following class they perform the peer correction activity and after that they rewrite their texts. In the interest of space, to illustrate this paper I will make use of data of just one student and from just one activity. The data will be analyzed qualitatively.

Protocol A: The students are asked to write an informal letter. Márcio corrects Cristiano's text. The text will be split in three parts to make it

easier for the reader to see how the participants are interacting because of the text. At the end, I will show the revised version of the text.

First Part:

<div align="right">
10th Avenue
New York, NY
May 19th, 1999
</div>

Dear Suzy,

How R U? Still doin' the course? It's really a hard work, isn't it? Take it easy. When you could realise, you'll be already graduated. The same happens to me, never forget it! And what about me? Well, after those long yrs, I finally end up here in NY. And I love it. It's fucking great!!! A true happy end indeed.

A1	Márcio:	Let's correct your letter now Cristiano. You are using 'How r u?' and instead of writing 'are' and 'you', you wrote the letter 'r' and the letter 'u'.
A2	Cristiano:	Ok, I guess this is informal.
A3	Márcio:	Yes, it's informal.
A4	Cristiano:	I intended to write an informal letter, so informal that, that...
A5	Márcio:	So, your intention is to write a very informal letter.
A6	Cristiano:	Yes, and to explore the grammar, the language...
A7	Márcio:	[Ok.
A8	Cristiano:	[... and the way Americans wrote, write informal letters.
A9	Márcio:	Ok, ok. "How are you? Still doin' the course?"
A10	Cristiano:	Yeah, without 'g'.
A11	Márcio:	Without 'g' with the 'apostrophe'. Ok, "Still doin' the course", Ok. "It's really a hard work, isn't it?" I think 'It's really hard work' is better, 'hard work', 'It's really hard work, isn't it?' No 'a'.

A12	Cristiano:	Without the article?
A13	Márcio:	Yes, without the article. What do you think? 'It's really hard work, isn't it?' Ah, "Take it easy", it's ok. "When you could realise, you'll be already graduated".
A14	Cristiano:	It's the same cause that I've, I've do, I've done 'realise' with 's'.
A15	Márcio:	Isn't it with 'z'?
A16	Cristiano:	Ah, you can write both forms.
A17	Márcio:	Both forms? All right. Yes, "When you could realise...". Wouldn't you think 'By the time you realise, you'll be already graduated'?
A18	Cristiano:	'By the time'?
A19	Márcio:	Yes. 'By the time you realise...'.
A20	Cristiano:	What's the problem with 'When you could realise'?
A21	Márcio:	Actually, there is no problem, the person could understand, but I think 'By the time...'.
A22	Cristiano:	Sounds better?
A23	Márcio:	Sounds better. But you are writing an informal letter, so I think there is no problem. Because you are referring to future, ok? "...you'll be already graduated". So, in general, we have this expression 'By the time' this, you tãrãrãtãrãrã. "The same happens to me, never forget it". 'The same happens' refers to what?
A24	Cristiano:	'Happens'? The hard work at university, how difficult was to graduated.
A25	Márcio:	Yes, hum, hum. So, this person is doing a course too?
A26	Cristiano:	Yes.
A27	Márcio:	Hum, taking a course. "... never forget it. And what about me?"
A28	Cristiano:	Hurry up. (risos)
A29	Márcio:	Well, after those long yrs...". Oh, 'years', you've written a very informal letter. "... I finally

		end up here in New York". Shouldn't it be 'I finally ended up'?
A30	Cristiano:	'Ended'?
A31	Márcio:	Yes.
A32	Cristiano:	Oh, yes, in the past.
A33	Márcio:	'Finally ended up here in New York'. "And I love it"
A34	Cristiano:	Oh, so the fucking place.
A35	Márcio:	(Risos). Oh, "It's fucking great". (Márcio demonstra espanto).
A36	Cristiano:	Márcio, please don't tell me to (risos).
A37	Márcio:	Don't you think this word is too informal?
A38	Cristiano:	Too informal?
A39	Márcio:	Yes, wouldn't you substitute this by...
A40	Cristiano:	No, Suzy is my close friend.
A41	Márcio:	Oh, she's your close friend. Ok, então.
A42	Cristiano:	She will understand.
A43	Márcio:	"A true happy end indeed". Yes, you can say it's a happy end.

