



# Understanding and planning the teaching of spelling by teachers of 2nd cycle of Elementary School

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify the way teachers of the 2nd cycle of Elementary School understand and construct goals for the teaching of spelling, specifically focusing on the work with letter-sound relations of the Portuguese Language Orthographic Standard. We take as reference the classification of spelling elaborated by Morais (1998). According to this author the orthographic standard presents regularities (direct, contextual and morphological) and irregularities in its letter-sound relationship. Twenty teachers from the 2nd Cycle of two municipalities in the metropolitan region of Recife participated in this research, with 10 teachers from each municipality (5 teachers from the 4th grade and 5 teachers from the 5th grade, from each municipality). Data were collected through interviews. The results showed that 80% of the interviewed teachers did not treat spelling as a specific object of teaching, in that sense there was no planning focused on the specificities of the letter-sound relation of the orthographic standard.

Keywords: Teaching goals. Orthographic standard. Brazilian Portuguese Language. Planning.

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## Compreensão e planejamento do ensino de ortografia por professores do 2º ciclo do ensino fundamental

### Resumo

O objetivo desse estudo é o de identificar o modo que os professores do 2º ciclo do ensino fundamental compreendem e constroem metas para o ensino da ortografia, enfocando, especificamente, o trabalho com as relações letra-som da Norma Ortográfica da Língua Portuguesa. Tomamos como referência a classificação da ortografia elaborada por Morais (1998). Segundo esse autor a Norma Ortográfica apresenta regularidades (diretas, contextuais e morfológicas) e irregularidades em sua relação letra-som. Participaram dessa pesquisa 20 professores do 2º Ciclo de dois municípios da região metropolitana do Recife, sendo 10 professores de cada município (5 professores do 4º ano e 5 professores do 5º ano, de cada município). A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de entrevistas. Os resultados apontaram que 80% dos professores entrevistados não tratavam a ortografia como objeto específico de ensino, nesse sentido não havia um planejamento voltado para as especificidades da relação letra-som da norma ortográfica.

Palavras-chave: Metas de ensino. Norma ortográfica. Língua portuguesa. Planejamento.

## Compreensão y planificación de la enseñanza de ortografía por profesores del 2º ciclo de la enseñanza fundamental

### Resumen

El objetivo de este documento es identificar la forma en que los maestros del segundo ciclo de la escuela primaria comprenden y construyen metas para enseñar ortografía, centrándose específicamente el trabajo con las relaciones entre letras y sonidos de la Norma Ortografía de la Lengua Portuguesa. Tomamos como referencia la clasificación de la ortografía fue elaborada por Morais (1998). Según ese autor, la norma ortográfica presenta regularidades (directas, contextuales y morfológicas) e irregularidades en su relación letra-sonido. Participaron en esta investigación, 20 maestros de dos municipios de la región metropolitana de Recife, siendo 10 profesores de cada municipio (5 profesores del 4º año y 5 profesores del 5º año, de cada municipio). La recolección de datos fue realizada por medio de entrevistas. Los resultados apuntaron que el 80% de los profesores entrevistados no trataban la ortografía como objeto específico de enseñanza, en ese sentido no había una planificación orientada a las especificidades de la relación letra-sonido de la norma ortográfica.

Palabras clave: Metas de enseñanza. Norma ortográfica. Lengua portuguesa. Planificación.

### Introduction

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For more than a decade, researches have spread (MORAIS, 1998; MELO, REGO, 1998; MORAIS, 2007; PESSOA, 2012; NOBREGA, 2013) whose inductions guide the systematicity and reflection of the orthographic principles. Specifically, one of the most latent guidelines refers to the importance of teaching practices committed to diagnosing what children already know about the norm and what they still need to learn. According to our understanding, the parameter that emerges from this diagnosis is the one that will can effectively subsidize teacher didactic planning and student learning.

Notoriously, the diagnoses of the appropriate (or not) knowledge by the students, added to the differential treatment of the regular and irregular orthographic correspondences (considering that these correspondences require different strategies for their appropriation) is one of the main principles capable of generating an organicity, referring to the establishment of specific, well-defined goals for the learning of orthography by the students of different grades of elementary school.

In this work, taking these assumptions as the basis of the conceptions defended herein, we seek to identify the way teachers of the second cycle of elementary school understand and construct goals for the teaching of orthography.



## Theoretical framework

### The orthographic standard of the Portuguese language

The orthographic norm is a knowledge coming from a social agreement established throughout history, with which it was possible to define with which letters a particular word is written, as well as knowing the segmentation and accentuation that these words must assume in a text (MORAIS, 2007).

If the orthographic norm is a social convention, then, we can state that it can undergo changes. As an example of this, it is enough to consider the various orthographic reforms undergone since the beginning of the 20th century (AGUIAR, 2007). And as a recent example, we can verify the new orthographic reform among Brazil, Portugal and other Portuguese-speaking countries, also as the result of a social agreement. This agreement is intended to facilitate and unify writing between these countries.

