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Student writing in higher education: From texts to practices to textual practices

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ABSTRACT

In this article, recordings of academic supervision interactions are examined to inform a discussion of how 'texts' and 'practices' have been conceptualized in Academic Literacies (AL) research. AL perspectives have contributed to a shift in focus, from texts as linguistic objects to the practices in which texts are embedded. With a starting point in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, we demonstrate the relevance of *proximal textual practices* as an intermediary between texts and the more abstract dimensions of practice targeted by AL, such as ideology, power, and institutional processes. Thereby we extend initiatives in AL to highlight direct interaction between learners and tutors as central to academic literacies pedagogy, and demonstrate the potential of detailed conversation analytic and ethnomethodological analysis for shedding light on the practices within which texts are embedded in the learning and teaching of academic writing.

1. Introduction

The conceptualization of academic writing and instruction plays an important role, not only in the structuring of research agendas but also in the pedagogy of higher education. Theoretical perspectives feed into the design of instruction and might in this way have a substantial impact on educational practice. Different positions on the conceptual relation between texts and surrounding practices, for instance, are typically associated with different assessments of the relevancy and efficiency of teaching methods (see e.g., Lea, 2004; Wingate & Tribble, 2012). The field of *Academic Literacies* (AL) research developed largely from a critique of the "textualism" (Lillis, 2019) or "textual bias" (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 10) characteristic of much research and pedagogy in academic writing. In order to understand the challenges of teaching and learning in academic writing, proponents of academic literacies argue that there is a need to move beyond a narrow focus on texts.

A central background to the discussion of textual bias is the apparent difficulties of large groups of students in meeting course requirements in the academy. Responding to the need for instruction in writing, courses and various resources that aid in the development of academic writing skills have been developed. Areas of research and development such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) have grown out of this movement. From an AL perspective, however, such measures and research efforts fall short by conceptualizing the 'problem' as textual, and by developing pedagogies that are predominantly textually oriented (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 12). In other words, "both the 'problem' and the 'solution' are constructed/perceived as being overwhelmingly textual" (Lillis, 2001, p. 22), and therefore "whilst annoying, relatively straightforward to identify and resolve" (ibid.). According to the AL argument, textualist or textually biased accounts focus too narrowly on the qualities of texts and the associated skills needed to produce academic writing in different genres. As stated by Lillis and Scott (2007): "to dislodge the text as linguistic object as the primary focus and to direct attention towards the *practices* in which texts are embedded [constitutes] the principal achievement of academic literacies research" (p. 21).

The AL perspective has been influential and delivered on its promise to aid researchers in the analysis of educational phenomena and to serve as a framework for the transformation of pedagogical practice (see the edited volume by Lillis et al. 2015). In this journal, this perspective has been used as a conceptual frame for discussing a wide range of topics, including issues of plagiarism (Blåsjö & Christenson, 2018; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2018); reading and writing practices and student identities (O'Shea et al., 2019; Vassilaki, 2017); and multilingualism in relation to language policy (Stroud & Kerfoot, 2013). Nevertheless, there is a

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need to further inspect the concrete courses of action in which texts are embedded. This need has been acknowledged by AL authors (e.g. Lillis & Scott 2007), for instance in initiatives to study "dialogues of participation" (Lillis, 2001) through which learners can be talked into key forms of academic literacy. The aim of the present paper is to extend these initiatives by applying an ethnomethodological and conversation analytic approach to talk-based interaction around texts.

2. The argument against textualism

In their seminal paper "*Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach*," Lea and Street (1998) argue that dominant approaches have "assumed that literacy is a set of atomized skills which students have to learn, and which are then transferable to other contexts" (p. 158). Problems with student learning are, according to Lea and Street, "treated as a kind of pathology" (ibid.) for researchers and educators to remedy, based on a theory of language which "emphasises surface features, grammar and spelling" (p. 159). Even approaches that take a more culturally sensitive perspective, such as academic socialization research, are criticized for the ways in which texts and writing are conceptualized (this characterization is critically discussed by Flowerdew 2020, Wingate 2019, and Wingate and Tribble 2012). In their critique, Lea and Street highlight a failure to consider "deep" (p. 159) issues, for instance, "the institutional production and representation of meaning" (ibid.). This phrase could be seen as a first formulation of the AL territory: the social practices that embed the text as a linguistic object.

The study reported in Lea and Street (1998) draws on interviews with staff and students, as well as analyses of documents, in particular examples of written feedback, which provides access not only to texts but to central actors' perspectives on the practices that surround texts as linguistic objects. One topic in the reported interviews with staff is how interviewees reason about *quality* in academic writing. First, it is noted that instructors often refer to generic textual concepts such as "structure" and "argument" as key elements in student writing. Second, the meanings ascribed to these concepts by individual academics appeared to be dependent on their discipline or subject area. Third, the authors note that interviewees often found it difficult to articulate what terms like "structure" and "argument" meant: "[S]taff were able to identify when a student had been successful, but could not describe how a particular piece of writing 'lacked' structure" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 162). Moreover, staff were limited to "the level of form" when expressing quality criteria in student texts. In relation to one interviewee, for instance, it is observed that "the descriptive tools he employs – 'critically analyze,' 'evaluate,' 'reach a synthesis' – could not be explicated further" (p. 163). Staff also appeared to be aware of these difficulties, as illustrated by the following statement made by one respondent: "I know a good essay when I see it but I cannot describe how to write it" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 163).

The authors suggest that one reason instructors are unable to describe what constitutes "structure" in concrete textual terms is that this concept, as it is used in assessing student writing, is not a purely textual category. Rather, what is at play are underlying assumptions regarding "epistemology" (p. 160) tied to the individual disciplines in which staff operate. Because these assumptions are not clearly articulated or apparent, staff instead reason in terms of "surface features of form" (p. 160) and "familiar descriptive categories" (ibid.), which mean different things in different disciplines. As a consequence, one might say that any attempt at formulating problematic issues in a piece of writing with the aid of (seemingly) textual terms such as "structure" and "argument" would be questionable from the point of view of instruction; if it is not clear what these concepts point to in textual terms, how are they helpful for students?