We can see from the dialogue above that Cristiano had the chance to explain to his peer why he used such an informal way of writing. The students had the chance to practice their metalanguage by saying words such as article, apostrophe etc. Márcio was in doubt about the spelling of the word "realise" and he learned from his peer that the word could be spelt with "s" or "z".

We can see that Márcio is correcting Cristiano's text in a collaborative way, giving Cristiano the chance to reflect on what he had written, instead of giving him the correct answers.

We can also see that this kind of correction, since it is symmetrical, permits the author to maintain his authorship and his points of view. Cristiano only changes the words in his text when there is a kind of agreement between him and Márcio.

Second Part:

I'm living with my old classmates William, Fernando and Fernanda (that blond girl with green eyes) in a small flat. During all those long yrs at university, we saved enough money to this "madness". Well, now we're looking for a job that could re-pay our bills.

A44	Cristiano:	Read it. Read it first, then we correct.
A45	Márcio:	"I'm living with my old classmates William, Fernando e Fernanda..."
A46	Cristiano:	Fernanda.
A47	Márcio:	"... that blond girl with green eyes". Hum, hum. "...in a small flat". Yes, very beautiful. "During all those long years at university, we should..."
A48	Cristiano:	"We saved".
A49	Márcio:	"... we saved enough money to this..."
A50	Cristiano:	"...madness", "madness".
A51	Márcio:	Hum, hum. "Well, now we're looking for a job that could repay our bills". What do you mean by 'repay our bills'?
A52	Cristiano:	Repay. Because the, the money is over. So, without money we have to look for a job and ah ah repay in a sense that we have to repair all the, the...
A53	Márcio:	[Because if you...
A54	Cristiano:	[...the madness that we've made.
A55	Márcio:	Because, if you repay is because you have already paid.
A56	Cristiano:	My, my intention was to say, ah, no I...
A57	Márcio:	Don't you think 'looking for a job that could afford our bills'?
A58	Cristiano:	'Could afford'?
A59	Márcio:	Yes.
A60	Cristiano:	What does 'afford' mean?
A61	Márcio:	We have conditions to pay something. For example, if you afford your expenses, you can pay your expenses, your bills.

A62	Cristiano:	Le, le, let me explain. Ah, we saved our money, then, ah, we went to New York and, ah, we spent all those, those year, ah, how can I say 'gastando'?
A63	Márcio:	Spending.
A64	Cristiano:	Spending, spending, spending, and we didn't know, think about looking for jobs ah ah to save money, to ...
A65	Márcio:	Hum, hum.
A66	Cristiano:	So, when the money is over, when the money ends, we have to repay our bills. Nossos gastos.
A67	Márcio:	É, but...
A68	Cristiano:	So, if it's...
A69	Márcio:	I don't understand the meaning of 'repay'. Do you understand the verb I put, 'to afford'?
A70	Cristiano:	Hum, hum.
A71	Márcio:	If you, if you repay because you have already paid. You are going to pay it again. Is this what you mean?
A72	Cristiano:	Hum, no, no, no.
A73	Márcio:	So, if you afford, you mean, you have no money and if you have conditions to afford, you...
A74	Cristiano:	So, what do you suggest? Instead of 'repay'?
A75	Márcio:	We're looking for a job, for a job that...
A76	Cristiano:	Could...
A77	Márcio:	Could give us chance, could give us chance to afford our bills.
A78	Cristiano:	Ok.
A79	Márcio:	We're looking for a job that, ah.
A80	Cristiano:	What about the next one?
A81	Márcio:	... could make us able...

We can see from this dialogue that the big problem is the word "repay". Instead of saying that it was wrong and giving Cristiano the right answer, Márcio asks for clarification by saying "What do you mean by 'repay the bills'?" Cristiano explains to him what he meant to say and they start to negotiate a correct way of expressing what Cristiano meant.

Through the interaction, Cristiano has the chance to learn the word "afford" from his peer and he uses it when he rewrites his text.

Third Part:

Language isn't an obstacle, I'm picking it up at streets: such as slangs, idiomatic expressions, taboo words. My English's getting better and better. American people don't get on well with Brazilians, but who cares? They succeed stealing us.
Write me back, soon, dear Suzy.
Bye, bye.
Lots and lots of love
X O X O
Cristiano.