In continuation to the explanation by professor Artur Gomes de Morais, the orthographic norm is not configured as a system, because it is the properties of the alphabetical writing system that define with which letters or digraphs words can be written. Therefore, the appropriation and understanding of the alphabetic writing system are necessary so that orthographic learning and its socially negotiated restrictions can occur. In front of this, apprentices need to know the existence of the limited repertoire of letters; that writing represents the sound pattern, although the graphic form of a word can be pronounced in different ways, that is, it may suffer variations in the oral modality; that for the notation of the sound pattern it is necessary to graphically record more letters than the syllables we pronounce; that a sound can be represented by more than one letter, in the same way that a letter can be represented by more than one sound and so on.

Concurrently, the orthographic norm creates properties characterized by the presence and absence of rules, which are defined as regular and irregular cases, respectively. The regularities are thus characterized, because they have criteria and generative principles that normalize and specify with which letters certain words must be written. It has to be emphasized that these specificities of regularities point to regular cases as a knowledge that can be acquired through the understanding of its generative principles. On the other hand, the absence of criteria and generative principles to specify the writing of words denotes the cases of irregularities of the orthographic norm; since understanding

and reflection will be dispensable, in this case, for the correct notation of certain words (MORAIS, 1998).

In front of this, we can conceive the idea that for the appropriation of a writing orthographically valued by the social context it is necessary to propose a systematically organized teaching that helps students in the process of understanding the way the orthographic norm is organized. However, the systematization of this teaching will only be developed if the teachers are aware of the operation of the Brazilian orthography and are committed to a planning that involves reflection on the norm studied.

## The learning of orthography

According to the explanation in the previous topic, the Brazilian orthography is organized in regular and irregular cases, which should be taken as teaching target. In front of this, we are sure that the learning of orthography is not only due to strategies of memorizing rules nor to the correct spelling of words. The in-depth study of their properties reveals principles that must be taken as the object of reflective and systematic knowledge in the classroom.

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These understandings, in turn, should be added to the aspects related to how children learn. That is why, elementary school teachers, besides having knowledge about the specificities of the norm, need to be attentive to the aspects related to the way children appropriate this knowledge.

One of the fundamental aspects to the understanding of the learning of the orthography and that, therefore, needs to be recognized by the teachers, concerns the capacity that children rework their knowledge on the writing. According to the psychological model of Karmiloff-Smith's (1992) "representational redescription", we understand that the progress of student learning, independently of the area of knowledge, is entirely related to the level of explicitness about its object of study. The level of explicitness, in turn, varies according to the learning moments under which apprentices will be subjected.

Therefore, according to Karmiloff-Smith (1992), at a first moment of access to the object of study, the individual formulates his knowledge at an implicit level, being limited to the mechanical reproduction of the information he receives. However, with the advancement of the explorations on the themes (orthography as object of specific study), the processes of acquisition follow a different progression, being able to reach the conscious explicit level, which



receives this denomination because it is characterized by the ability of the apprentice to be aware of what he does and an awareness of the reasons for his action. Subsequently, the student can reach the explicit verbal conscious level, according to which the apprentice is able to verbalize their mental representations.

From this theory we can conceive the importance of a reflexive and systematic didactic intervention related to orthography, since we conceive the teacher as the individual capable of enhancing the mental elaborations that students develop about writing. It is worth emphasizing that the capacity referred to above is implied to the development of different teaching strategies that value the apprentice as an active individual in the process.

Thus, recognizing the apprentice as an individual that actively processes the information that is received is the first step towards favoring the teaching and learning of the orthographic norm.

A second aspect that dialogues with the theory of "representational redescription" and which may similarly reveal how children learn orthography refers to the recognition of their errors as demonstrations of the knowledge being elaborated. Morais (2007, p. 37) is one of the authors who admits this conception, because as he stated: "when the student errs – because he creates certain 'regularizations', for example by writing 'mininu' instead of 'menino' (translator note [T. N.]: the right spelling of the word "boy" in Portuguese is "menino") –, he is revealing to us that he elaborates his own representations on the writing of words, that he is not a mere repeater of the written forms he sees around him."

Cagliari (2005), on the other hand, warns the school and teachers about the need to take students' mistakes as a teaching truth. According to said, this is how education will contribute to the development of students who reflect on what they do:

[...] as long as the school does not assume learning mistakes as a truth of teaching, camouflaging them and hiding them from everyone, including the apprentice himself, it is impossible to develop an education that leads the student to reflect on what he does, because there is a part of the process in which he is always deceived. Teaching students to correct their mistakes is perhaps the most challenging task the school has, but without solving that problem, instead of teaching, the school is creating pedagogical chaos (CAGLIARI, 2005, p. 84).