At a most general level, the academic literacies argument against textual bias is a reaction to attempts at explaining students' difficulties solely in terms of their textual skills. It is argued that to understand why students struggle, researchers and educators must take into consideration the wider context in which students and academic faculty operate. From an AL perspective, a set of previously ignored dimensions of student writing can thereby be made visible:

> [T]hese [dimensions] include the impact of power relations on student writing; the contested nature of academic writing conventions; the centrality of identity and identification in academic writing; academic writing as ideologically inscribed knowledge construction; the nature of generic academic, as well as disciplinary specific, writing practices. (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 12)

The move away from solely examining texts towards encompassing broader aspects of power dynamics, identity, ideology – and the tangible implications of this shift – has faced criticism (see, for instance, Wingate and Tribble 2012). In particular, critics have argued that the textual level has been neglected in research, and that pedagogical applications downplay explicit text-based instruction in academic writing, in favor of critical reflection and the challenging of dominant academic practices (e.g., Wingate 2012). Lillis (2019) responds that there is a misunderstanding underlying this kind of critique, which amounts to "conflating the textualist critique […] with a presumed lack of interest in texts" (p. 7). Lillis continues: "A concern with academic writing necessarily involves a concern with academic writing as textual product – but textual product as nested within/constitutive of a particular social practice" (ibid.). Still, a potentially problematic conceptual relation between texts, contexts, and wider social practices is also acknowledged and discussed within the field. Lillis and Scott note that there is a risk that "texts, and more importantly, detailed analysis of texts, can disappear altogether" (2007, p. 21). The authors argue for incorporating "ethnographically sensitive text analytic tools" (p. 22) in future developments of the field. It is also suggested that AL might draw on other disciplines in this effort, such as applied linguistics, linguistic ethnography, and critical discourse analysis.

3. The interactional constitution of textual practices

Researchers within the field of academic literacies have engaged in research that connects different levels of context, including studies of talk-based interactions around texts. Lillis et al. (2015) have collected reports on practical applications of an academic literacies perspective in writing pedagogy. These reports examine the practices surrounding academic writing, ranging from dialogues around written texts (e.g., Kaufhold 2015), to changing semiotic practices such as digitally mediated writing (e.g. Penketh & Shakur, 2015) and tutorials (e.g. Boz 2015). Generally, however, these studies provide limited access to the interactions where understandings of academic writing are negotiated between students and academic staff. For instance, while Kaufhold (2015) highlights that the composition of a master's thesis involves a complex interplay of various activities, with student-tutor dialogue serving as a crucial element, the perspective on these dialogues is primarily derived from interviews rather than direct observation. Although these interviews provide insights into the process, they are not intended to capture student-tutor dialogue directly, as an order of practical action.

This can be contrasted with studies that base their analysis on the close inspection of recordings of the interaction between supervisors and students. With a starting point in traditions such as ethnomethodology, discourse analysis and conversation analysis, researchers have examined various facets of academic writing interactions, such as student resistance to advice (Leyland, 2018; Vehviläinen, 2009a; Waring, 2005); the balance between epistemic asymmetries and learner autonomy (Park, 2012a; Waring, 2007a); the design and function of student questions (Park, 2012b); student-initiated advice sequences (Vehviläinen, 2009b; Waring, 2007b); intercultural aspects of supervision interaction (Cargill, 2000); dominance and its intersection with gender and language (Thonus, 1999); and interactional strategies for managing the sensitive

nature of critical feedback (Li & Seale, 2007). Prior research has thus provided analyses of the discourse structures of instruction in academic writing as well as interactional re-specifications of relational and social-psychological aspects of instructional practices such as dominance, autonomy, and resistance. Less emphasis, however, has been put on understanding learning and instruction specifically, in a way that addresses the "gap between institutional demands and students' understanding" (Lillis, 2001, p. 56). In connection to this, the observations made by Lea and Street (1998) regarding the difficulties staff appear to have explicating central concepts, raise important questions about how academic literacies may be taught, learned, and negotiated between students and staff. If explicit definitions are not forthcoming in the interview situation, then how is instruction in academic writing done to help students move forward? Apparently whatever competencies staff might have in teaching (and doing) academic writing is not in the form of 'knowing that' (Ryle, 1949). Then what about their 'knowing how'? How can we explore instruction in academic writing as practical action?

Eriksson and Mäkitalo (2013; see also Eriksson 2015) touch upon such issues in their analyses of the "communicative challenges" involved in supervision around key components of texts, such as referencing and formulating conclusions. The same authors also examine the process whereby students are initiated into a particular field of research through feedback on project outline documents, and "how access points to disciplinary reasoning and arguing were introduced through verbal discourse" (Eriksson & Mäkitalo, 2015, p. 123). A set of studies by Macbeth (2006, 2010) represents another relevant contribution. Macbeth (2010) examines the practical significance of "model essays," arguing that such models "provided relief from the vague terms and occult objects of what was for [students] a cultural curriculum" (p. 33). Macbeth (2006) examines "following instructions" in academic writing as an object of learning in itself. Ambiguity and vagueness are treated not so much as issues of the instructions' imperfections, but as reflections of the fact that "all instructions are relentlessly and irreparably indefinite" (p. 197; see also Amerine and Bilmes 1988, Lindwall et al. 2015). Smith (2021) addresses what has been described as an "institutional practice of mystery" (Lillis, 1999) in AL writings, but does so from a perspective that treats student descriptions as accounts, or "performative spoken practices" (p. 77) through which facets of academic writing are constructed as "strange." This strangeness is not treated as referring to "states of affairs in the world", but as part of students' ways of accounting for their academic performances.

A theme that runs through these interaction analytic studies of academic writing is the inherent challenges that characterize academic writing. Borrowing a phrase from Garfinkel (1967) these challenges may be called the "normal, natural troubles" (Garfinkel, 1967) of learning and instruction in academic writing. What Garfinkel refers to as normal troubles are perennial ones, part of competent performance in a setting, and *managed* continuously rather than resolved once and for all. The notion provides an understanding of instances that strike an outside observer as somehow problematic, which does not suggest that underlying faults are to be sought in observed practices or in the competence of actors. Instead, analysis commits to explicating the endogenous rationality of the actors' point of view and examining the ethno-methods whereby 'normal troubles' are managed in practice.

4. Data and analytic procedures

The larger data set for this study consists of eight video-recorded supervision sessions with one supervisor and four groups of students from a five-week course in ethnographic research method. The course was given as part of a Master's program at a Swedish university, covering social perspectives on the design and use of information technologies. In the present context, supervision refers to meetings between supervisor and student groups. For each group, two supervision sessions were held, one during the fieldwork, focusing on practical and methodological issues, and one as a draft of the students' written report had been submitted. Each group produced one report, and this report constituted the main assignment during the course. In two cases, we also have access to the students' work after the supervision session, where the feedback is discussed and the report is edited before a final version is submitted.

Given our interest in texts and writing, the focus in the present article is the second of the two sessions (each between 25 and 45 min long) and the students' post-supervision work. In the presentation, we will limit the scope of analysis to one case, that is, one supervision session with one group of students, and their post-supervision group work. We also include brief extracts from their written report, pre- and post-supervision, to track the revisions made as a result of feedback. Focusing on one case makes possible a more in-depth analysis of how feedback comments delivered over the course of the supervision session are tied together, and allows an analysis of feedback uptake in post-supervision work and text revision.

