

3

The Incidence of Speech Modalizers On Children's Reflections About the Use of Expressive Punctuation¹

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This chapter presents findings that are part of a wider investigation which aims to understand how children use punctuation to organize publicity discourse. The results presented in this chapter show the influence of discursive marks of axiological modality on punctuation use. The data was obtained by interviewing 60 children (30 pairs) of second, fourth and sixth grade children (Mexican primary education). They were asked to introduce punctuation, where there was none, into the headlines of a children's magazine cover. The first activity was individual punctuation. This task was followed by paired discussion and explanation of the punctuation marks used by each child. The analysis of the children's discussions leads to the following results: some categories of words are clues used to guide decisions about children's use of expressive punctuation marks that best reflects the semantic and / or discursive function in the text; or the opposite, children identify some words that indicate that punctuation is unnecessary in a textual space because the text shows the enunciator's attitude. These results suggest that children's conceptualizations about punctuation evolve in terms of other graphic and semantic aspects of writing.

Cet article présente des résultats qui s'inscrivent dans le cadre d'une enquête plus large visant à examiner comment les enfants utilisent la ponctuation. Il se concentre sur l'acquisition de la ponctuation expressive et sa possible relation avec la présence de modalisateurs de discours dans le genre publicitaire. Les résultats montrent l'influence des marqueurs de modalités axiologiques. Les données ont été obtenues en interrogeant 60 élèves de seconde, quatrième et sixième années de

l'école primaire mexicaine. Ces élèves ont travaillé en binôme. Ils ont été invités à ponctuer les gros titres de la couverture d'un magazine pour enfants, de manière individuelle. Cette tâche a été suivie d'une discussion par deux et de l'explication des signes de ponctuation utilisés par chacun. L'analyse des discussions conduit aux résultats suivants: certaines catégories de mots sont des indices utilisés pour orienter les décisions sur l'utilisation de signes de ponctuation expressifs qui reflètent le mieux le choix discursif repéré dans le texte ; à l'inverse, les enfants identifient des mots qui indiquent que la ponctuation n'est pas nécessaire parce que le texte explicite déjà l'attitude de l'énonciateur. Ces résultats montrent que les conceptualisations des enfants sur la ponctuation évoluent non seulement en fonction des aspects graphiques et mais aussi des aspects sémantiques de l'écriture.

1. Introduction

Punctuation marks are an integral part of written language. However, there is still a limited amount of research into children's learning of these marks at different stages of education, which leads to many unanswered questions: what are children's ideas about the different marks (syntactic ones such as commas, periods and semi-colon and expressive ones like exclamation marks, question marks and three periods)? How do children understand the role of each one of these marks in a text? Under which premises do children decide which mark to use in a specific type of text? Do other elements of written language play a role in understanding punctuation? Does it vary depending on genre?

The use of punctuation in a text is fundamentally linked to text organization. In order to understand its acquisition, it is necessary to consider at least two important aspects related to its use: its historical development and the psychological implications within its learning process.

In their studies, Ferreiro (1996, 1999a, 1999b) and Zamudio (2003, 2004) have shown that the development of the knowledge of the history of writing has been essential in understanding the cognitive processes involved in the acquisition of the conventions of writing.

The history of writing shows clearly that the normalization of punctuation happened late and gradually in the written languages of Western Europe (Parkes, 1993). Its origins are closely tied to the contexts of reading and producing texts; to the needs of the one who produces, edits or reads the text; to the diverse conditions of instruments and writing materials; to the control of

how the reader should interpret the text, and to the diversity of textual genres (Parkes, 1993; Chartier, 1997; Saenger, 1997; Petrucci, 1999).

Currently, we have not managed to define a field or area that studies the phenomenon of punctuation. It has been studied by traditional linguistics by means of analysis of syntactic structures (Nunberg, 1990; Pan and Snow, 1999 in Galeote, 2002), mostly describing the use of punctuation marks in specific sentence context. Other approaches are rule-related like those of Marsá (1986), Gómez Torrego (1995), Benito Lobo (1992) and Martínez de Sousa (2007). These approaches tend to enlist punctuation marks used in specific languages (English and Spanish) dividing them into those which delimit syntactic units and those which entail a prosodic function.

