

# **Academic interactions through supporting ‘e-(sub)genres’ – where does the quality dimension fit in?**

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# Presentation Outline

- Setting the scene
- Textual analysis from several perspectives
- Comparing findings with interview data
- Inter-relatedness of the various components
- Quality-related aspects
- Pulling the strings together

# Main Aims

- Identifying some of the key-features of 'supporting' academic (sub)genres (Swales and Feak 2009) in a digital environment
- Exploring to what extent Quality Assurance criteria can be transferred from the F2F setting of language education to the online context

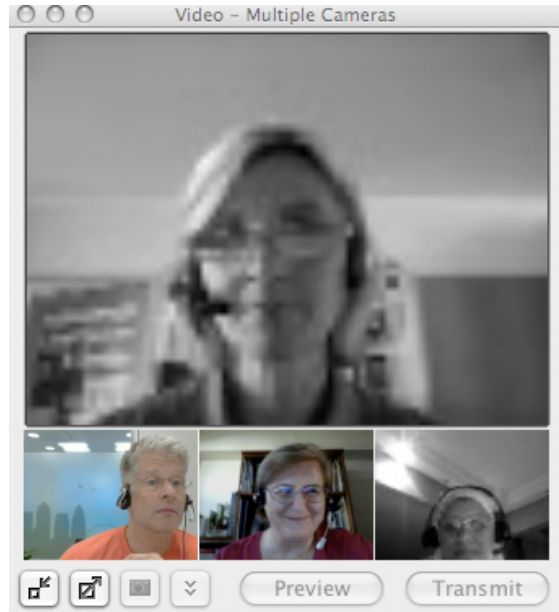
# Starting point(s) of the journey

a) Personal learning experience & self-reflection generated by participation in online communication in transnational professional contexts

b) Needs identified in our local academic context & researchers' interest in personal development

c) Emerging needs & developments in the broader context in relation to both academic networking & publication and QA requirements for new learning environments

# Communication Contexts



Online eModeration  
course with participants  
from 8 countries  
IH London, July 2012

For comparison purposes:  
online interaction among  
project partners within the  
framework of the *NELLIP*  
Project (Nov. 2013 – May 2014)



# Methodological Approach

- Starting from observation & self-reflection...
- ... setting up a corpus with most of the written communication on the platform
- A combination of genre- and corpus-based approaches for textual analysis in terms of both linguistic features and relevant content elements -  
Concordancing software used: Antconc 2012
- Triangulation through interviews with experts, incl. co-participants in the same e-learning experiences
- Stepping outside the micro-context to look at the interactional component from a QA perspective (interviews and documentation)

# CORPUS – source, size, selection criteria

- Most of the communication among the participants in the eMod course July 2012, saved directly from the platform
- Selection criteria: written, asynchronous communication, both peer-to-peer and tutor-participants (tutor as participant in the communication with all, i.e. not just exchanges with individual participants)
- Size of corpus analysed: 60.000 words

# Analysis of textual elements

Linguistic features identified – through the extraction of 4-word n-grams (min frequency 3):

Recurrent moves in the interactional component:

- Greetings
- Reference to posting by peers or tutor, usually expressing agreement with previous contributor's content or approach
- Evaluation (usually positive)
- Building on previous content when introducing own contribution



## Examples of 'thanks' addressed to peers (out of over 100 instances in the corpus)

... the emails generated a genuine consideration - thank you for pointing this out, and I'm sure we ...

... can all appreciate how true this is, these days. Thank you for the suggestions, and I'm certainly...

...a lovely idea! I'll use it with my students, too. Thanks for sharing this!

Thanks Tim - I like the idea of a negotiated condu...

It's a pleasure to read everyone's posts. Thanks

.. thank you all for the feedback to this post!