During the course, groups of 4–5 students conducted brief observation-based ethnographic studies at different workplaces. Their observations and analyses were intended to form the basis for further design-oriented work in the subsequent course. The aim was that students should develop their skills in analyzing work practices to inform the development and design of technologies. Reflecting this aim, students were to write their reports as would-be research articles geared to the field of computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW). Students were instructed to use publications from key conferences in this research field as templates for their reports. The four recorded text-supervision sessions are taken from the end of the course, two days before the final deadline. Thus, the only additional feedback delivered in the course is summative and based on the final written report. To examine how feedback comments are taken up, however, we draw on recordings of student work after supervision, and analyses of the final submitted reports.

The recordings have been transcribed according to the conventions of conversation analysis (CA) (e.g., Jefferson, 1984). Pauses are marked with single parentheses and measured in tenths of a second. Pauses shorter than 0.2 s are marked "(.)". Overlapping talk is marked with square brackets. Elongated sounds are marked with colons, as in "e::hm" (more than one colon indicates a longer sound). Cut-off sounds are marked with a hyphen, as in "I wi-". Equal signs ("=") indicate latching, that is, turns that follow each other without an intervening pause. Within CA, there is a preoccupation with the sequential order and local resources with which people interact and make sense of each other. As a species of institutional talk (Drew & Heritage, 1992), supervision interaction is structured in a way that departs from ordinary conversation in terms of turn-taking and turn-allocation, most notably through a format which is dominated by the supervisor's delivery of feedback comments. Still, like other forms of spoken interaction, the interaction has a sequential organization where each turn at talk displays an understanding of the prior. While asymmetric in quantitative terms, the students recurrently interject with comments and questions. In the upcoming sections, we take a special interest in these moments, including how turns at talk are chained together and how the participants orient to the achievement of common understanding. The ethnomethodological framing further entails an interest in "members' methods" – the specifiable ways in which participants manage the 'normal troubles' of supervision encounters. This includes, for instance, the methodical ways in which feedback comments are structured and delivered over the course of a supervision session, and how the feedback is analyzed and picked up by students, during as well as after the supervision session.

5. Findings: explicating meaning in supervision interaction

The following sections are structured around the delivery of two items of feedback during the supervision session, the first one targeting the students' empirical analyses, and the second one focusing on the "previous research" section of the report. Following these two feedback

episodes, we examine an extract from the students' post-supervision work. Taken together, these episodes illustrate three phenomena related to the proximal textual practices of learning-and-instruction in academic writing: first, the inherent interrelatedness between feedback comments that occur over the course of a supervision session; second, the ways in which the delivery of feedback is oriented to the temporally extended and iteratively organized character of the writing process; and third, the sequential and responsive nature of the supervision sessions, visible in the ways in which student actions contribute to the sense-making processes whereby feedback comments are given meaning in interaction.

5.1. *The paired structure of 'general comment' and concrete illustration*

The observation made by Lea and Street (1998) that instructors *struggle* in their attempts at explaining 'what they actually mean' with feedback comments is one that resonates with our own observations of video-recorded supervision sessions. Unpacking specific issues with student texts regularly takes some time, stretching over the course of the sessions. In the episode we focus on here, the supervisor attempts to direct the students towards developing their empirical analyses, which are described as too "descriptive". This issue is brought up at the beginning of the session as the supervisor's "big comment":

The "big comment" takes the form of a description of what the students have done: sometimes they describe "interesting stuff" but do not move beyond that (lines 03-04). One student interjects and asks if the supervisor is "especially" referring to the "analyses" (line 06). The student's question initiates a side-sequence (Jefferson, 1972) which deals with, and repairs, problems concerning mutual understanding (Schegloff, 1987) of the feedback talk. These problems, as they are oriented towards by the participants, are dual in nature. First (line 07), the supervisor responds positively to the student's understanding-check (Schegloff et al., 1977) in a way that aligns with the polar yes/no quality of the question, what sometimes is referred to as a type-conforming answer (Raymond, 2003). Second, the expansion beginning with "I mean" (line 07) addresses a possible confusion or imprecision discernible in the question's formulation, thus taking up the status of the understanding check as an invitation to other-correction (see Schegloff et al., 1977). In the question of whether the comment about descriptiveness refers to the analyses "especially", the supervisor finds reason to establish the relevant sections of the report where one might expect to find analyses versus descriptions (lines 07, 09, 12-14).

Three observations can be made regarding this sequence. First, we see an instance of the productiveness of student-instructor talk, in the ways in which a brief understanding check enables both the ratification of mutual understanding on a surface level (i.e. that the supervisor is talking about the analysis section) and an instructional response to

EXCERPT 1: The "big comment"

01	Tom:	**ja ska försöka ha nån stor kommentar också** I'll try to have one big comment also
02		**å min stora kommentar e (0.3) e::h (0.3) ibland** and my big comment is (0.3) u:hm (0.3) sometimes
03		**så (.) beskriver ni (.) väldit (0.8) uh- intressanta** so (.) you describe (.) really (0.8) eh- interesting
04		**saker (0.4) men de stannar ibland vid beskrivningar** things (0.4) but it stops sometimes at descriptions
05		**(0.8) e:h (.) de::=** (0.8) u:hm (.) i:t=
06	Bob:	**=speciellt i analysen eller** =especially in the analysis or
07	Tom:	**a. (0.7) e:h ja menar här i introduktionen eller i=** yup. (0.7) uhm I mean here in the introduction or in=
08	Bob:	**=m=** =m=
09	Tom:	**=metoden så e de ju [bes]krivningar man vill ha=** =the method it is descriptions one wants
10	Bob:	**[m]** [m]
11	Bob:	**=m** =m
12	Tom:	**men att i analysen så så (.) så kanske ni:: (0.4)** but that in the analysis then then (.) then perhaps you (0.4)
13		**skulle kunna ta de ta de (0.4) ett ett varv till,** could take it take it (0.4) one one round more,
14		**(.) abstrahera gå på djupet va man nu vill kalla de** abstract go deeper whatever you want to call it
15	Bob:	**m** m
16	Tom:	**e:hm (0.3) så de e min stora generella kommentar å de** u:hm (0.3) so that is my big general comment and it
17		**e de som ja tror att (0.7) ni skulle::h liksom (0.7)** is that which I think that (0.7) you could like (0.7)
18		**å å ja har nåra förslag sen också på hur ni skulle** and and I have some suggestions then also of how you
19		**kunna göra de** could do that

possibly problematic implications of the student's question. Second, one might see in these initial formulations a clear connection with the vague and general terms that Lea and Street (1998) report from interviews with academic staff. A distinction between "description" and "analysis" is alluded to, but not explicated further. What is to be done, concretely, is perhaps even less clear: the remedy is described as "taking it one round more", "abstract", and "going deeper" (lines 13-14). One sensible reaction could be to point out that "abstract" and "go deeper" seem to indicate opposite procedures. These labels, however, are presented not as technical terms, but as tentative and specifically informal ways of talking (see "whatever you want to call it" on line 14). Third, we would like to highlight that already at the point when the "big comment" is first articulated, the supervisor indicates that something more is upcoming: "I have some suggestions then also of how you could do that" (lines18-19).