Studies made from the historical perspective such as Catach (1994), Gautier (2010), Lavrentiev (2011) and from the pragmatic perspective (Sperber and Wilson, 1986; Escandell 1994; Jones, 1991; Reyes, 1995) have caused debate between the grammatical and normative approach to punctuation and a contextual approach where communication is the driving force.

From the psychological point of view, when children interact with written language, they confront the use and interpretation of punctuation: they read punctuated texts and they are expected to introduce punctuation marks in their written texts. However, the process is not linear. We know that the acquisition of the writing system and its resources involves cognitive activity (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1979) which leads to a long series of metalinguistic reflections that allow children to understand the interrelationship between written textual units and communicative intentions across the use of graphical resources (punctuation, typography and blanks).

2. General Description of the Problem of Investigation

When studying the learning of writing resources, the characteristics of the different types of texts should be taken into account, namely:

- their communicative purpose
- the publishing/editing resources of each one of the textual types
- the discursive style
- the media in which they circulate in society

It should be clarified that the above mentioned elements respond to different cultural contexts and to historical conventions. As Chartier (1993) indicates, these aspects affect the decisions of an author or publisher, as well as the reader's interpretation of a particular text.

The present research focuses on the acquisition and mastery of expressive

punctuation and its possible relationship with the presence of discourse modalizers in the genre of publicity. The task consists of introducing punctuation in a children's magazine cover presented without punctuation but with the typical graphical format of children's magazines. The research was applied to children who attend public primary education in the Mexican system.

We assume that for children punctuation is an object of knowledge. The action—a central concept in Piaget's theory—is conceived as the interaction between subject and object. In this interaction the subject (child) exerts an action on the object (punctuation). Knowledge about this object (punctuation in this case) is the result of the child's interpretation when looking for regularities, similarities and differences of its use in various written contexts. To incorporate the object, children transform their interpretations according to their intellectual tools. So, in an effort to interpret the use and function of punctuation, children construct hypotheses which they test, and reformulate when they are not useful for interpreting a situation or when they are inconsistent with other hypotheses that they have produced.

Psychogenetic based researches led by Ferreiro (1996) show that the acquisition of punctuation comes late in the process of learning written language. This author gives some reasons:

- The heterogeneity of the system and the lack of fixed rules.
- The interaction with other elements of writing (lexicon, syntax, discourse genre).
- The function of "instruction for the reader" implies an ability to take the point of view of the author and the reader.

However, some important results of her study on children's narratives (Ferreiro, 1996:156) made evident that "punctuation begins at the external borders of the text and proceeds towards the internal parts." In other words, there is a way to say the text begins here and this is where it finishes. From early stages children use punctuation marks to differentiate direct speech and to separate elements of a list—though their use is not always the conventional one.

Other research done from the same perspective (Ferreiro, 1996; Davalos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2009; Moller, 2011; Espinoza, 2011) has shown that children's use of punctuation reflects their sensitivity to certain grammatical and lexical resources to help them make decisions about how to segment a text in readable units or to perform other functions of textual organization such as to show the hierarchy of ideas.

Specifically, the study developed by Espinoza (2011) became a starting point for our research as it refers to certain words that turned out to be clues that induced (or not) the use of expressive punctuation, meaning exclamation

and question marks. The absence of a detailed analysis of the role that lexical elements play in children's hypotheses on punctuation use led us to consider this as a pertinent topic of research.

We want to know if expressive punctuation interacts with the available lexicon in the text. That is, if there are words that offer sufficient information to express the semantic and/or discursive function in the text making punctuation unnecessary for children. Or the contrary, if there is lexicon that triggers the use of expressive punctuation for adding information not explicitly contained in the texts. In this context, the use of expressive punctuation would fulfil the function of emphasizing and completing the message in the text contents.