Thanks again everyone, for all the useful comments...

and i think it	metadiscourse	dialogic	epistemic
and i think that	metadiscourse	dialogic	epistemic
and i think this	metadiscourse	dialogic	epistemic
a sense of community	reference	others as participants or community	
an online environment as	reference	learning context elements	
can come up with	reference	learning context specific actions	
chance to contribute to	reference	learning context specific actions	
and listening to the	reference	learning context specific actions	
and i agree that	metadiscourse	dialogic	certainty
i agree with you	metadiscourse	dialogic	certainty
definitely going to try	metadiscourse	learning context related	intention
fiona i love your	evaluation	graduation of attitude	
i like the idea	evaluation	graduation of attitude	
i love the idea	evaluation	graduation of attitude	
looking forward to learning	metadiscourse	learning context related	intention
looking forward to the	metadiscourse	learning context related	intention
looking forward to working	metadiscourse	learning context related	intention

# Functions associated with the lexical bundles identified

## Main functions

- Metadiscourse
- Reference
- Evaluation
- Discourse organising

## Additional sub-functions

- Stance and engagement
- Self-reference
- Dialogic
- Framing of arguments
- Quantification
- Time reference

# Findings of textual analysis – re content

E.g. Reference to the perceived importance of the interactional component:

*I found it interesting in starting me thinking and introducing key concepts such as appropriate tasks, transparent assessment and group-building strategies.*

(excerpt from the Discussion Forum 1, week 1)

## Examples (cont.)

- *If I'm honest though, I have found it more useful to read through other members' posts. It interests me that at least two people characterise themselves as 'soloists' and I started thinking about what makes people keen or reluctant to work in groups. I have found I need to take time to try to get an idea of who the other course participants are before I complete the tasks and interact - something that takes me much longer on an online course. I assume some of my CPs will be the same.*

[Excerpt from Discussion Forum 4, week 1 - Online communities]

# Some of the stylistic features

Hybridity

Combining features of

- informal dialogic oral communication
- classroom discourse
- comments on blogs
- formal academic discourse (e.g. conference abstract)

Flexibility

Adaptability

# Triangulation through interviews with experts

- To find out if the interactional elements are/  
have been perceived as important also in  
other similar courses
- To explore to what extent there are clear  
Quality Assurance frameworks to ensure that  
peer-to-peer interaction is built in  
(both interview data and documentation)

# Interview data re (a)

- Perceptions of a co-participant in the same eMod course
- Feedback from another, similar course re relevance of the interactional dimension
- Course designer's plans for the future, so as to enhance the peer-to-peer component
- Feedback from participants in the *Nellip* online communication component



## ‘Peer-to-peer interaction’ in similar course contexts - *interview data & documentation*

- Its place and role
- Mechanisms built in the system – e.g. pre-course training for eModerators/ ‘Webheads’, suggested readings, experience sharing through videos, mentors for the eModerators, guidelines & tips for specific task-design, meant to boost peer-to-peer interaction, other means
- However, there do not seem to exist unified systems and explicit QA criteria and instruments for ensuring the quality of design and implementation of this component in practice

# Where does the quality dimension fit in?

## A. The global approach

- EAQUALS – Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services ([www.eaquals.org](http://www.eaquals.org))
- National QA systems, e.g. the Romanian Association for Quality Language Services QUEST Romania ([www.quest.ro](http://www.quest.ro))
- Quality oriented projects, e.g.
  - *Improving Standards of Quality in Adult Language Education* (2013-1-BG1-GRU06-00108)
  - *Quality Assessment Training* (LLP-2011-GRU-LP-20)
  - *NELLIP - Network of European Language Labelled Initiatives and Projects* (Key Action 2 Project - <http://nellip.pixel-online.org> )

# The quality dimension (cont.)

## **B. Specific criteria & instruments - the latest developments, e.g.**

- The EAQUALS QA documents for self-assessment, for evaluation and accreditation of language education, for the (self-)assessment of language teacher competences and the evaluation of Teacher Training & Development, etc.
- The *ISQALE* and *QATrain* QA instruments and accompanying documents for improving the quality of adult language education

# The quality dimension (cont.)

*NELLIP*: QA instruments for evaluating and improving the quality of projects, a comprehensive selection of case studies and examples of best practice, available online on the *NELLIP* portal



# Limitations

- Size of the sample
- Number of respondents
- Documentation analysed

In a nutshell:

*For the moment it is a small scale study and still work in progress*

# Plans for the future & implications

- Implementation in the local context – revision of course design, diversification of genres & sets of competences to be developed
- Continuation of the research, so as to enhance the robustness of results
- Influence (hopefully) on the formulation of Quality criteria and indicators in the QA instruments for online learning

For more on the local context:

[www.edures.ase.ro](http://www.edures.ase.ro)

[www.quest.ro](http://www.quest.ro); [www.prosper.ro](http://www.prosper.ro)

For more on the international context:

[www.eaquals.org](http://www.eaquals.org)

<http://nellip.pixel-online.org>

*Thank you!*

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