In addition to attention to errors, Morais (2007) presents three general principles that may guide the practice of orthography. The first principle mentions the importance of the child's living together with written texts according to the norm and so, thus, they can serve as fomenters of reflections on the orthography. The second principle affirms the value of the practices that promote the explicitness of knowledge that children develop on writing. According to Morais (2007), such practices tend to sow (on students) doubts about the correct spelling of words, as well as tend to propose intentional transgression of the rules studied and the verbalization of why a given word is written with certain letters. The third principle calls for teachers to set orthographic learning goals for different grades of schooling. The establishment of these goals aims to achieve significant progress in students' orthographic performance over the years.

In addition to these general principles, Morais (2007) also pointed out some specific principles to the planning and routing of the teaching-learning situations of orthography, among which we can understand that: reflection on orthography must be present at all times of writing; we should not control the students' spontaneous writing; we should not take grammatical nomenclature a requirement for learning rules (contextual and morphological-grammatical); it is necessary always promote the collective discussion of the knowledge that children express and to make a written record of their findings (rules, lists of words etc.); in addition to the possibility of the activities being developed collectively, in small groups or in pairs; and, when setting goals, we cannot fail to take into account the heterogeneity of students' performance.

In front of these guiding principles of orthography teaching, it is convenient to present one of the studies developed by Melo and Rego (1998), whose objective was to develop an alternative way of teaching orthography, as well as to evaluate the effects of this alternative pedagogical practice under which the student was encouraged to understand, make explicit and make generative use of the contextual rules worked.

The aforementioned authors structured the methodology of their work in five stages, in which participate 51 children of 1st grade and 45 children of the 2nd grade of two schools of the city of Recife. The first stage intended the training of teachers to teach according to the alternative form of orthography teaching. The second stage was organized with three groups in each series: an Experimental Group (EG), subject to intervention that considered orthography as knowledge that may be subject to reflection, discussion, understanding



and explicitness of its generative principles; and two Control Groups (CG) duly matched for each series, which were not submitted to intervention. The Control Groups continued to be subject to teaching and learning situations that revealed the mnemonic and normative conception that teachers possessed regarding the orthographic knowledge.

The third stage was intended to apply a pre-test to evaluate the students' level of orthography and select the type of rule to be worked during the intervention. The fourth stage was dedicated to the intervention of teachers. This intervention was carried out with the Experimental Group of children, who, as already mentioned, were subject to an alternative practice of teaching orthography. The fifth stage was carried out with the accomplishment of a post-test to evaluate and to compare the advance (or not) of the orthographic knowledge that the students possessed.

The post-test made possible to verify the progress of the students of the Experimental Groups and the stability of the students of the Control Group regarding the knowledge related to the rule worked. Among other data analyzed by Melo and Rego (1998), it was found that training and memory exercises do not guarantee the more elaborate domain (generative use) of orthographic conventions, since the domain in the use of contextual restrictions only occurred with children of the Experimental Group, which were subject to instruction shaped in the understanding and awareness of the orthographic principles.

In front of these findings, it is worth investigating the way which the teachers of the second cycle of elementary school understand and construct goals for the teaching of orthography.

## Methodology

The research was carried out in two municipalities of the Metropolitan Region of Recife, Camaragibe and Paulista, Pernambuco state. The teachers who were subjects of this work taught in the 4th or 5th grade of elementary school 1.

It is worth noting that the choice of the teachers who taught in the 2nd cycle of elementary school was supported by our agreement with the National Curriculum Parameters of the Portuguese Language (BRASIL, 1997), which predicts that students have already appropriated the System of Alphabetic Writing (SEA, in Portuguese abbreviation) and, therefore, they guide greater

explication/work of the orthographic norm in this second cycle of learning; since some regularities of orthography must already be worked from the first cycle of elementary school, even if in an incipient way.

Therefore, 20 (twenty) teachers from the 2nd cycle of elementary school (10 teachers from each municipality, 5 teachers from the 4th grade and 5 teachers from the 5th grade, in each city) participated in the study, who were submitted to a semi-structured interview, composed of questions that allowed to sketch an idea about their expectations of teaching-learning process in relation to the orthographic knowledge worked with classes of the mentioned cycle of education.

With the interest of preserving the identity of the teachers participating in this research, we developed identification codes for each of them. Teachers in the fourth and fifth grades of elementary education were identified respectively by numerals 4 and 5 positioned at the beginning of the code. The letter X and the letter Y preserved the indication of the municipalities. The names of the teachers of the two municipalities were preserved through the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J.

All the interviews were recorded in audio. The analysis of the data occurred by transcription of the recorded records of the teachers' statements. Therefore, the audio transcriptions of all interviewees served as protocols, which allowed the selection of comments and actions related to the purpose of this research.