3. Method

To find out if there is a relationship between expressive punctuation and evaluative speech modalizers, we designed a children's magazine cover with six headline boxes, a header with the name of the magazine and the type of edition, as well as a bar code that includes the price.

The headlines were taken from magazines known to Mexican children in the age range delimited and then adapted for the aims of the study. The adjustments consisted of the introduction of speech modalizers and the position and typography of the text according to the relevance of the information. The most relevant appears at the beginning with bigger letters, whereas that at the end in smaller type is complementary. We also removed punctuation marks.

The texts are encased in boxes, just like in real magazine covers, as we wanted to avoid a predetermined reading sequence. Typography (text), images and text distribution are fixed. This helps children focus on the task of introducing punctuation.

We are interested to know if children use expressive marks due to the modalizers, or if they use other criteria. Therefore, we designed a "neutralized" version that preserves the format, but has a reduced presence of explicit modalizers directed at the reader. We refer to the first version as A (Figure 3.1), and the second one as B (Figure 3.2). We offer a translation of each version.

Explicit evaluative speech modalizers are words that show axiological subjectivity—the implicit or explicit value-judgment that the speaker states about a situation. Table 3.1 shows the focal modalizers introduced to version A and their translation in English; Table 3.2 those focal modalizers common in versions A and B².

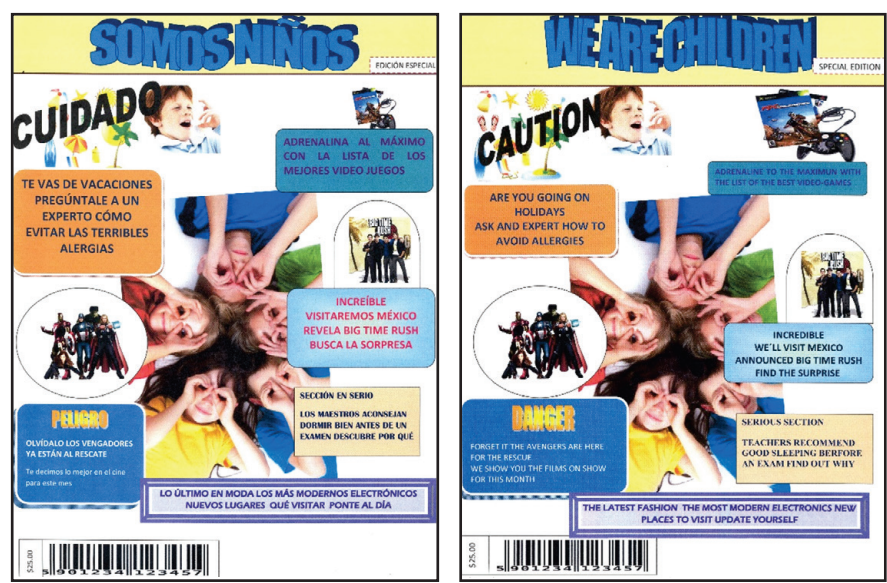


Figure 3.1 Original magazine cover (Version A) in Spanish and its translation (right)

