

Provisional Title

Collaborative academic writing in higher education

NB: This version of the text has been slightly edited by the IRC team on the authors' request.

Project Team

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Institution

The didactic experiment is carried out at the Lisbon School of Education, which is part of the network of polytechnic higher education establishments. It belongs to the Lisbon Polytechnic Institute, which comprises seven other higher schools: Institute of Engineering, Accounting and Business School, School of Communication and Media Studies, School of Dance, Theatre and Film School, School of Music, and School of Health Technology.

The School of Education offers degrees in Basic Education, Artistic and Cultural Mediation, Visual Arts and Technologies, Community Music (in association with the School of Music), and Sociocultural Community Development. All the graduate curricular programmes offer a curricular unit focused on the development of writing skills. However, it is only the degree in Basic Education that offers a curricular unit entirely dedicated to academic writing (*Portuguese Academic Writing*, 6 credits), which is allocated to the first year of the curricular plan (1st semester).

The Degree in Basic Education belongs to the 1st Cycle of Studies of Bologna and aims at training the graduates in the various areas of knowledge, enabling them to intervene in the fields of education, namely Free Time Activities, Museums, Libraries, among others. In the last few academic years, about 85 students have enrolled in the first year of the course. Importantly, the BA degree in Basic Education complies with the number of credits required to apply to the 2nd Cycle of studies of Bologna in the field of Pre-school Education and Teaching of the 1st and 2nd Cycle of Basic Education (6 to 10 years and 10 to 12 years, respectively).

Glossary

Textual genre

Socio-discursive Interactionism. An abstract notion used to denote a text model or a standard which comprises all the empirical text possibilities that can be observed in the social world (e.g. scientific paper; dissertation; advertising announcement).

Action figures

Socio-discursive Interactionism. Interpretations of the professional acting that can be observed in the different types of discourse (see *types of discourse*).

Socio-subjective context

Socio-discursive Interactionism. It refers to all contextual parameters that can account for differences found in the language activity (i.e. conditions of production, circulation and reception of the exemplars of genre with regard to the interlocutors, place and finality).

Co-actants

Socio-discursive Interactionism. General designation for acting participants, i.e., for all voices that emerge in a text. There are two types of acting participants: *actors*, who have inner motivation and intention in their actions, and *agents*, who do not have this profile.

Language activity

Socio-discursive Interactionism. It refers the social practices carried out in a social domain or context.

Types of discourse

Socio-discursive Interactionism. Modes of enunciation (interactive discourse and theoretical discourse, for the explanatory mode; interactive report and narration, for the narrative mode). In French: *discours interactif* and *discours théorique* (ordre de l'exposer); *récit interactif* and *narration* (ordre du raconter) (Bronckart, 1997, 2008).

Theoretical framework [Author comment: this section requires further editing...]

This research is inscribed in Socio-discursive Interactionism (SDI) principles (Bronckart, 2008) and focus on language as the mediator of change. According to SDI, human interactions: (i) should be described within specific social practices; (ii) resort to text models known as textual genres; and (iii) refer to four basic language communicative forms (mental construct) known as types of discourse (interactive speech, theoretical speech, reported speech and narration) in western cultures.

This theoretical model values human acting, the individual performance in work contexts and how its role is unfolded. Marx and former Russians authors, such as Voloshinov (1992) and Leontiev (2004), have been influential in the ideology of the interactionism framework. Educational and training contexts are particularly productive for ISD researchers, namely via the implementation of the didactic transposition of languages studies (context characteristics, textual genres, grammar) (Dolz, Noverraz & Schneuwly, 2001). Educational tools are taken as the mediator that may enhance personal skills; thus Vygotskian studies (1962, 1978) guide SDI and other works.

For the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), language is conceived as both a cultural tool (for the development and sharing of knowledge amongst members of a community or society) and as a psychological tool (for structuring the processes and content of individual thought). Under this view, peer interaction may be considered an educational tool to develop individual skills, since the partnership is a proficuous learning vehicle (Mercer, 1996; Fernández, Wegerif, Mercer, & Rojas-Drummond 2001).

Questions

- How does interaction during collaborative writing contribute to the development of students' (meta)linguistic and (meta)textual skills?
- How to relate the interaction characteristics to the quality of the joint and individual academic written productions?

Method

The didactic experiment is carried out within the course of *Portuguese Academic Writing* in the first year of Bachelor's degree in Basic Education (Lisbon School of Education).

The course implements a didactic sequence based on the scientific paper, which contains one module focused on scientific paper's abstract (Cardoso, Sebastião & Teixeira, in press).

This module is organized into four blocks: (i) discovering scientific paper's abstracts; (ii) deconstructing scientific paper's abstracts; (iii) producing scientific paper's abstracts; and (iv) evaluating the module.

The block (i) — *Discovering scientific paper's abstracts* — includes activities which aim to promote the exploration of this textual genre (e.g. functions, contents, support). The block (ii) — *Deconstructing scientific paper's abstracts* — fosters the discovery of micro and macrotextual properties of scientific paper's abstracts. The block (iii) — *Producing scientific paper's abstracts* — is dedicated to the production of scientific paper abstracts (which includes planning, translating, reviewing, revising). Finally, in the block (iv) — *Evaluating the progress in the module* — students fill in a questionnaire that aims to assess their view on their ability to write the target genre before and after the module and their opinion about the module, optionally considering such topics as the compliance with the work plan, preferred working modalities, and difficulties experienced.

The data analyzed in this study are collected during a collaborative writing task performed in block (iii). Peer interactions are audio recorded (8 dyads) and transcribed (1 interaction transcribed so far, adopting a simplified version of CORDIAL-SIN Transcription Conventions, cf. Magro, org., 2007). Moreover, joint and individual abstract productions of these dyads are collected, as well as the answers obtained by means of the questionnaire.

At this initial stage, the project team includes three Ph.D. teachers with Linguistic (Discourse Analysis, Text Linguistics, Syntax) and Educational background, which may provide an eclectic look into the analysis of peer interaction in higher education. Moreover, the coordinator of the curricular unit (Adriana Cardoso) is also a member of the team, which may facilitate the implementation of new didactic experiments.

Results, hypothesis

For the dyad interaction transcribed so-far, an exploratory analysis was performed within the Socio-discursive Interactionism framework (Cardoso, Teixeira & Sebastião, 2018a). In line with Bulea-Bronckart (2014), five different action figures are suggested to analyze the student's conceptions about the writing production of a scientific paper's abstract, showing how these figures rely on discourse types and other linguistic choices. The five action figures identified concern: (i) the socio-subjective production context (action *context*); (ii) the social practice of collaborative writing (action *negotiation*, action *evaluation*); and (iii) the processes underlying the writing task (action *interpretation*, action *writing*).

In more recent studies, Cardoso, Sebastião & Teixeira (2018b,c) explore the episodes of peer interaction involving negotiation (see Schurmans, 2013). Following some of the procedures adopted by Corcelles & Castelló (2015), the authors provide an analysis of: (i) the types of talk developed by peers during collaborative writing (Mercer, 1996; Fernández, Wegerif, Mercer & Rojas-Drummond, 2001, i.a.); (ii) the sequence of activities followed by the dyad; (iii) the dyad dynamics; and (iv) the Individual and collaborative abstracts produced by the dyad.

Moreover, the authors try to trace the profile of the co-actants in terms of +/-assertiveness by resorting to the analysis of modality expressions, direct/indirect questions and adversative conjunctions.

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