Later in the session, the supervisor reaches the analysis section and picks up the thread from his initial comment. The bit of text that is focused here comes after a field note recounting a telephone conversation between a truck driver and a clerk at the fieldwork site (a mobile workshop for service and repair of cargo trucks), where the caller attempts to order and schedule a service. In the version handed to the supervisor, the paragraph reads as follows:

> During the conversation the clerk uses his scheduling program to fit the customer needs into available timeslots. This proves hard because of this customer's needs. The truck needs to be available for emergency duty during daytime. This means that repair needs to be made in the evenings. Because of the amount of work in a full service this will consume two evenings. After the conversation the clerk explains that the customer also wants to change the locks because of this it will take another evening, in total three evenings. It proves hard to find a suitable timeslot. They agree that the clerk will check it up and return to the customers call when he finds a possible solution.

This is the paragraph that the supervisor refers to in making the following comments:

EXCERPT 2a: Your analyses are descriptions

01	Tom:	**en sak ni skulle kunna göra (0.3) de e å titta (0.3)** one thing you could do (0.3) it's to look (0.3)
02		**e:h (0.7) de de e jättebra (.) excerpts (.) tycker ja** uh (0.7) these these are really good (.) excerpts (.) I think
03	Bob:	**m** m
04	Tom:	**och e:h (0.8) på nå sätt de ni e ute efter (0.6) de som** and uh:m (0.8) and like what you're getting at (0.6) what
05		**underförstått står här e intressant (.) så ni har hittat** what's is between the lines here is interesting, so you have found
06		**nånting som e intressant (.) men (.) ni har liksom inte** something that is interesting (.) but (.) you have sort of not
07		**ni uttrycker de inte riktigt än** you are not expressing it really yet
08	Bob:	**näe** no
09		**(0.5)**
10	Tom:	**e::h (1.1) och eh (2.0) e:h (0.4) beskriv- eller analysen** uhm (1.1) and eh (2.0) uhm (0.4) descript- or the analysis
11		**utav excerpten dom e ganska mycke, (1.1) e:h** of the excerpts they are pretty much, (1.1) e:h
12		**beskrivningar av excerpten** descriptions of the excerpts
13		**(1.3)**

In line 01, the supervisor begins by formulating what appears to amount to a piece of concrete advice, "one thing you could do is to look." This line of talk is aborted, however. Instead, the supervisor in lines 02 to 12 provides a diagnosis of a problem with the students' analyses. This kind of structure, where formulations of advice are preceded by assessments where a problem is unpacked, has been shown to be recurrent in instructional sequences (see e.g., Phillabaum, 2005). The supervisor enacts a kind of professional vision (Goodwin, 1994) in relation to the assessment and characterization of the students' text and presented data. He states that the analyses as they stand are too much like "descriptions" and miss out on "expressing" interesting things, which are formulated as being said "implicitly" in their analysis (lines 04-07). On the supervisor's account, the students have thus merely *described* the data extracts, not quite *analyzed* them. In relation to the initial articulation of the "big comment", these formulations have moved some way towards something concretely textual, and a particular section of the text has come into focus. A further facet is also added: the observation that the empirical data presented in the text amounts to having found something "interesting," which indicates an assessment that there is potential for developing the analyses. Although anchored in a specific section, these formulations could of course be dismissed as elusive and ultimately unhelpful for students who do not yet know what the difference between a "description" and an "analysis" might be. The supervisor does continue, however, in a stepwise fashion, in the direction of further textual concreteness.

EXCERPT 2b: A method of analysis

14	Tom:	**så de som ja tänker då om ja ska (0.3) e:h dels e de** so what I'm thinking then if I should (0.3) uh partly it's
15		**då liksom (.) metoden som ni ska använda för å- för å** then like (.) the method you should use to- to
16		**se fler saker här (0.4) de e å titta på varje mening å se** see more things here (0.4) it's to look at each sentence and seeing
17		**va e de som händer här (0.5) eh vilken funktion i samtalet** what is happening here (0.5) u::h what function in the conversation
18		**fyller den här (0.3) meningen inte bara vilket innehåll** does this (0.3) sentence have not just what content
19		**finns de för att de (.) de har ni ju (.) beskrivit här** is there because that (.) that you have (.) described here
		[...]

In this excerpt, Tom introduces a "method to see more things" (lines 15-16) a formulation which yet again recalls the organization of professional vision as the "body of practices through which the objects of knowledge which animate the discourse of a profession are constructed and shaped" (Goodwin, 1994, p. 606). The suggested method involves "looking at every single sentence and seeing what is happening," describing the function of each sentence in the conversation, and going beyond just stating the content of the talk. In the larger data set, similar attempts at formulating methods are done recurrently. The supervisor's comments on students' analyses often involve prompts to "look carefully," "break it down," in this excerpt: "look at each sentence, and see what is happening here". The distinction between content and function is used several times; that is, the students are supposed to capture the function of an utterance, rather than only its content (lines 17-18). We

view the supervisor's contribution here as reflecting the epistemology of the intended genre of academic text, and as beginning to unpack how the students' descriptions of field notes and extracts of conversations can be made recognizable as CSCW analyses.

The supervisor has moved from a first "big comment" to locating a relevant section of the text, and – via an indication that the data is "interesting" and amenable to further analysis – to a relatively concrete formulation of a "method". What we have here is something that a student could potentially use as a guide in the production of a revised textual product. The suggested method is still formulated in quite generic terms, and it is not clear that a student without good genre-analysis skills would be able to employ it independently to improve the text. However, a further element in the stepwise delivery of feedback is added in the next excerpt:

EXCERPT 2c: Enacting analysis

25 Tom: **å då tänker jag på såna saker som schemaläggning e en (0.6)**
and then I think of things like scheduling is one (0.6)

26 **diagnosticering e en (0.7) som dom gör i samtalet**
diagnosing is one (0.7) thing that they do in the conversation

27 **asså dom pra[tar ju om]**
I mean they ta[lk about]

28 Bob: **[a just de]**
[yeah that's right]

29 **(0.6)**

30 Tom: **ja:: va: hur (.) brukar du göra å så där så de finns ju**
yea:h wha:t how (.) do you usually do it and so on so there is

31 Bob: **[m]**
[m]

32 Tom: **[en] typ av liksom (0.3) fördiagnos som sker**
[a] kind of like (0.3) pre-diagnosis happening

33 **i samtalet (.) som ni skulle kunna: (.) nämna då**
in the conversation (.) that you cou:ld (.) mention then

34 Bob: **m**
m

35 Tom: **och förhandling (.) nu vet ju inte ja d- nu va ju ja inte**
and negotiation (.) now I don't know d- now I wasn't