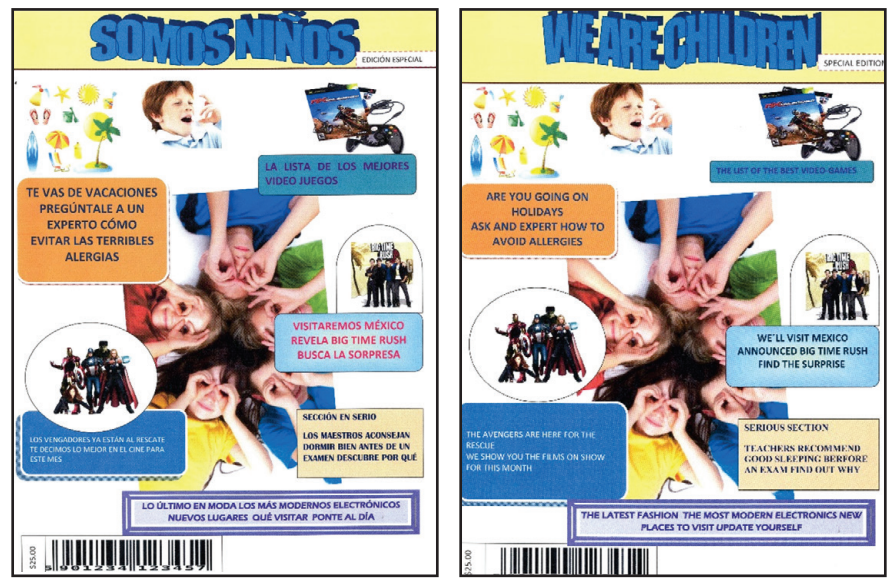


Figure 3.2 Original magazine cover (Version B) in Spanish and its translation (right)

Table 3.1. Explicit focal modalizers used in version A

Speech modalizer (Mexican Spanish)	Translation in English
cuidado	caution
peligro	danger
adrenalina al máximo	adrenaline to the maximum
increíble	incredible

Table 3.2. Common focal modalizers used in version A and B

Speech modalizer (Mexican Spanish)	Translation in English
especial	special
moderno	modern
nuevo	new
serio	serious
lo mejor	the best
lo último	the newest

For ease of identification, we named the headlines with texts longer than two words as shown in Table 3.3. This is important as it will help to understand the results we will present later.

The data was obtained by interviewing 30 pairs of second, fourth and sixth grade children (Mexican primary education). They were asked to introduce punctuation, where there was none, into the headlines the magazine cover.

The first activity was individual punctuation following this instruction: “Here is a cover of a magazine without punctuation. I want you to help me by introducing punctuation where you think necessary. First, you will take turns reading the titles to ensure that you understand the text, and then introduce the marks.”

This task was followed by paired discussion and explanation of the punctuation marks used by each child after this instruction: “Please show each other your results. Compare them and explain to each other why you think punctuation is needed there or why it isn’t.”

This discussion was part of the critical-clinical method of exploring children’s notions through a dialogue in which the researcher asks questions that explore the reasons for the child’s responses (punctuation used or not used). Every interview was audio recorded. We obtained a corpus of 60 individual punctuated magazine covers (30 per version) and 30 paired interviews (15 per version).

Table 3.3. Names given to headlines to ease their identification

Headline	Name
ARE YOU GOING ON HOLIDAYS ASK AND EXPERT HOW TO AVOID ALLERGIES	HOLIDAYS
THE AVENGERS ARE HERE FOR THE RESCUE WE SHOW YOU THE FILMS ON SHOW FOR THIS MONTH	AVENGERS
WE'LL VISIT MEXICO ANNOUNCED BIG TIME RUSH FIND THE SURPRISE	BIG TIME RUSH
SERIOUS SECTION TEACHERS RECOMMEND GOOD SLEEPING BERFORE AN EXAM FIND OUT WHY	TEACHERS
THE LATEST FASHION THE MOST MODERN ELECTRONICS NEW PLACES TO VISIT UPDATE YOURSELF	FASHION
THE LIST OF THE BEST VIDEO-GAMES	VIDEOGAMES

4. Results and Discussions

We are mainly interested in a qualitative analysis of children’s reflections about expressive punctuation and lexicon. Nevertheless, we present some quantitative data in order to give an overall idea of the quantitative distribution and variety of punctuation marks in both versions.

4.1. A Quantitative Look

When counting punctuation marks we noticed that periods at the end of the texts were very common in both versions. When analyzing the number of children that used final period (FP) in at least one of the headlines we observed very little differences between grades. The use of final period is common from second grade onwards. A typical justification was “the text is finished.” Therefore, we will not consider this use of final period in our counting. It is worth saying that the headlines with the least presence of final period were: WE ARE CHILDREN, SPECIAL EDITION, CAUTION and DANGER. The reason being is that they received other punctuation marks or none.