## Results and discussions

### Teaching and learning goals of the orthographic norm according to teachers of the 2nd cycle of elementary school

Table 1

Objectives for the teaching of orthography mentioned by teachers according to the municipality and schooling

Teachers	4° grade X					4° grade Y					%	5° grade X					5° grade Y					%
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E		F	G	H	I	J	F	G	H	I	J	
Write correct	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100%	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100%
Produce cohesive text	X	X	X				X	X			50%				X	X						20%
Score correctly	X					X					20%					X	X					50%

Caption: 4 and 5 refers to schooling; X and Y refers to the participating municipalities and the letters A through J represent the identification of the teachers.

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In Table 1, it can be seen that the 20 teachers participating in the research, regardless of the municipality and the grade of teaching. They stated that their intention was that students to write correctly the Portuguese language words, when asked about the main objectives related to the teaching of orthography.

Some teachers still wanted to see their students developing a cohesive and comprehensible text (50% of the 4th grade and 20% of the 5th grade), and making correct use of the punctuation marks (20% of the 4th year and 20% of the 5th year), in parallel to the answers that revealed knowledge about the specificity of the object of teaching orthography.

Therefore, we note that, for some of them, writing is not limited to spelling correctly, when we relate the specificity of the object of teaching orthography to the other goals (objectives) that some of the interviewed teachers mentioned.

This reality, based on some of the answers to the interviews (according to table 1), allows us to consider that, in at least 50% of the interviewed cases, there are teaching practices that commit themselves to go beyond the



orthographic check in the texts their students produced; taking into account also the textual aspects that give coherence to the written productions analyzed. Let us look at an example:

**Researcher:** What are the main objectives? What is important to teach for this teaching grade?

**Teacher 5XJ:** The students take better appropriation of the basic notions of orthography, knowing, not just orthography, but how to put another vocabulary in the text, not be so repetitive, they are very repetitive. I'm working on it a lot now, I'm teaching synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, so they take appropriation of new words, both in the language..., on both oral and written language.

**Researcher:** Which notions are you specifically referring to, when you speak of basic orthography?

**Teacher 5XJ:** Writing with quality. Let them write comprehensibly, legibly, fit their age and so as to err less. In the action of writing, with punctuation, accentuation. A simple word like "ilha" ("ilha" stands for "island") they forget the "H", "minha" ("minha" stands for "mine") they put "mia".

10 We can infer that in his work with orthography there is a concern to attend to the aspects related to textual production in the speech of the teacher. This concern seems to dialogue with the conception that underlies thoughts of Schneuwly, Dolz and collaborators (2004) when they affirm:

The orthographic should not obscure the other dimensions that come into play in textual production. First of all, for the student, who, mainly concerned with orthography, will lose sight of the meaning of the work he is doing, that is, the writing of a text that corresponds to a task of language; secondly, to the teacher whose glance, attracted by "orthographic errors", will not dwell on the quality of the text nor on other errors considered more fundamental from the point of view of writing: incoherence of content, poor general organization, lack of cohesion between sentences, maladaptation to the situation of communication etc (SCHNEUWLY, DOLZ, 2004. p 117).

This conception leads us to reflect on the aspects as a priority to take during the writing process (by the student) and analysis of a textual production (both by the teacher and by the student): meaning, quality and organization of the text; coherence of content; cohesion between sentences; adaptation to the situation of communication etc. Therefore, as it is possible to conceive, to return



to the attention to the merely orthographic aspects during the textual production could compromise the quality of its production and its analysis.

However, regarding this type of commitment to the textual productions of apprentices, it is worth to emphasize aspects related to cohesion, punctuation and orthography could not be worked on at the same time and in a single way. Both the orthography and the dimensions related to the textuality of the students written productions need to be taken as specific objects for analysis / study in the classroom.

In support of this defense, it follows part of the guidelines explained by the Curricular Parameters of the Portuguese Language:

Either we focus on consistency of content presentation, cohesive aspects and punctuation, or orthography. And, when only one of these aspects is revised, it is possible, at the end of the task, to systematize the results of the collective work and to return it organized to the group of students (BRASIL 1997, p. 81).

Having clarity about these conceptions and understanding that textuality questions must be prioritized in the textual production process, it is also necessary to be clear that a well-written text requires a good dominion of the orthographic norm to become intelligible. Thus, what we consider essential to the treatment of the dimension of this object of knowledge (orthography) refers to the detachment of a work committed to the reflection of the principles that govern the norm and, that's why we insist on the organization of specific teaching goals so the development of the teaching and learning of orthography promotes the generation of the principles that govern the spelling of words.

In a qualitative analysis of the answers offered by the teachers, related to the main objectives of orthographic teaching (presented in table 1), in some cases, we obtained very broad answers, if not too vague to verify if in fact the teachers planned the teaching of orthography based on the regular and irregular characteristics of the norm.

Let us look at the 5X1 teacher's response when we ask what aspects of orthography are important to teach:

**Researcher:** So... what are the main objectives, if it were to say the main goals for orthography work, you would say...?