A82	Cristiano:	"Language isn't an obstacle...".
A83	Márcio:	Hum, hum. Yes. "Language isn't an obstacle, I'm picking it up at streets''. 'On the streets'.
A84	Cristiano:	'On the streets'?
A85	Márcio:	'On the streets'.
A86	Cristiano:	'On the streets'?
A87	Márcio:	Yes, it will be better 'on the streets'.
A88	Cristiano:	Is the, the, any problem with 'at'? 'At the streets'?
A89	Márcio:	We usually use 'on the streets', "...such as slangs, idiomatic expressions, taboo words". Hum, hum. "My English is getting better and better". Ok. "American people don't get on well with Brazilians...", hum?!, "...but who cares?" (risos). "They succeed stealing us". Hum? 'They succeed stealing us'? What do you mean by this?
A90	Cristiano:	Oh, Americans explore the Brazilian people.
A91	Márcio:	Hum.
A92	Cristiano:	(?)
A93	Márcio:	Ok. "Write me back soon, dear Suzy. Bye, bye. Lots and lots of love". Ok.

In the dialogue above, we see that Cristiano does not accept the correction passively. He insists on questioning the problem with "at streets", but it seems that an agreement takes place when Márcio says "We usually use 'on the streets' ".

Of course the students overlook some mistakes either because they do not know that it is incorrect or because they can understand the message. When Márcio asks what Cristiano means by "They succeed stealing us" and Cristiano is able to explain what he means, the problem is over because Márcio could understand it. Although Márcio did not correct Cristiano saying that he should have written "succeed in", Cristiano did so when he rewrote his text.

We can observe that the students were able to perform the task without the teacher's assistance. The use of affective markers in the interaction, such as "hum, hum", "ok" etc., reveals, as Schiffrin (1987) points out, task and information management. They are also indicators of orientation to the task (Frawley and Lantolf, 1985; Donato and Lantolf, 1990, cited in Donato,1994), thus signifying the point at which joint focus of attention was achieved.

These are the first version and the revised version of Cristiano's text, respectively. The modifications in the revised text are in italics.

10th Avenue
New York, NY
May 19th, 1999

Dear Suzy,

How R U? Still doin' the course? It's really a hard work, isn't it? Take it easy? When you could realise, you'll be already graduated. The same happens to me, never forget it! And what about me? Well, after those long yrs, I finally end up here in NY. And I love it. It's fucking great!!! A true happy end indeed.

I'm living with my old classmates William, Fernando and Fernanda (that blond girl with green eyes) in a small flat. During all those long yrs at university, we saved enough money to this "madness". Well, now we're looking for a job that could re-pay our bills.

Language isn't an obstacle, I'm picking it up at streets: such as slangs, idiomatic expressions, taboo words. My English's getting better

and better. American people don't get on well with Brazilians, but who cares? They succeed stealing us.

Write me back, soon, dear Suzy.

Bye, bye.

Lots and lots of love

X O X O

Cristiano.

10th Avenue
New York, NY
May 19th, 1999

Dear Suzy,

How R U? Still doin' the course? *It's really hard work*, isn't it? Take it easy? When you could realise, you'll be already graduated. The same happens to me, never forget it! *But and what about me?* Well, after those long yrs, *I finally ended up here in NY*. And I love it. It's fucking great!!! A true happy end indeed.

I'm living with my old classmates William, Fernando and Fernanda (that blond girl with green eyes) in a small flat. During all those long yrs at university, we saved enough money to this "madness". *Well, now we're looking for a job which would provide us money to afford our expenses*.

Language isn't an obstacle, *I'm picking it up on the streets*: such as slangs, idiomatic expressions, taboo words. My English's getting better and better. American people don't get on well with Brazilians, but who cares? *They succeed in stealing us*.

Write me back, soon, dear Suzy.

Bye, bye.

Lots and lots of love

X O X O

Cristiano.

Now I will present some of the student's perceptions[3] of the activity they took part in, which help us to understand the benefits of the peer correction activity.

When asked to evaluate the process, saying the positive and negative aspects of taking part in a peer correction activity, the students said:

Márcio: Eu acho muito muito muito produtivo, muito mesmo. É bom você ter alguém olhando os seus erros, comentando, corrigindo, dando opiniões porque é outro ponto de vista de uma pessoa que também tem competência lingüística, competência extralingüística também e é muito interessante isso aí. Eu achei muito produtivo e muito assim gratificante até.

Francisco: E você eh percebeu assim algum aspecto negativo na atividade?

Márcio: Não, nenhum.

Cristiano: Ah, os aspectos positivos que eu acho assim é porque você trava contato com outro colega, vê o estilo, essas questões e você acaba incorporando um pouco também, né?