Table 3.4. Number of children who used final period in the magazine cover

VERSION	N	2 nd	4 th	6 th
A	30	9 (90%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)
B	30	10 (100%)	8 (80%)	7 (70%)
Total % in both versions		95%	80%	80%

We registered every mark introduced in each version in terms of: exclusive use of basic punctuation (BP) such as periods and commas; exclusive use of expressive punctuation (EXP) such as exclamation and question marks, and mixed use of BP and EXP (MIX). However, our analysis is centered in the frequency of EXP, as well as other marks like quotation marks, colon or ellipses used with expressive intentions (OTHER).

We found out that the Version A is the one with the most expressive marks, used mostly with the words CAUTION, DANGER, INCREDIBLE and ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM. In Table 3.5 we present the complete list of headlines and the differentiated punctuation marks received in each one. We use the generic name in English shown in Table 3.3 to refer to each headline.

Looking at Table 3.5, it is possible to observe that there are no significant differences in quantity and variety of punctuation between versions A and B. However, if we analyze differences within each version, we see that the highest numbers of EXP and OTHER are in CAUTION (20 EXP and 3 OTHER); INCREDIBLE (22 EXP), ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM (15 EXP and 1 OTHER) and DANGER (14 EXP and 2 OTHER).

These words demonstrate the attitude of the enunciator and are the same four modalizers we included intentionally. Nevertheless, in version A we can see that the headlines with these words have also got a considerable absence of punctuation: DANGER (14), ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM (10). This absence is particularly notable in SPECIAL EDITION (26).

Presence and absence of punctuation related to modalizers or other lexicon in the texts are very important in this study considering our hypothesis. However, the pure frequency does not help us to know if children established a relationship between lexicon and their use (or lack of) expressive punctuation. Therefore, interviews are important as they provide information about children's text interpretation and their punctuation choices.

Table 3.5. Frequency and variety of punctuation marks used by children in both versions of the magazine cover

N=30								
Headline	Ver sión	EXP	MIX	BP	NO PUNCTUATI ON	ONLY FP	OTHER	
WE ARE CHILDREN	A	9	-	-	15	4	2 ""	3 0
	B	17	-	-	12	1	-	3 0
SPECIAL EDITION	A	1		2	26	1	-	3 0
	B	4	-	-	19	6	1 ""	3 0
CAUTION	A	20	-	-	7	-	3 ""	3 0
	B							
HOLIDAYS	A	15	3	7	2	3	-	3 0
	B	18	3	6	-	3		3 0
DANGER	A	14	-	-	14	-	2 ""	3 0
	B							
AVENGERS	A	16	-	12	-	-	2...	3 0
	B	13	3	5		8	1...	3 0
ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM	A	15	-	4	10	-	1 ""	3 0
	B							
VIDEOGAMES	A	3	-	-	19	8		3 0
	B	13	1	-	-	16	-	3 0
INCREDIBLE	A	22	-	3	5	-		3 0
	B							
BIG TIME RUSH	A	10	2	13	-	2	1 "" 1GUI 1:	3 0
	B	10	5	10	-	4	1:	3 0
SERIOUS SECTION	A	4	-	4	18	-	3: 1 ""	3 0
	B	1	-	2	21	2	4:	3 0
TEACHERS	A	10	3	4	5	8		3 0
	B	11	1	7	1	7	2: 1...	3 0
FASHION	A	7	4	12	-	6	-	3 0
	B	7	5	8	1	9	-	3 0

4.2. A Qualitative Look: With or Without Expressive Punctuation

The interviews provided have very interesting data because they offer some hints as to the different principles for establishing if punctuation marks were needed. This is the case of the interview of Miguel and Abigail (6th grade, Version A). With **ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM** they just introduced a FP. From their discussion (translated below), an interesting insight into the criterion used emerges.

We present their results in the original language³ (Spanish) highlighting punctuation marks in bold. We will keep this format in all the examples given.

6th grade Version A	
ABIGAIL	MIGUEL
ADRENALINA AL MÁXIMO CON LA LISTA DE LOS MEJORES VIDEOJUEGOS.	ADRENALINA AL MÁXIMO CON LA LISTA DE LOS MEJORES VIDEOJUEGOS.

