

**Dialogic learning in tutorial talk:
a case study of semiotic mediation
as a learning resource for second language
international students**

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Appendix A: Question and Rhetorical Unit Analysis

Appendix B: Transitivity and Ergativity Analysis

Supplementary material

Spoken Data (compact disc)

Abstract

This thesis is a case study of dialogic learning in a university context as demonstrated in *tutorial talk*. The aim of the study is to examine the effectiveness or otherwise of dialogic learning as applied in an economics curriculum. More specifically, the thesis examines the learning experiences of a second language international student cohort as they attempted to understand the role of prediction and causality in economic principles and theories through spoken dialogue. This approach means interpreting the students' learning as a semiotic process and the students' cognitive development as shaped by their language in use. The theoretical framework for this examination is offered by the analytical resources of systemic functional linguistics, as developed by M.A.K. Halliday (from 1975 to 2004) combined with frameworks for mediated learning offered by Vygotsky (1986, 1987); Bakhtin (1986); Hasan (from 1985a to 2001); Bernstein (from 1971 to 2001) and Cloran (from 1994 to 2006 draft); and more recent research in 'scaffolded learning'. The study applies these resources to analyse significant rhetorical functions of economic discourse, such as predictive reasoning and argumentation, and to examine how these were negotiated and mediated by the students and their lecturer.

The method for analysing negotiation and mediation in these students' learning draws on Rhetorical Unit (RU) analysis as devised by Cloran. Linguistically, the analysis takes account of categories and relations between the Rhetorical Units on the basis that these are able to provide theoretical explanations for the predictive reasoning construed in the interactions. The analysis of Rhetorical Units primarily involved the identification of relations between the basic constituent of the text, ie, the message, and how these relations constructed the units of rhetorical meaning in the discussion. The advantage of adopting this approach is the possibility of realising rhetorical activities as an abstraction at the semantic stratum, and, as such, how they were realised by lexicogrammatical phenomena. The analysis examined: first, the use of Rhetorical Units by the lecturer and students in their construal of the critical pedagogic discourses identified by Bernstein, being the regulative and the instructional; and second, the adjustments and shifts to more congruent explanations as a result of contingency

strategies taken by both the lecturer and students in response to the students' difficulties.

The findings throw a different light onto dialogic learning in a new social constructivist pedagogical approach in a university context. The study reveals that while the students' learning was a highly collaborative dialectical process, any transformations in understanding were not at all neatly incremental as described in the literature. Indeed, the negotiations were highly 'peripatetic'; any increments in understanding were overall *devolutionary*. While the lecturer's initial guidance reflected the monologic discourse of written economics, her responses became more congruent and reactive. It was shown that a key predictor of these contingency strategies was the kinds of meanings sought by the students' extensive questioning. Hence, in this case study, the contingency strategies undertaken within the interactional dynamic reveal a different view of semiotic mediation, necessarily a process of semiotic *remediation*.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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