

**Opening dialogic spaces:
Meaning-making in teacher educators'
collegial conversations about academic
writing instruction practices**

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Context and research question

- This study is part of my PhD project: *(Academic) Writing Instruction in Teacher Education: A Study of Teacher Educators' Literacy Practices*
- This presentation builds on the first article from the project: “Teacher educators’ talk about academic writing instruction practices: Collective meaning-making in collegial conversations”
- Research question: How do teacher educators co-construct meaning in collegial conversations about academic writing instruction practices?

Theoretical perspectives

- Sociocultural perspectives on learning (Vygotsky)
 - Thought, language, interaction – key components of knowledge construction
- Dialogical and communicative perspectives (Bakhtin, Linell)
 - Meaning-making as a joint endeavor, embodying both individual and social processes, negotiated and maintained in collaborative interplays
- Spoken language = a tool for “inter-thinking” (Mercer)
 - For constructing knowledge, sharing understanding, and tackling problems collaboratively

Methodology

- Participants
 - Six teacher educators from five disciplines at one teacher training institution
- Material
 - 22 episodes from 5 interdisciplinary collegial conversations
- Analytic approach
 - Communicative projects (Linell, 1998): What appears to be the intended purpose of the interaction?
 - Communicative acts (Linell, 1998): How do they shape their discourse to achieve the intended purpose?
 - Types of talk: Cumulative, exploratory, disputational (Mercer, 2000)

- 1 Jean: [...] what status does “Important to remember” have [in the assignment]?
- 2 Mary: Yeah, I think it is important.
- 3 Jean: Yes, but is it formally a part of the writing assignment?
- 4 Mary: Yes, yes, it is.
- 5 Jean: Because the wording “Important to remember” gives me, at least, the impression that this is advice.
- 6 Mary: Mhm.
- 7 Jean: But ... the criteria themselves are sort of [...] it is not [uten videre] fair to base the assessment on advice ...
- 8 Mary: Mhm, I understand what you mean.
- 9 Jean: ... that the text above this line [points in the assignment] is the assignment itself.
- 10 Mary: Yes, I agree. At the same time, I think that what’s below the line provides an additional explanation which is important to the understanding of the final text that is to be submitted [besvarelse] ... because as Mia mentioned [...] applying practical examples and didactic considerations become a sort of reflection ...
- 11 Jean: [overlaps] Yes, yes, yes.
- 12 Mary: ... but instead of using that word [reflect] we have tried to phrase it so that it becomes clear that you are going to discuss but you can’t only use personal experiences, you must also use course literature ...

Anaysis: Results

Type of talk	Number of episodes	Communicative projects	Communicative actions
Cumulative	10/22	Establish common ground	Describe approaches/activities Add to each other's contributions Rephrasing to ensure understanding Express agreement
	5/22	Mentor colleagues	Ask for opinion/advice Seek affirmation of teaching practices Provide insight Offer collegial support, praise
Exploratory	4/22	Explore perspectives	Provide and elaborate reasoning Defend, justify an idea or practice Problematize, express (slight) doubt Challenge practices or ideas Provide "positive professional critique" (Warwick et al., 2016)
	3/22	Reconsider one's teaching practices	Reflect, wonder, think aloud about one's teaching practices Evaluate, assess, reconsider Ponder revision

Communicative project

Communicative actions

- | | | | |
|----|-------|---|---|
| 1 | Jean: | [...] what status does "Important to remember" have [in the assignment]? | Ask question; seek information |
| 2 | Mary: | Yeah, I think it is important. | Confirm |
| 3 | Jean: | Yes, but is it formally a part of the writing assignment? | Seek further clarification |
| 4 | Mary: | Yes, yes, it is. | Confirm |
| 5 | Jean: | Because the wording "Important to remember" gives me, at least, the impression that this is advice. | [Problematize] |
| 6 | Mary: | Mhm. | Confirm |
| 7 | Jean: | But ... the criteria themselves are sort of [...] it is not [uten videre] fair to base the assessment on advice ... | Challenge
[Problematize] |
| 8 | Mary: | Mhm, I understand what you mean. | Confirm |
| 9 | Jean: | ... that the text above this line [points in the assignment] is the assignment itself. | Challenge
[Problematize] |
| 10 | Mary: | Yes, I agree. At the same time, I think that what's below the line provides an additional explanation which is important to the understanding of the final text that is to be submitted [besvarelse] ... because as Mia mentioned [...] applying practical examples and didactic considerations become a sort of reflection ... | Express agreement

Explain, justify, defend |
| 11 | Jean: | [overlaps] Yes, yes, yes. | Express agreement |
| 12 | Mary: | ... but instead of using that word [reflect] we have tried to phrase it so that it becomes clear that you are going to discuss but you can't only use personal experiences, you must also use course literature ... | Explains, elaborates further |

Findings: Opening dialogic spaces

- Teacher educators' talk was predominantly cumulative and descriptive
 - Promoting collegial alignment, support and consensus (Havnes, 2009; Junge, 2012; Kvam, 2018; Ohlsson, 2013)
- Descriptive talk in the episodes: Opening dialogic spaces
 - Does not only describe; also appears to function a tool for the teacher educators to
 - Verbalize and make explicit their potentially tacit knowledge
 - Identify similar experiences
 - Have their experiences and beliefs recognized and affirmed by colleagues
 - Seem to carry the potential to be transformative
 - Provide opportunity for the teacher educators to expand their knowledge and deepen their understanding of their own and their colleagues' perspectives, beliefs, practices with regards to academic writing instruction

Findings: Opening dialogic spaces

- Interdisciplinary collegial conversations in teacher education can open dialogic spaces in that they might
 - Carry a potential for an increased understanding or knowledge-creation in individual teachers
 - Represent a way to a greater “collective awareness” of writing instruction across disciplines in teacher education by adding to the knowledge about academic writing instruction in teacher education in general