Miguel: There is no need for expressive signs / I just saw it as a simple sentence that carries the emotion in **ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM**

Abigail: It could have exclamation marks to make it more interesting

Miguel: Maybe / but it is not needed / when they see it is about video games they will be interested in this because we / children like video games/ and the words / by themselves are attractive and exciting / they don't need a push.

Abigail: If you really want to draw attention to stress the excitement you put them / but it would be very repetitive

In this case, the absence of EXP is linked to two types of justifications in which the interaction between lexical aspects plays an important role. For Miguel the phrase **ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM** offers enough emotional information (the words / by themselves are attractive and exciting), therefore there is no need for EXP. Abigail recognizes the emotional information but suggests that EXP could reinforce the attractiveness though the use of exclamation marks might be redundant.

The same pair of children did not punctuate **SPECIAL EDITION** arguing that the word **SPECIAL** is "enough":

Miguel: Where it says SPECIAL EDITION/ it made me think that it is just a simple description

Abigail: It is not that it isn't/ the word SPECIAL already makes the information very important

Miguel: Yes/ it is not necessary to put punctuation marks although exclamation marks could be used/only if the people of the magazine want to highlight it a bit more/and if they consider to be relevant that children should read this header/ I wouldn't use any as it informs sufficiently.

The latter example shows how different principles may lead to the same graphic results. Abigail focuses on a lexical level—the meaning of SPECIAL—whereas Miguel on a pragmatic one as he considers the publisher's point of view in the possible use of EXP. Cases like the above were found in other school grades and especially in those identified with the most EXP and those with a lack of punctuation marks.

Second graders Regina and Alberto debate about the punctuation marks used in EDICIÓN ESPECIAL.

2nd grade version A	
REGINA	ALBERTO
EDICIÓN ESPECIAL.	¡EDICIÓN ESPECIAL!

Regina: I used a period here/here/and here (meaning the headlines HOLIDAYS, VIDEOGAMES, TEACHERS and FASHION)

Interviewer: Why a period?

Regina: Because the sentence is finished

Interviewer: Do you agree Alberto?

Alberto: No/ I put SPECIAL EDITION (read with happy intonation)/ with admiration marks (sic) so that they (the readers) realize that this is special/otherwise it wouldn't say SPECIAL/ that is a word that grown-ups use for important things like your birthday/and by the way Regina/ periods are only used at the end of long sentences not with few words

Regina: But I have seen them like that/ but I can't remember where

These children are learning in school settings, but we cannot exclude that they are building their hypotheses influenced by the experience they have as written language users in non-school contexts. Alberto, Miguel and Regina recognize the dialogical discourse of this type of text. Their justifications show a logical coordination of the knowledge of the genre, the lexical devices and punctuation.

We found a consistent association between the chosen modalizers and the use of punctuation. Tables 3.6 and 3.7 present a synthesis of the punctuation marks that were associated with the explicit modalizers in children's justifications.

Table 3.6. Introduction of expressive punctuation marks associated with the explicit modalizers in version A

N=30							
MODALISER	Number of children who related the modaliser with their use of expressive punctuation in a headline			Total	Punctuation marks used		
	2nd	4th	6th		2nd	4th	6th
DANGER	1	1	4	6	¡!	¡!	¡! and ¿?
CAUTION	2	2	2	6	¡!	¡!	¡!
INCREDIBLE	-	3	5	8	-	¡!	¡!
ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM	1	3	1	4	¡!	¡!	¡!

Table 3.7. Lack of punctuation marks associated with the explicit modalizers in version A

N=30			
MODALISER	Number of children who related the modaliser with the lack of use of expressive punctuation		
	2nd	4th	6th
DANGER	-	-	1
CAUTION	1	4	-
INCREDIBLE	-	-	-
ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM	-	3	3

These tables allow us to observe that the modalizers exclusive to version A are words influencing expressive punctuation especially by children in 4th and 6th grade.