36 **där men de låter som att dom förhandlar om (.) a när kan du**
there but it sounds like they negotiate about (.) oh when can you

37 **va utan den å hur [länge] å så där**
manage without it and how [long] and so on

38 Bob: **[m:]**
[m:]

39 Tom: **så de handlar också om en förhandling där (0.4) mekanikern måste**
so it is also about a negotiation where (0.4) the mechanic has to

40 **(0.4) förstå nånting om hur maskinen används**
(0.4) understand something about how the machine is used

41 Bob: **m:**
m:

42 **(0.9)**

43 Tom: **för att han ska kunna veta hur länge (0.3) asså när de passar å**
for him to know how long (0.3) I mean when it is suitable to

44 Bob: **[m:]**
[m:]

45 Tom: **[få] (.) å de liksom å de att de e nätter å så vidare då liksom**
[get] (.) and it like and the fact that it is nights and so on like

46 Bob: **m**
m

47 Tom: **såna saker som mekanikern måste veta (.) för att han ska kunna**
things like that which the mechanic has to know (.)

48 **för att han ska kunna schemalägga så måste han förstå hur**
in order for him to be able to schedule he must understand how

49 **(.) hur maskinen används ute i fältet då**
(.) how the machine is used out in the field then

[...]

50 Tom: **å de e liksom (.) tre såna förslag på saker som ni skulle kunna**
and that is like (.) three such suggestions of things that you could

51 **[...] skriva två meningar var om diagnosticering (.) förhandling å**
write two sentences each about diagnosing (.) negotiation and

52 **(.) förståelse av (.) användningen eller nåt sånt där**
understanding of (.) usage or something like that

In the literature on qualitative research methodology in the social sciences, specifications of methods or procedures for conducting analysis often wind up in formulations that emphasize the craft-like character of the practice (see e.g., Potter, 2004). In line with this, providing a definition of analysis as something distinct from description seems like an impossible project. Rather than providing further definitions, however, the supervisor engages in an enactment. He spells out four "things" – scheduling (line 25), diagnosis (line 26), negotiation (line 35), and understanding (line 40) – that would be relevant in relation to the excerpt (these concepts are also written in the margin of the supervisor's printed copy of the report). Interspersed with the delivery of these categories, the supervisor elaborates on what he means, accounting for how and why the categories are relevant to analyze the excerpt. What is indirectly suggested is that the inclusion of arguments based on these categories could potentially turn the overly descriptive text into something more like analyses.

Interestingly, the categories – negotiation, scheduling, etc. – could very well be characterized as being just as descriptive as the students' original texts. What counts as analyses and what is a mere description is thus shown to the students as a question of degree and judgment. This highlights the complexities involved in learning and instructing a practice such as analysis; although the supervisor can to a degree unpack and describe what doing analysis is, there can be no finite or exhaustive set of instructions. To understand why these categories are considered in this setting as "analytic," one must consider both the particular discipline or genre being instructed here, and the characteristics of the specific case – the fact that these are analyses of particular practices and interactions in a specific work setting.

Just where a description begins to be seen within a given setting as an analysis depends on the recognizability of that description as a specimen of a particular disciplinary object. From the perspective of CSCW, identifying and understanding key work practices, such as workshop clerks receiving phone calls from truck drivers, is central for fitting technological support to these practices. In this light, one might see how phenomena like "scheduling," "diagnosis," and "understanding of use" become relevant analytic categories in relation to this student report. These observations highlight the deeply disciplinary and case-specific nature of categories such as "description" and "analysis," in line with the arguments put forth by Lea and Street (1998). In this context, we see the supervisor's work of tying general characterizations of problems to ensuing method-formulations and enactments as an attempt to construct an "access point" to disciplinary reasoning and arguing (see Eriksson & Mäkitalo, 2013, p. 123).

Given that the students presumably wrote their text with the ambition to produce an 'analysis' it is also noteworthy that the identity of a text as an instance of a type of disciplinary object, e.g., an analysis, is not given beforehand, but is renegotiated based on the produced texts. The possibility for such retrospective renegotiation of the students' work can be seen as a consequence of the students' provisional mastery of the practice of writing social scientific texts. As Macbeth (2004) observes in relation to her studies of writing instruction, students make "assessments and judgments in crafting their assignments based on an array of considerations all of which are thoughtful, yet few of which may be recognizable as the actual practices of the writing community" (Macbeth, 2004, p. 174). That is, although students might orient towards their work as 'analysis,' what they achieve is in no way guaranteed to be recognizable as such, from the standpoint of the specific discipline.

To sum up, the excerpts thus far bring out the simple observation that feedback comments—which by themselves could very well be described as vague and elusive—do not feature in the analyzed supervision interaction as stand-alone instructional contributions. They come paired with something more. In this particular sequence, we see a stepwise development in the direction of concreteness and textuality whereby "analysis" is anchored to the text, formulated as a "method", and then enacted and exemplified

5.2. *Uncertainty in advice, the write-and-revise process, and student interjections*

A general observation regarding the supervisor's work of delivering advice is that it is characterized by *struggle*. On the level of discourse, we see markers of uncertainty, hedges, restarts, and so on, as was evident in excerpts 1 and 2a–c. Again, this struggle resonates with the findings of Lea and Street (1998), regarding the difficulties staff had of explicating descriptive concepts. What is noteworthy here, however, is that initially vague, elusive, and general comments only very rarely stand on their own. Instead, they rely for their sense on downstream events, textually anchored explications, and enactments.

Enactments can only go so far, however, and do not constitute an ultimate solution to the problem of how we know whether students understand advice in the intended way. The actual revision of the text can only be hinted at. What is made of the instructional work is beyond the reach of the individual supervision session. Here we come upon the relevance of the *temporal* organization of instruction and the writing process; texts are submitted, discussed, rewritten, and resubmitted. Far from being specific to the educational situation, this temporal organization closely mirrors how academic writing proceeds in general. Writing is an iterative process, where successive drafts are produced, assessed, and rewritten, according to what strikes the writer and other relevant actors (readers, colleagues, reviewers) as a useful way forward. What we would like to highlight here is the non-linearity of this process. At each stage, the writer often does not know for certain if the route taken will ultimately work. There is thus a source of uncertainty, vagueness, and struggle in the provision of feedback and instruction that has to do with the general conditions of the write-and-revise process—a "normal, natural trouble" of academic writing that impinges on the instructional work. This source of uncertainty is not addressed by pointing towards textual specifics, formulating methods, or enacting "analysis" during the supervision session, but by pointing forward, to the upcoming work of developing the text. The following examples provide illustrations of these issues.