Cristiano: Aspecto negativo? Ah, eu acho que a o o o grande problema dos aspectos negativos assim saber exprimir, saber colocar assim em palavras porque você tá lendo o texto e é uma coisa assim prefixada, você tem que achar erro ali. Então assim, você não acha, você já não fala nada. A atividade não rende e você fica desesperado pra encontrar, tanto é que eu encontrei só um errinho de vírgula, nem erro não era. Era uma sugestão, a vírgula ali eu acho que ficaria melhor. Então assim, a sensação é de que não tava rendendo pro meu lado porque eu não encontrava muita coisa ali.
            Talvez se ele fizesse propositadamente alguns erros ali (risos) de antemão, teria ajudado bastante (risos).

We can see that both students found the activity productive because they had the chance to learn from each other, to exchange

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information, to have another reader for their texts etc. Cristiano's speech reveals that he was a little frustrated because he could not find mistakes in his partner's text. Maybe this reflects how correction has been conceived of by many teachers and students: the looking for mistakes rather than the making of a clearer and better text.

The students had positive feelings about the activity, as we can see from their own words:

Francisco: Certo. E como que você se sentiu ao corrigir o texto do seu colega?

Márcio: Bom, ah como é de um colega, né, que eu já tenho mais contato com ele, foi foi fácil porque a gente já tem mais um contato e ele é compreensivo. Então, houve aquela troca de idéias mesmo. Correção propondo idéias. Ah por quê? Por que isso? Por que aquilo? E a gente chegou numa opinião, num consenso. O que foi muito importante, né?
Eu me senti tranqüilo e ele também me/se sentiu tranqüilo. Quando eu fui corrigir, também houve essa troca aí.

Francisco: Quando ele te corrigiu, você também ficou tranqüilo?

Márcio: Fiquei. Ele, acatei o que ele o que ele me corrigiu. Ele tinha razão realmente. É por isso que é bom porque outra pessoa vê uma coisa que você não viu. E quando ele me falou, "é realmente você tá certo. Eu deveria ter colocado assim. Dessa forma fica melhor". O mesmo processo eu fiz com ele. "Olha, o que você acha disso? Você acha que dessa forma fica melhor?" "É, pode ficar sim". Então, a gente muda ou, às vezes, eu vou apresentar alguma coisa e ele fala assim "não, mas eu quis dizer isso de tal forma". "Ah, então, você tá certo. É assim mesmo". Então fluiu, o trabalho fluiu.

Cristiano: Quando você corrige e ele aceita, ah é uma sensação assim de poder (risos) porque parece assim eh você vê que em algum campo você domina, mas com a- Eu tou/vou falar mais teoricamente do que em cima da experiência que eu tive

naquele dia porque a sensação de corrigir, sabe, sugerir, dá uma sensação assim de que você tem um conhecimento, você pode transmitir esse conhecimento, você pode assim ajudar alguém. E, curiosamente, uma sensação de potência, m a s que é de muita humildade e troca, sabe, assim de ajuda. É eu acho que é uma atitude que todos deveríamos ter quando os colegas começam a conversar uns com os outros em sala de aula. Você percebe que eles cometem erros, assim como eles podem tá percebendo que você comete erros também. Só que há uma sensação assim de que eles tão julgando você. Então, você se inibe. E não é essa sensação que a gente tem não de tá fazendo a correção porque cê sente que cê pode ajudar, você pode dar a sua parte, fazer sua parte e é humildade, não é poder, não é julgamento. Não é eu que tou com a balança, com a espada, que vou. Não, é uma sensação assim de troca e se esse clima pudesse assim ser, sabe, a gente pudesse ter consciência desse clima, ia ajudar bastante no desempenho oral.

Francisco: Certo. E como que você se sentiu ao ser corrigido pelo seu colega?

Cristiano: Como eu já venho dizendo, bem. Eu acho interessante a troca, falar assim "aqui eu não entendi o que você quis dizer etc." Nessa correção específica, não fica aquela impressão de que, parece que a pessoa respeita as suas idéias. Ela per- quando ele pergunta isso, "peraí, que que você quis dizer aqui?", parece que há o interesse não só, há o interesse, ele tá querendo saber sobre a idéia, sabe, ele não tá "ah, ficou bom", ele tá querendo entender o que você disse, há/parece que há uma maior consideração pelo que você tá fazendo. Eu me sinto bem.