**Teacher 5XI:** Read and write. Where is he going... to fifth grade... not knowing how to write?

**Researcher:** So... in orthography... in regard to orthography, what is important to teach?

**Teacher 5XI:** The writing.

**Researcher:** What in writing? What in writing, specifically?

**Teacher 5XI:** Know how to write the oral words. Orthography requires this from the student [...]. For example, when I say: today we will go to study orthography. So, orthography... what is next? It comes with words for them to write with great difficulty. That is orthography! Depending on... the... grade you are teaching the student, you will be working orthography with him. You can work orthography through what? Through... music! That's the different! Why I teach them and the way I work is something unusual. I can work with music, with a message, a history...

12 As we can see, even though there was an insistence on the questioning about their objectives for the teaching of orthography, teacher 5XI initially pointed to "knowing how to read and write" and when prompted to answer "what about writing specifically", she merely referred to the teaching of orthography as something that is intended to write words "with great difficulty". In the course of this interview, in order to obtain a response that gave us greater support for the analysis of the 5XI teaching goals, we asked her what were the main orthographic difficulties of their students, to which she replied:

For example: there are some words that he does not know how to write... with X, with CH, consonant meetings... it confuses them a lot. These are things we have to prepare for the sixth year. Know the consonant meetings, the digraphs is important.... In orthography, we talk about this. Orthography is for learning to write. Orthography is to know... digraphs, consonant meetings... diphthong, triphthong and hiatus.

From the reference to type of letters, consonantal encounters, digraphs, diphthong, triphthong, and hiatus we can infer that these were some of the 5XI teaching goals in his work with orthography. In addition, from her answer, we could still recognize that his work with such an object of teaching was limited to orthographic practice when 5XI said to request "five times the word when he (the student) errs."



This response demonstrated the cultivation of a teaching practice based on the memorization of the correct writing of words and lacking reflection on the rules that can be taken as a target for reflection in the classroom (orthographic regularities). Contrary to this type of practice, we defend those that recognize the "different criteria that exist behind the relations between sounds and letters..." (MORAIS, 2007, p. 29) and, therefore, establish the distinction between what is regular and irregular in orthography; because it is only through this distinctive knowledge and, consequently, on the principles that govern it teachers can organize their work more clearly.

Similar to the practice already discussed, most of the teachers in the municipality Y also revealed lack of knowledge of the orthographic specificities and incomprehension of the norm as an object of knowledge that needs to be teach in a reflexively and systematically way.

The teachers' speech seems to show, most of the times, the school has not been treating orthography as an object of teaching, but continues to treat it as a simple object of verification and evaluation. From the interviews conducted, we have seen that there is predominantly a lack of clarity about the specificities of orthography and, consequently, the absence of discussions about why write a given word with certain letters. Instead, she displays writing the correct and request them its copy.

From the interviews, we could also infer that the difficulties and mistakes made by the children do not constitute, for these teachers, an opportunity to map what their students still need to understand about orthography. This directly implies the absence of teaching goals for the 2nd cycle of elementary school. The attention given to the writing errors of the students seems to be limited to the proposal and request of the exercises of orthographic training. Teaching practices that resemble these seem to be unaware that the error may reveal the representations that students make about writing and, therefore, what they think about writing and how they create regularizations about it.

Two teachers (5XH and 5YF) presented clear goals and saw the possibility of treating orthography as an object of reflective teaching. 5XH, through his answers, demonstrated to establish comprehension goals in dealing with some orthographic rules. Let us look at the fragment of the interview we conducted with this teacher:

**Researcher:** What are the main goals for spelling for the grade you teach?

**Teacher 5XH:** They write correctly, right... Respecting the orthography... Without making orthographic mistakes and really understand... some orthographic rules of the Portuguese language.

As we can see, the teacher was clear about her teaching goals of orthography. It would not be enough for their students to write correctly, but, in addition, "really" understand some rules that dictate the norm. The term "really", evidenced emphatically how much this teacher seemed to be committed to the process of orthographic regulations reflection.

During the interview, 5XH, among the other interviewees of the municipality X, was the only teacher who granted more subsidies for a positive analysis of her practice. Let us look at her answer when asked about the importance given to the teaching of orthography for the teaching cycle she taught:

**Researcher:** Do you think orthography is important for the teaching cycle you teach?

**Teacher 5XH:** Absolutely! Especially in these final series... on the second cycle. Because when the student has already appropriated the system of alphabetic writing, he will understand how all the orthographic conventions work, right... The matter of the sounds, the similarities of the sound of X, CH, NH... All this I think it's important.

Through this answer, we can infer about the learning expectations that 5XH establishes regarding the years of teaching. So, when she said "especially in these final series... of the second cycle" the teaching of orthography becomes important, in reality, the teacher is exposing his understanding about the teaching goals that guide his practice and, therefore, give her clues to the knowledge students should have already developed and the knowledge they need to develop along the way of schooling.