Whereas the prior excerpts dealt with the "analysis" section of the report, the supervisor here targets the "prior research" section. Just before the following exchange, the supervisor attempted to formulate some general advice. He then articulated a perceived dissonance between the different studies cited in the background section, saying that the cited publications relate to the topic of the report "on different levels." It is emphasized that it's not "wrong" to include these studies, but that an evident rationale is lacking in the "order" and manner they are presented. A kind of meta-strategy for finding a good order is then articulated, pointing to the importance of having a clear and conscious strategy for structuring the text. Some clear points of resonance with the previous excerpts can be seen: a general comment is followed by an explication in connection with a particular section, followed by the articulation of a "strategy". In the following excerpt, one student picks up on the notion of "order:"

EXCERPT 3a: What is a good order?

01 Tom: **vilken eller vilka poänger försöker vi göra (0.4) e:h (1.0)**
which or which points are we trying to make (0.4) u:hm (1.0)

02 **gör vi dom i rätt (.) ordning (.) eller e**
are we making them in the right (.) order (.) or are

03 **vi medvetna om i vilken ordning vi försöker göra dom**
we aware of which order we are trying to make them

04 Bob: **va e en bra ordning**
what is a good order

05 **(0.7)**

06 Tom: **e::h (0.4) de beror lite- de beror lite på vart man vill**
u::hm (0.4) that depends a bit- that depends a bit on where you want

07 **hamna sen då (0.3) e::h (0.3) ja menar de de kan lika gärna**
to end up later then (0.3) u:hm (0.3) I mean it it may just as well

08 **va bra å börja tekniskt å säga (.) de här e nåra relevanta=**
be good to start technical and say (.) these are some relevant=

09 Bob: **=m:**
=m:

10 Tom: **å sen så gå mot praktik (0.4) de e ganska**
and then go towards practice (0.4) it is quite

11 **praktiknära de ni gör**
close to practice what you do

12 Bob: **m:=**
m:=

13 Sue: **=m::**
=m::

14 Tom: **ni skulle också kunna ja menar (1.0) skriver man en artikel**
you could also I mean (1.0) if one writes a paper

15 **me kanske lite mer e::h (0.4) som e lite mer**
with maybe a little more e::h (0.4) that is a little more

16 **tekniskt in- e::h inriktad då kan de va bra å**
technically or- e::h oriented then it might be good to like,

17 **sluta med (0.4) så där får ni liksom,**
end with (0.4) n' there you have to

18 **(0.4)**

19 Bob: **så [egentligen de man fortsätter me] längre ner**
so [basically that which you continue with] further down

20 Tom **[när- när ni väl när ni väl har]**
[once- once you once you have]

21 Bob: **de kan va vettigt å sluta me då**
that might be sensible to end with then

22 Tom: **a. de k- de kan va en taktik då**
yup. that c- that can be one tactic then

In lines 01–03 we can see the end of the supervisor's attempt at explicating how to reason around the structure of the background section. We would first like to draw attention to the brief self-initiated self-repair (see Schegloff et al., 1977) in line 02. The supervisor makes a reference to "the right order", but then, initiated by the lexical repair preface "or" (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2015), rephrases in terms of "awareness" of order. This repair is potentially consequential, both for understanding what the supervisor is trying to communicate and for the way his comment is picked up in the student's ensuing question. In asking, "what is a good order?" (line 04) the student is requesting specific instructions, thereby in a sense responding to the reference to a "right order," prior to the supervisor's self-repair. The supervisor, however, is reluctant to give specific instructions on the matter. Instead, he says it "depends" and that it relates to what kind of text the students want to "end up" (lines 06-07). By declining to provide a straight answer to the question, however, the supervisor is not saying that the order is arbitrary. Rather, he is saying that there is no formula. Many different orders could be possible, as long as they display some rationale, in consonance with the overall content and focus of the text, and the ways in which the following sections are structured.

In line 17, the supervisor begins to formulate a conclusion or upshot of the prior talk, projected by the preface "so" and indicating some form of general advice "there you have to like." This attempt is interrupted, however, by an interjection from one of the students, Bob (line 19). Some overlapping talk is generated as the student provides a candidate understanding, also using the "so-preface" (see Barnes 2007, Bolden 2009) to construe the utterance as an inference from the immediate prior talk: "so basically that which you continue with further down […] might be sensible to end with" (lines 19, 21). Similar to what we saw in excerpt 1, the student's contribution here is in the form of an understanding check, which makes relevant acceptance as well as correction in the next turn (Schegloff et al., 1977). The supervisor's response is interesting in that it, on the one hand, ratifies the expressed understanding ("yup", line 22). On the other hand, in the added increment, the supervisor qualifies the positive answer and yet again highlights that what exact route to take is an open question: "that can be *one* tactic". The student is making repeated attempts at finding generalized advice in the instructions provided by the supervisor, while the latter pushes an orientation emphasizing awareness, rhetorical functions, and situated judgment in relation to the individual case. This way of positioning the advice as a possible and only possibly functional solution among a set of alternatives is further elaborated in the next excerpt, in which the supervisor seems to pick up the advice that was cut short by the student's question in line 19.

EXCERPT 3b: Try and see

23 Tom: a. de k- de kan va en taktik då (.) e::h
yup. that k- that can be one tactic then (.) e::h

24 (0.9) sen så kan ju de (0.4) då då kan ju de när man har
(0.9) then it might (0.4) then then it can when one has

25 testat de så kan man ju upptäcka (.) amen de går ju inte
tried that one might discover (.) oh but it doesn't work

26 börja det här stycket på detta sättet=
starting this section in this way

27 Bob: =nä=
=no=

28 Tom: =vi kan liksom inte börja i den ordningen
=we can't like start in this order

29 Sue: m::
m::

30 Tom: e:h så de får ni känna (.) själva då
u:hm så that you have to feel (.) yourselves then

31 Bob: m:
m:

32 Tom: men men de viktiga e att ni gör de medvetet
but but the important thing is that you do it consciously

33 så att om nån frågar varför börjar ni me
so if someone asks why do you begin with

34 detta stycket å varför slutar ni me de
this paragraph and why do you end with that

35 Bob: m::=
m::=

36 Tom: =å va handlar detta stycket om (0.5) då ska
=and what is this paragraph about (0.5) then

37 ni kunna svara på de va
you should be able to answer to that right

38 Sue: m::
m::

39 (1.2)

40 Tom: ja å ni ska ha ett bra svar på de också
yeah and you should have a good answer to it also

41 Bob: hehe[he
hehe[he

42 Tom: [inte de ba(h)ra blev [så eller
[not ju(h)st it ended up [that way or

43 Sam: [men men de e inget
but but it is nothing

44 man tänker på när man läser så utan eh,
you think about when you read but eh,

45 (0.8)