We can see that the students' positive feelings towards the activity is possibly due to the fact that, by correcting each other's text orally, they can negotiate meaning with each other, and, hence, improve their linguistic production.

The students learned different things from the activity, as we can perceive from their words:

Francisco: E o que que você aprendeu com essa atividade, Márcio?

Márcio: Eu aprendi que é bom pra mim ser corrigido por uma outra pessoa. Lingüisticamente é bom porque a outra pessoa troca informação com você. Você vê um outro ponto de vista. Então, eu aprendo que eu não sou o dono da verdade do meu texto. Apesar do texto ter sido escrito por mim, ele não corresponde a cem porcento de correção, de tá correto cem porcento. Então, ele é passível de correção de uma outra pessoa e, a partir do momento que a gente reconhece isso, eu acho que é bom pra mim, eu tou aprendendo com isso aí. A gente vai continuar fazendo o trabalho e eu espero que continue assim.

Cristiano: Eh eu acho que eu tenho muito que aprender. Tenho muito que aprender, muito que conhecer. Nessa atividade assim que você se coloca que você se coloca em choque com, choque não, eu acho uma palavra forte, mas assim cê tá observando um, tá observando o outro e fazendo correções mútuas, você descobre assim que você ainda tem, sabe, muita coisa que você desconhece, muita coisa que você faz mal feito e devia fazer melhor. Eu me avalio assim, eu não poderia dar uma nota porque eu sempre, já é um problema meu, eu acho que eu sempre vou dar uma nota bem baixa pra mim mesmo. Mas, eu acho assim que é um tipo de de coisa que eu não queria perder quando eu largasse o curso. Esse essa exploração contínua, esse aprendizado contínuo, essa atividade contínua de tentar entender a língua, exercitar ela, e eu tenho certeza que vai acabar perdendo isso. Então, é uma coisa que eu não queria perder.

Francisco: Certo. E o que que você aprendeu com essa atividade?

Cristiano: Ah, gramática, um pouco sobre erro e correção e principal-
             mente interação. Assim, interação com colega a nível de
             conhe/ descobrir juntos a coisa, isso que é interessante.

     These students said that they liked having their texts corrected by their peers instead of by the teacher and gave their reasons for that. They said that they felt comfortable because their relationship was symmetrical, so there is not a kind of hierarchy as there is in the teacher/ student relationship. Through dialogue, they were able to negotiate meaning with each other and to keep their points of view in relation to their texts. They had the chance to change roles: to correct and to be corrected. So, the correction was a two-way activity. Let us see what they say about this:

Francisco: Eh você preferiria que o seu texto tivesse sido corrigido pelo
             professor ao invés de pelo colega?

Márcio: Não, eu acho que da forma como que foi feito foi muito
             bom. Se fosse corrigido pelo professor também tudo bem.
             Só que nem sempre a gente tem tempo de fazer essa ativi-
             dade de uma pessoa tá falando com você. Porque uma coisa
             é você pegar um texto corrigido e uma outra coisa é uma
             pessoa corrigir com você. É um outro estágio, né? É um
             estágio diferente de correção. Porque quando você pega um
             texto corrigido, você já vê a forma, a forma certa, ela já vem
             corrigida, já vem dada. E quando você corrige não, você
             tem a possibilidade de de de ver diversas possibilidades, até
             mais do que uma. O que é muito produtivo porque você tá
             ali, você tá crescendo o seu vocabulário, o seu léxico, as
             suas estruturas, tudinho.

Francisco: E você preferiria que o seu texto tivesse sido corrigido pelo
             professor ao invés de ser pelo seu colega?

Cristiano: Eu vou falar uma coisa que é meio assim estranha, mas eu
             acho que a correção do professor me soa um tanto distan-
             ciada.

Francisco: Hum.

Cristiano: Sabe, o amigo tá mais próximo, né, tá, a o porque não existe um papel, quem é o professor na relação que você tem com o amigo. Há um revezamento contínuo. Com o professor já é uma coisa assim objetiva, até um pouco fria embora não seja essa a intenção do professor. Então assim, ah há uma sensação melhor quando você corrige com o colega porque você sabe que não vai se sentir tão rebaixado dos seus comentários porque vai ter esse intercâmbio de papel, você vai também tá fazendo sugestões etc. Há alguns professores que recusam a, por exemplo, se o 'fucking' aparecesse, ah se a sugestão fosse do professor, talvez eu teria mudado por causa que é uma voz assim já mais, a voz do professor já é uma voz mais autoritária, mais exigente. Como é que a gente fala quando não aceita argumentação? Sem réplica, sabe?