Therefore, we can conceive 5XH bases its practice and, consequently, plans its goals of teaching the orthography from the conceptions that we defend in this work. The teacher's statement dialogues with what Morales (2005, p. 16) refers to when he expresses the knowledge that must be built before systematic treatment with orthography can be carried out: "[...] first, apprentices dominate the constraints or properties of the system of alphabetic writing and, only then and gradually, they internalize the orthographic norm". Therefore, teaching practices that set goals for students' reading and writing skills, undertake



to enable the System of Alphabetic Writing (SEA, in Portuguese abbreviation) learning as a prerequisite to learning orthography.

In addition, as said by the teacher 5XH, after the SEA appropriation, the students will "[...] understand how all the orthographic conventions work [...]". This statement is one more evidence that the work proposal of this teacher apparently aims at orthography as an object of teaching that students can reflect and understand.

5YF, in turn, also demonstrated to understand the importance of a systematic teaching of the orthographic norm, concerned, mainly, with the work of some specificities of orthography based on the difficulties found in the grade in which he taught. According to Morais (2005, p. 46), this is essential for effective teaching. Let us see, then, the teacher 5YF answer when asked about what he expects his students to learn until the end of the second cycle in relation to the orthography:

**Professor 5YF:** In relation to orthography, our goal is they come to dominate not only the regular direct, but also the contextual and the morphosyntactic, right? Which are basically where you find more difficulties.

Professor 5YF, in his position, demonstrated the clarity that "to write correctly" implies in reflecting and understanding specific aspects of the orthographic norm of the Portuguese language. His speech also revealed that advancing on the teaching of such orthography specificities (direct, contextual and morphosyntactic regularities) are priority goals established from the difficulties of his class: "we find the difficulties and work on them", he said. Relating this talk to the guidelines given by Morais (2007, p. 69) when he affirmed the need for a careful diagnosis of what are "[...] the main difficulties for students, so they can set goals for the orthographic performance of the specific class with which they work"; we understand, therefore, that the work of periodically mapping what students already know and what they still need to learn is fundamental to the organization of the teaching-learning process of orthography.

After the diagnosis, the reflection on the sequencing of the orthographic teaching is necessarily. In this respect, Morais (2007, p. 70) proposes a work combining "[...] regularity (or irregularity) of the phonographic correspondences and the frequency of use of the words in the written language". Nóbrega (2013, p. 117-118), in turn, specifically suggests a work that has as its priority

the teaching of contextual and morphological regularities as a way of ensuring "[...] efficiency in the process of learning orthography that is expressed in the significant reduction in the number of errors".

Aside from the discussion of the interviews of these last two teachers, we contacted 18 teachers who, as it was possible to perceive, independently of the municipality and the grade of teaching, explained teaching practices of the norm that show lack of planning and systematicity. Therefore, in the face of the answers of most teachers, we asked about what guides their practice of orthography, since there seems to be little clarity about what they work on.

### Defining goals of orthographic norm teaching and learning according to teachers of the 2nd cycle of elementary education

When questioned about how they planned to teach the orthographic norm, the 20 teachers interviewed, regardless of the grade and municipality in which they taught, presented various forms of planning. Let us look at table 2.

Table 2

Plans for the teaching of orthography mentioned by teachers according to the municipality and schooling

	4° grade X					4° grade y					%	5° grade X					5° grade Y					%	
Teachers	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E		F	G	H	I	J	F	G	H	I	J		
Diagnosis							X		X		20%			X		X	X					X	40%
From resources	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	70%	X				X		X	X			X	50%
From the axes of the PCN*					X				X	X	30%											X	10%

Caption: 4 and 5 refers to schooling; X and Y refers to the participating municipalities and the letters A through J represent the identification of the teachers.

\*National Curricular Parameters.

When we questioned the planning of the 20 participating teachers, only six (20% of the 4th grade and 40% of the 5th grade) said to develop a plan based on the diagnosis of the main orthographic difficulties of their students. However, it is worth mentioning that, by analyzing qualitatively the answers





given among the aforementioned six teachers, only 5XH and 5YF, detailing their form of planning, clearly demonstrated the establishment of teaching goals of some specific conventions, defined from the diagnosis of the main writing difficulties of his students. 5XH justified that, in regard to these difficulties, it would be necessary "to understand some rules".

The other fourteen teachers presented different ways regarding the planning mode for working with the orthographic norm. Among these ways, according to table 2, the answers that revealed the planning based on texts, didactic and para didactic textbooks, were highlighted by a higher percentage (70% among those in the 4th grade and 50% among those in the 5th grade). In addition to the plans backed by these resources, there were still those who said that it was based on the National Curricular Parameters.