46 Tom: jo ja tycker absolut att ni skulle kunna göra de
no I definitely think that you could do that

47 här=
here

48 Sam: =a:=
yeah

49 Tom: =liksom lägga en en en (.) en stund på de
like spend a a a (.) a moment on it

50 Bob: m
m

51 Tom: e::h (.) å ja tror ni skulle kunna tjäna på d-
e::h (.) and I think you could benefit from th-

52 för ja tycker de sista stycket kommer lite
'cause I think the last paragraph comes a bit

53 malplacerat när det kommer där
out of place when it comes there

The instructions are hedged as things to try rather than as definitely workable solutions, as in "when you have tried that you might discover" (lines 23-24). The supervisor is thereby offloading the final judgment to the students (see line 29). While this could be seen as a way of withholding advice to get students to "think for themselves," one could also profitably see the supervisor's reluctance to say with confidence what a "good order" is in terms of the practical conditions of writing, alluded to above. Even for a competent writer, it is only when a certain way of structuring the text has been attempted that it can be assessed. Rather than withholding instructions, the supervisor is pointing to an iterative write-and-revise process. He is not suggesting a random trial and error procedure; it is stressed that any solution should be a thought-through realization of some organizing principle (lines 31-41). It is the lack of an evident rationale in the presentation of previous research that prompts the instruction, rather than a judgment to the effect that a particular order is wrong and another is right. The supervisor can thus see that the current text does not work as is. At the same time, he is not in a position of being able to provide an explicit and definitive answer to the question "what is a good order?"

One observation we would like to highlight in this example is how the temporal organization of textual practice seems to constrain the work of providing instructional explications. It is not only that there might be several workable solutions but also that the instructor does not know for sure what will work before something has been tried out, just as he would not know for sure if a similar textual problem was noted in his own work. The exchanges in excerpts 3a–b in a sense echo the interviewee in Lea and Street (1998) who knew a good essay when they saw it but could not describe how to write it. One crucial difference here is that the supervisor has access to the concrete textual resources provided by the students' work. In addition, and most importantly, the situation allows the calibration of meaning in direct interaction with students.

Although the sessions are generally dominated by the supervisor's delivery of feedback, the students recurrently interject to ask questions of clarification and through producing understanding checks (see also excerpt 1 in the previous section). These checks not only function as ways for students to elicit more detailed instructions from the supervisor but also provide further materials for the supervisor to respond to. Questions may, for instance, communicate possibly problematic understandings, which can then be addressed by the supervisor. In excerpts 3a–b, a candidate understanding is formulated by one student, to which the supervisor responds, allowing the supervisor to not only ratify or correct expressed interpretations but also react to higher-order aspects of textual reasoning, such as the expectation that there are straight answers to questions about which order is best, in a general sense. In the concluding turns of excerpt 3b we see that this instruction is met with an additional understanding-check, this time from Sam, who breaks in to clarify the implications of the supervisor's rhetorically framed argument (lines 43–44). Sam's suggestion, that there is nothing wrong with the text from the perspective of a reader – the implication being that the prior feedback refers exclusively to the importance of being able to account for the choices made in structuring the text – is met with a further clarification from Tom, who emphasizes that the students "definitely" (line 45) should engage in, and would "benefit" (line 50) from, additional work with the text.

In line with one dictum of academic literacies, we see clearly that the work of providing feedback on student writing is conditioned in various ways by orders of practice beyond the text and the immediate situation. The practices that come into view here, however, are eminently *textual* practices, shaped by the concrete conditions of reading, writing, and analyzing texts as linguistic objects. While more abstract aspects of practice such as "processes of change and the exercise of power" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159) are doubtlessly relevant for situating the immediate interactions between supervisor and students more broadly, the proximal textual practices that are directly observable in the recordings merit analytic attention in their own right.

5.3. *Post-supervision student work: reconstructing the meaning of feedback*

Space does not allow a close analysis of how the students discussed the feedback provided during the session and edited their report. Therefore, a brief account will have to suffice. We focus on one example—the comment made in relation to the students' analysis of "scheduling" (excerpts 2a–c)—and how it is taken up in students' subsequent work. Directly after the supervision session, the students go through the supervisor's comments and edit their report. They have access to the supervisor's printed and annotated copy of the report. The following extract begins when the students have reached the comment connected with the "scheduling" analysis and begin to unpack what the supervisor meant. In this work, as in the supervision session, Bob is the most active participant. The following is a somewhat abbreviated (excluded portions marked with "[…]") and simplified English translation transcript of an extended stretch of talk in which Bob holds the conversational floor, while the other three students contribute mainly with continuers and tokens of agreement (not included in the transcript):

EXCERPT 4: Reconstructing and appropriating analytic reasoning

01 Bob: You could, (.) that was actually quite obvious that this, that the clerk-
02 […] understands right away what's up like (.) he knows exactly what an eh
03 […], full service is and what it entails for this customer like that he is
04 on call and it's like nothing (.) nothing strange that the customer needs
05 to explain to him, no he knows that. […] That's what he means with
06 "understanding the use". […] probably ehm (3s) now I understood what he
07 meant with something heh heh […]
08 […] but it's actually quite interesting that eh that (.) that,
09 diagnosing that I'm not sure of if there is any really (.) cause it's not
10 that type of error it's only service really but negotiation and
11 understanding of eh like (.) this person's work […] that he understands
12 what like that entails […] that's interesting […] the question is
13 is it interesting for us (.) what does it have to do with scheduling…

As we can see, Bob goes through the three suggested categories and attempts to connect them to the analyzed data extract. He expresses acceptance of "understanding of use" and "negotiation" but questions the relevance of "diagnosis" in this specific case (line 09). In his interpretation of the feedback comment, we can see how Bob has appropriated portions of the supervisor's assessment. He does not only refer to what the supervisor said but enacts assessments and stretches of analytic reasoning of his own, saying for instance that it is "actually quite obvious" (line 01) that the clerk has some detailed background knowledge about the caller's work situation. He also notes the relevance of negotiation (line 10) and says that these observations are "interesting". However, Bob also questions the relevance of the feedback "for us" (line 13) and asks what it has to do with "scheduling", which is the heading for this particular analysis. This question initiates a discussion that continues for a few minutes (not included in the transcript). The students go on to check what they had written in the discussion section, to recapitulate, as one student (Sue) puts it "what we want to arrive at with scheduling". That is, in order to make this particular piece of feedback function as an instruction for revising their text, the students weigh it against their overall aim with the analyses, here represented by the themes they bring up in the discussion section

It is clear that the ways in which the supervisor's feedback is taken up do not simply involve "following instructions" in the sense of directly adding to or editing the text in line with the feedback. Instead, we see Bob first taking on the voice of an 'analyst' re-examining the data in light

of the suggested conceptual resources. Drawing on Goffman's (1981) notion of footing, we might say that Bob initially positions himself as principal or originator of a stretch of analytic reasoning, which evinces a degree of "participatory appropriation" (Rogoff, 2008) of prior instruction, in the sense that Bob appears equipped to engage in analytic activity in a way that is shaped by a prior situation of guidance (ibid.). The prior sequence of problem formulation, articulation of method and enactment of analysis (excerpts 1 and 2a–c) appears to have provided an access point to this particular form of analysis, that is, the instructions constitute "vehicles for students' appropriation of genres and disciplinary ways of reasoning" (Eriksson & Mäkitalo, 2015, p. 127).