The use of EXP in these headlines is plausible given the appellative modality of the non-verbal phrases DANGER and CAUTION, words that

fulfil a double function: attracting attention and indicating action. The same goes for the evaluative modalizers INCREDIBLE and ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM which indicate intensity. The cases where questions marks were used (DANGER, one case in 6th and ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM, one case in 2nd) followed an imagined dialogue between the magazine and the reader “Do you think there is DANGER around?” / “Do you want to feel ADRENALINE TO THE MAXIMUM?” Again, children’s knowledge of the genre is also playing a role in their mark choice.

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that DANGER and INCREDIBLE are mostly associated with introducing punctuation than with its absence. Once more this is more common in 4th and 6th grade.

As for the common lexicon in both versions, we identified that children took into account the focal modalizers. The discussion between Karla and Margarita (6th, version B) is an example of the reflections triggered by the evaluative modalizer SERIOUS.

6th, version B	
Margarita	Karla
SECCION EN SERIO LOS MAESTROS ACONSEJAN DORMIR BIEN ANTES DE UN EX- AMEN DESCUBRE POR QUÉ.	¡SECCION EN SERIO! LOS MAESTROS ACONSEJAN DORMIR BIEN ANTES DE UN EX- AMEN, DESCUBRE ¿POR QUÉ?

Margarita: This section looks very boring because it says SE-
RIOUS /not even introducing exclamation marks like this
SERIOUS SECTION (emphasizing) will make it fun /
nothing that is serious is fun/ I used a period.

Karla: I used exclamation marks because it is talking about
something serious that you must pay attention to/ some-
thing that must be taken as important/ otherwise it would
not say SERIOUS/ then question marks for asking WHY
(¿POR QUÉ?).

We also noticed that other lexical elements were related to punctuation choices. The word SURPRISE in the Big Time Rush headline for example led to a very interesting situation for Fernando which was quickly solved by Carlos, his partner.

2nd, Version A	
Carlos	Fernando
¡INCREÍBLE VISITAREMOS MEXICO REVELA BIG TIME RUSH BUSCA LA SORPRESA!	INCREÍBLE ¡VISITAREMOS MEXICO! REVELA BIG TIME RUSH ¿BUSCA LA SORPRESA?

Carlos: With marks for surprise (meaning exclamation marks) to let women who like that music band to go and see them and buy the tickets/ it says the word SURPRISE / then yes/ those marks go.

Fernando: I used them (exclamation marks) to let them see (the readers) that they (Big Time Rush) will go to Mexico in VISITAREMOS MEXICO.

Interviewer: And these marks? (question marks)

Fernando: At the end it says FIND THE SURPRISE / and I wonder what they give away.

Carlos: I'm sure it's a ticket

The word SURPRISE is associated with the unexpected and with predicted anticipation. Fernando was caught in this anticipation as he assumed the role of a reader instead of the role of an editor. We found similar results linked to the words VIDEOGAMES, ALLERGIES, TERRIBLE and ADVICE.

Table 3.8 is a synthesis of the common lexicon interacting with expressive punctuation. We divided the focal modalizers from the rest of the lexical elements available in the headlines. The Table shows the predominance of exclamation marks no matter the school grade, also that questions marks are clearly linked to those words associated with a question (ASK, WHY, HOW). It is clear that, as previously shown with explicit focal modalizers in version A, that the majority of children establishing a relationship between lexicon and punctuation belong to 4th and 6th grade.

Knowing how to use punctuation means knowing how to coordinate several criteria: comprehension of the message of the text, the set of punctuation marks, the position of the mark within the text according to the function they accomplish and the interpretation expected by the reader. This coordination is especially difficult for the younger ones.