Analyzing in more depth the teachers' responses to their planning, as well as articulating with the previous discussion, we reached the conclusion that eighteen of the twenty interviewees did not have well-defined orthographic teaching goals. We understand that the teachers, faced with the need to promote the teaching of orthography, showed insecurity and some unpreparedness in setting teaching goals, which, in most cases, led them to seek support in already defined resources. It was the case of the teacher 5YJ, let us see a cut of his interview:

**Researcher:** What do you plan based to teach orthography, when you are able to plan? How do you plan to teach orthography to your class (diagnosis)?

**Teacher 5YJ:** First in the proposal, in the curricular proposal, because we have to be in agreement with the proposal of the municipality. Second, we look for books that mention these grammatical rules and activities that are part of this orthographic context.

Before expose this answer, the teacher said: "I make diagnoses to see what is the level of child, then, just after this diagnosis we see his orthographic level." However, as can be seen from the above statement, this evaluation (diagnosis) that points to the student's "orthographic level" seems to be disregarded by the teacher at the planning moments for the teaching of orthography. In addition, regarding the "orthographic level", said by the teacher, we should pay attention to the guidelines of Carraher (1985) when affirming that the hypotheses of writing come into conflict and, therefore, we cannot consider that certain correctness or writing errors reveal the level/stage of writing learning. On the

contrary, we can consider the students' mistakes and successes as strategies to know what aspects of orthography have already been and which still need to be appropriate.

The disregard for the orthographic knowledge that the students bring also seems to guide the planning of 4XA, since this teacher affirms to base their planning as follows:

**Teacher 4XA:** It's based on their subjects... in the content, right? I have the book, I have their book and I have a companion book. I have their book... It comes with the content, right... text and other things [...]. So, I have books... other books... activity books, right ... Books from the series and other publishers, so I can follow a roadmap of planning and activities, right?

It is worth clarifying that we do not disregard here the importance of the teacher being aligned with the curricular proposal of the municipality, nor he uses the textbook as a resource for teaching the norm. What we want to emphasize is, when choosing one or the other to define their teaching goals, the teacher fails to take into account what students already know about the orthographic norm and what they still need to learn.

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According to Morais (2005, p. 46), the conception of education we defend "[...] is one that understands that teaching is to provide adjusted help to apprentices, for they (re)build their knowledge". Then, it is a planning of orthography teaching that does not consider the regularities and irregularities of the norm, nor is based on the diagnosis of the previous knowledge of the students. It is not considered, from this perspective, as planning and, consequently, can be ineffective for the teaching-learning process of the orthographic norm.

Taking up the speeches of the teachers 5YJ and 4XA, when they attribute to the textbook the guiding role of their planning, we are aware, as Almeida (2013, p. 25), that the textbook is undoubtedly "[...] an instrument that assists in the orientation of pedagogical practice". However, when it comes to teaching orthography, we need attention to some aspects that will influence the teaching-learning process of the norm. According to Silva and Morais (2005), the teacher must be attentive to some criteria when choosing the textbook that will guide his or her work of teaching orthography. Among some of the criteria discussed by these authors, we highlight the one referring to the analysis of the teacher's manual in order to examine what the book's considerations about the



teaching and learning of orthography, as well we must do a survey of letter-sound correspondences proposed by the book.

In front of such analysis criteria, we can infer that the teachers we portrayed above, as well as the other ten, who, like them, have claimed to rely on the book to plan their orthographic classes, are unaware of this need for careful analysis of how the textbook presents the orthography. When the 4XA teacher said: "[...] books like that, from the series and other publishers, so I can follow a roadmap of planning and activities, right?", as well as being engaged in a planning which, as we have said, does not take into account students' real learning needs, is most likely reproducing the teaching conception of the norm behind the activities of the book. Most of the time they are mechanical activities based on rules memorization.

Still discussing the textbook, we agree with the study by Val, Martins and Silva (2009) when analyzing activities of orthography teaching contained in Portuguese language textbooks approved by National Textbook Program 2007 and 2008, defend, among other things, that the teaching of orthography must be worked in a differentiated way as to the cases of regularity and also to the various cases of orthographic irregularity. They also emphasize the importance of teaching orthography so the apprentice reflects on the orthography and not just mechanical copies that prevent reflection on this object of knowledge. And, in general, they point to the textbook as a good ally of the teacher, but as a single element, it does not guarantee the appropriation of the orthographic knowledge by the students. Therefore, it is necessary that the teacher creates other possibilities in order to more and more students correctly use the orthographic norm in everyday life.

With regard to the four teachers who referred to planning from the axes of the National Curriculum Parameters, although we must consider the consultation, references and reflections raised by the National Curriculum Parameters of the Portuguese Language (BRASIL, 1997) we can not only take it as a document that subsidizes the teaching of orthography. We must take care, since the document only spells out general and not specific orthographic guidelines. No National Curriculum Parameters suggests, for example, what types of regularities and irregularities should be worked in a particular grade of education. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to diagnose what the orthographic knowledge their students have already appropriate and which are still in the process of

appropriation. From this analysis, then, the teacher can develop a plan of teaching more systematic and appropriate for the needs of their students.