Francisco: Hum.

Cristiano: Então, eu me senti melhor por causa desse contato.

Cristiano: [...] É interessante realmente esse negócio, eu queria assim enfatizar que é interessante essa coisa da correção com o colega porque há um relacionamento mais próximo com o colega. Então assim, você não sente tão julgado na correção, cê também pode corrigir. Ah o que eu tava falando, por exemplo, do problema em sala de aula, passa então aquela sensação de humildade, de troca, de solidariedade, solidarie- dade é a palavra chave. E isso é importante pra correção porque você não se sente julgado, cê não sente assim, é uma voz autoritária que vai dar ponto, isso é fatal, né? Por exemplo, o seu desempenho foi A enquanto o seu foi C. Isso é terrível. Eu acho, então, que eu gostaria de enfatizar essa questão da correção, desse intercâmbio entre os colegas. É enriquecedor porque cê tem que se esforçar pra ajudar ele e ele vai se esforçar, vai haver uma troca e o professor poderia ser aí no caso a pessoa da consulta. Se a dúvida nossa, se eu não

resolvi o problema dele e ele não resolveu o meu, temos a dúvida em alguma estrutura sintática, você chama o professor. Seria um consultor.

CONCLUSION

Since this is an in-progress study, I am not supposed to make any definite statements about the peer correction process. The only thing I can say is that the students are really benefiting from the activity since they are starting to reflect on their own linguistic production. So, not only were they using the foreign language to talk to each other, but they were also talking about the language they were using. This metalanguage, according to Swain (1998, p. 69), "may well serve the function of deepening the students' awareness of forms and rules, and the relationship of the forms and rules to the meaning they are trying to express". They are starting to revise – an activity they rarely used to do – and by rewriting they are having the chance to improve their texts.

We were able to see that the students had the opportunity to interact in English, and although they were talking to perform a task, their talk was quite spontaneous. More specifically, they talked to perform a task rather than performing a task as an opportunity to practice speaking.

The interactions during peer reviews give students more ways to discover and explore ideas, to find the right words to express these ideas, to negotiate meaning with each other and to learn from the activity. According to Swain and Lapkin (1998, p. 321), "we wish to suggest that what occurs in collaborative dialogues *is* learning. That is, learning does not happen outside performance, it occurs *in* performance" (emphasis in the original).

The students also had the chance to develop, according to Gardner (1995), their multiple intelligences, such as the verbal-linguistic one, since they had to express themselves to convince each other or to arrive at a kind of consensus. They could also develop their interpersonal intelligence by interacting with each other through group work. And finally they also had the chance to develop their intrapersonal intelligence by reflecting on their weaknesses and strengths through the feedback they received from each other or when they were interviewed about the activity they took part in.

The fact that the students preferred correcting each other's text to having their texts corrected by the teacher may be the result of a teaching/learning system where the teacher generally has no time to correct the students' texts orally due to the overload of classroom routine.

So, the peer correction activity fosters more interaction in the classroom. Undoubtedly, interaction among students has been considered the key to cognitive development. But understanding how interaction promotes such development is not an easy task. Therefore, it is extremely important and necessary to get data from learners and teachers to really understand what happens in the classroom since they are the real participants in the teaching/learning process, being, therefore, invaluable in classroom research in SLA.

As Liddicoat (1997, p. 316) says

> SLA research appears to be more focused on determining what a learner cannot yet do, than on what a language user can do with the resources currently available. Reversing the focus can yield unexpected results.

ABSTRACT

In this study I investigate the interactions performed by two students from the Curso de Letras/Inglês at UFG during a peer correction activity. The main aim of this study is to understand how this interactive way of correction influences the re-writing of those students' texts. The data show that not only does the peer correction activity improve the written texts, but it also serves as a moment in which the students have the chance to use the language orally and to reflect upon it.

KEY WORDS: Interaction, peer correction, sociocultural theory, collaborative learning.

NOTAS

1. Although the literature about language teaching and learning makes a distinction between the terms 'foreign language' and 'second language', in this paper they will be used interchangeably.

2. The excerpts from the book of Vygotsky's were translated into English, since the book I read was in Portuguese.

3. The students were interviewed in Portuguese.

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