Table 3.8. Common lexicon in version A and B interacting with expressive punctuation

FOCAL LEXICON	Number of children who related to the modaliser with their use of expressive punctuation in a headline			Total	Punctuation marks used		
	2nd	4th	6th		2nd	4th	6th
SPECIAL	2	-	2	4	!	-	!
MODERN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NEW	-	1	2	3	-	!	!
SERIOUS	-	2	2	4	-	!	!
THE BEST	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
THE NEWEST	-	1	-	1	-	!	-
WHY	2	6	6	14	?	?	?
HOW	-	3	2	5	?	?	?
NON FOCAL LEXICON							
SURPRISE	1	1	1	3	!	!	!
VIDEOGAMES	-	2	2	4	-	!	!
ALLERGIES	2	1	-	3	!	!	-
ASK	1	3	5	9	?	?	?
FORGET IT	-	2	1	3	-	!	!
TERRIBLES	-	1	-	1	-	!	-
UPDATE	1	1	1	3	!	!	!
	9	24	24	57			

It is also evident that the lexical elements found in versions A and B (e.g. SURPRISE) are more related to the need for punctuation than its omission. This could be because they are:

- nouns related to contextual connotations that are familiar to the children and associated with their emotions (allergies-illness; videogames-fun; surprise-happiness; serious-boredom) and where exclamation marks are linked to subjectivity
- interrogative words clearly associated to question marks (WHY, HOW)
- imperatives (FIND OUT, DISCOVER THE SURPRISE, UPDATE YOURSELF) usually linked to oral appellations, commonly said loudly; children might be trying to represent this aspect of orality with exclamation marks.

In version B, we also found some children did not introduce EXP when they felt the headlines did not fulfil their expectations of the genre. They expressed the need for a certain type of words common in magazines. For example, Regina (6th, version B) explained to Synai that, for her, the most important thing in the BIG TIME RUSH headline is the fact that the music band will visit Mexico. However, she says, “I didn’t use exclamation marks because there

is something missing/I don't know/ it should say something like MAGNIFICENT NEWS/ or something like that to show what BIG TIME RUSH is revealing."

5. Conclusions

We obtained this data by asking children to punctuate an already existing text and by asking them to explain their punctuation choices. We were aware that asking them to adopt the role of an editor would present them with difficulties. Ferreiro (1999) has explained that when revising a text a change of enunciative position is needed because of the writer's need to assume an external perspective as a critical reader of someone else's text. This decentration involves a simultaneous and complex coordination of a variety of aspects of written language. We have also seen that the role children assume when managing texts influences their choice of punctuation marks.

The analysis of the children's discussions leads to the following results:

- some categories of words are clues used to guide decisions about children's use of expressive punctuation marks that best reflects the semantic and / or discursive function in the text; or the opposite, children identify some words that indicate that punctuation is unnecessary in a textual space because the text (or a word) already indicates "how it's said" (speaker's attitude)
- children—in the position of editors—identify viewpoints considered as modalities of the enunciator's involvement (attitude, opinion, subjective appreciation); the space where they place the expressive punctuation mark responds to a logic based on age and experience with the genre
- the data suggests that the exclamation marks used by children add more information for the reader than just that provided by the semantics of the words; this means that children double-mark the sense of a sentence when they feel what is written needs to be emphasized.
- children's justifications of question marks used point to two main functions:
- indicating to the reader the presence of a dialogic process regardless of the enunciation structure,
- indicating their own doubts or questions regarding the content of a text.

These results suggest that children's conceptualisations about punctuation evolve according to other aspects of writing such as lexical choice. Oral exchanges between children also show that when learning to punctuate, expressive marks can either supplement or modify the information provided by

these words. This may mean that the process of appropriation of expressive punctuation is linked to discursive and communicative purposes of specific types of speech.

Our findings raise the need to explore if the relationship between lexicon and punctuation exists in other discursive genres (i.e. narrative), as well as focusing on other lexical categories used to transmit communicative intentions such as verbs (i.e. saying verbs, performative verbs) adjectives and adverbs.

Notes

1. Partial results of a Ph.D. dissertation study (CINVESTAV-IPN, Mexico City) conducted under supervision of Emilia Ferreiro.
2. We keep the use of capital letters and type of font from the headlines throughout this chapter.
3. We followed the criteria for transcription of orality suggested by Blanche-Benveniste (1988). When transcribing children's interventions, no punctuation is used. Capital letters are used for names and texts from the magazine cover. We use brackets to introduce comments about the context of the interview. We also used the following code:

? at the end of a phrase to indicate interrogative intonation

/ to indicate short pauses

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