Therefore, stating that the planning is based on the guidelines of National Curriculum Parameters is still based on practices that are not very specific for the development of orthography.

It is possible to affirm, supported by Silva and Andrade (2005), when speaking about the functions of the diagnostic tools for orthography, the great majority of teachers interviewed developed a practice in which there is no planning based on the different specificities of the standard. Not even based on the orthographic evolution of the students, that allows to subsidize the planning of significant orthographic activities.

Contrary to these examples, we find in teachers 5XH and 5YF a more propitious way to develop a plan coherent with the specificities that govern the orthographic norm. As we have already analyzed, both 5XH and 5YF presented in their interviews elements that we can consider as well-defined goals for teaching orthography in the second cycle of elementary school. These goals (objectives) were only made possible through a mapping of the difficulties of their students. 5XH shows us clearly in his speech that he develops his planning based on these difficulties:

**Researcher:** When you are able to plan, do you plan based on what to work with orthography?

**Teacher 5XH:** This class that came to me this year, despite being in the fifth grade and most of them able to read and write, do a lot of exchange and omissions of letters. And they still get very confused in some conventions. With RR, with a single R, with SC... So, as I watch their writing... wherever they are struggling, I go to work. For example: this grade... seems like a very easy thing... which was not even to be worked out in this grade, because it is assumed that they should have already been appropriate in previous years... But simple rules like the RR, the syllabic separation... the digraphs... accentuation... punctuation... many students still have a lot of difficulties with it... So, as I realize this in the written productions, I go to work. So I worked on the sounds of X, because many of them still traded with CH... \* I also worked on words with L, words ending in U\*, because they were very confused. So, therefore... As I see where they have the most difficulties, I go to work.

\*(T. N.): In Portuguese, the letter "X" and the digraph "CH" sometimes have the same sound. The letter "L", in the end of the word, has the same sound of the vowel "U" in the same position.



This teacher understanding shows how important is to know the difficulties of the class to only later think about proposals of activities that can lead them to understand the rules and, consequently, helps them correctly spell the words. The teacher 5YF also demonstrate it. Let us look at his answer to the same question:

**Researcher:** When you are able to plan, do you plan based on what to work with orthography?

**Teacher 5YF:** Direct, contextual, morphosyntactic regularities, basically the activities that are performed correspond to those difficulties that are there in the classroom, right? Sometimes, it's more contextual and morphosyntactic, right? [...] Because inside the classroom through the difficulties you can perceive, the most important thing is to work on what you are noticing their difficulty.

According to Nóbrega (2013, p. 87), such work is based on a teaching-learning conception that "[...] confer to the initial evaluation a regulatory function of planning, since the identification of the students' knowledge will guide the selection of learning expectations, as well as the elaboration of the sequence of activities to be developed in the classroom".

Although none of the above statements accurately detail what kind of evaluative tool they used to draw these difficulties, we clearly realize that both understand that the orthographic errors of their students are not treated merely as an error, but serve as the guiding goal planning teaching that will take into consideration what their students will still need to internalize about the orthography of their language so that they reach the end of the second cycle, as they said: writing correctly.

This explains why each of them show very specific teaching objectives for the grade in which they teach. 5YF teacher even goes so far as to mention "a grid of difficulties" mapped. 5XH teacher is more explicit in saying the most recurring mistakes of his class. The teachers' proposal of planning will promote an organization of the orthography teaching that will allow to systematize, in a progressive way, the orthographic contents that will be worked during the year. This is only possible because both 5XH and 5YF understand the complexity of the orthographic rules that they intend to work until the end of the second cycle.

Pessoa (2012), in advocating a systematic teaching of orthography, points out, in addition to other aspects, some principles of how to develop a work with orthography focused on the student's reflection on his writing. From

these principles, we highlight here a mapping of what children already know and what they still need to learn, through a diagnosis, as well as the daily monitoring of orthographic difficulties focusing not only on correction. Also investing in moments of reflection on what about they think of writing, in addition to record students' progress to reshape teaching, will thus promote the possibility for teachers to set appropriate teaching goals for their class and to reflect on language irregularities and irregularities.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the way teachers of the second cycle of elementary education understand and construct goals for the teaching of orthography. After conducting interviews with 20 teachers, 80% of them did not have clear goals for teaching orthography. This, in most cases, because they do not understand, firstly, how the orthographic norm of the Portuguese language is organized and, secondly, because they do not have the practice to carry out a planning based on a previous diagnosis of the difficulties presented by their students. We also found that, although most of them aim to have their students reach the end of the second cycle by writing correctly, only two teachers that indicate were concerned with planning based on the difficulties of their students presented more adequate goals to achieve their objectives with success.

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