Bob connects his remarks explicitly to the supervisor's feedback comment, "that's what he means…" (lines 05–06), and jokingly addresses the fact that he at least has understood "something" of the prior feedback (lines 06–07), thereby generating a sense that he is also acting as the animator (see Goffman 1981) of the supervisor's modelled reasoning. However, the students then return to adopting a critical stance, questioning the relevance of the suggested analytic themes for their own report, in relation to the overall aims of the report. Their practical reasoning (see Garfinkel 1967) consists in "the indefinite work of turning indefinite instructions into a definite reply" (Macbeth, 2006, p. 195). How a "definite reply" took shape in this case can be seen in the following extract from the final version submitted two days after the supervision session. Added or edited portions of the text are marked in bold font:

> During the conversation the clerk uses his scheduling program to fit the customer needs into available timeslots. **Based on the conversation we can see that the clerk quickly understands what the emergency duty means and what impact this has on the availability of the truck.** It proves hard to find an available timeslot that satisfies the customer's needs. The truck needs to be available for work (emergency duty) during daytime. This means that repair needs to be made in the evenings. Because of the amount of work in a full service this will consume two evenings. **But the customer cannot see this, he has no understanding of the work in the workshop, the negotiation continues. During the negotiation the clerk informs the customer about the procedure. Finally** the customer accepts that it is better if the clerk finds a suitable timeslot and then calls him. **After the conversation the clerk explains that the customer also wants to change the locks because of this it will take another evening, in total three evenings.**

Comparing the two versions we can see that a number of changes have been made. "Based on the conversation…" is new. "But the customer cannot see this… the negotiation continues" is new. "During the negotiation…" is new. "Finally…" is a rewritten version of "They agree…". "After the conversation…" has been moved to the end of the paragraph. The students have thus included some elaborations of the excerpt in relation to "negotiation" and "understanding of use," but omitted "diagnosis," which they deemed less relevant for this specific excerpt. Reading only the surface-level changes, one might get the impression that the students have merely inserted the words that the supervisor suggested. Considering the material from the students' work with the text, however, it is evident that the group made the feedback their own by elaborating the parts of the comment that they found interesting and relevant, but also took a critical stance, scrutinizing the relevance of the suggested themes for their analysis, and deciding not to include one of them (i.e. "diagnosis"). It also appears as if the theme of "understanding" has been extended to include the caller as well as the clerk – it is observed that the negotiation is conditioned by the caller's limited understanding of how the workshop functions.

Drawing on Bakhtin, Lillis (2006) discusses how one aspect of the tutor-student dialogues she analyses is the tutor's efforts to help students "populate the text with their own intentions," that is, adopt an independent voice in writing. Here, we see how a process of embedding the feedback in the writing process, guided by their own intentions, is an integral part of how the students approach learning from feedback in the analyzed episode. Students' work of reconstructing the meaning of the supervisor's comments and applying them in revisions of the text constitutes an additional "practice in which texts are embedded" (Lillis & Scott, 2007), the analysis of which provides access to the situatedness of texts as linguistic objects in orders of social action and activity.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Based on the analyses presented in the previous section, we can articulate three aspects of proximal textual practice that are brought into relief by an analysis of recorded supervision interaction and students' post-supervision work: first, the interdependence between general feedback comments and concrete exemplifications and enactments; second, the direct dialogue between student and instructor in which the meanings of feedback comments are specified and nuanced; and third, the temporally extended sequence of the write and revise process. All three of these are clear instances of what could reasonably be included in any description of the "embedding practices" of texts. They also have obvious relevance for how we understand the activity of providing feedback on student writing, and students learning to write in higher education more generally. In addition, considering such proximal textual practices expands the range of phenomena that could be considered "textual," to include not only "texts as linguistic objects" (Lillis & Scott, 2007) but the textually oriented activities and practical reasoning engaged in by students and instructors in direct talk-based interaction.

One of the major contributions of academic literacies research is to draw attention to the practices of academic writing, and thereby to counteract the textual bias characterizing earlier conceptualizations. A common way of addressing practice has been to privilege elements of context some way removed from individual texts and concrete instructional activities. Lea and Street (1998), for instance, employ the concept of practice in a critique of academic socialization research, observing that, "institutional practices, including processes of change and the exercise of power, do not seem to be sufficiently theorised" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159). As our analyses illustrate, there is a more granular level of practice in which texts are also embedded – the local work of reading, of writing, and of learning-and-instruction as socially organized, temporally extended orders of activity. From our ethnomethodological approach, a practice is a recognizable social order to which individual actions are observably oriented, making "practice" something quite close to action and activity.

From this perspective, the most immediate embedding practice of any given text is the observable mundane orders of practical action and practical reasoning in which teachers and students are engaged. An understanding of these proximal practices is, as we have attempted to show, important to make sense of academic writing as an object of learning and instruction. Of course, it may turn out that participants are indeed oriented towards "processes of change and the exercise of power" (Lea & Street, 1998), or that an understanding of the latter is important to provide an adequate account of the analyzed materials. However, we suggest that there is much to learn from beginning at the more granular end, to work out the practical and interactional challenges that writing and text-based instruction entail.

One illustration is how such an analysis might bear on the ways in which we conceptualize the practical reasoning of instructors involved in reading and responding to student writing—what we make, for instance, of their struggles of providing verbal explications of textual concepts. To see how descriptive terms such as the ones discussed by Lea and Street (1998) might be explicated, we could examine how their use and their meaning were interdependent with the sequence of instructional action-in-interaction in which they occurred. This applies to the temporal frame of the individual supervision session in which sense is developed incrementally and in a prospective-retrospective fashion, and the ways in which participants orient towards future writing and subsequent iterations of texts. Students were, to borrow a phrase from

Garfinkel (1967), willing to "[wait] for something later in order to see what was meant before" (p. 41), and the instructor explicitly referred to the relevance of 'something later' as a resource by which initially vague and general feedback might eventually make sense.

The interdependence between descriptive terms and various forms of upcoming illustrations and enactments was thus an organizing frame for supervision interaction, a structure reminiscent of what Lillis (2001) describes in her discussion of tutor-directive dialogue: "student writers who want to learn to write within the conventions of a particular practice can be talked into doing so, even before they know what the conventions are" (p. 138). We also saw how the write-and-revise process was an important condition for the instructional interactions, impacting the ways in which participants were oriented to individual feedback items. An important aspect of a sequential and temporal understanding of feedback practices in academic writing is also the reconstruction of meaning that occurs post-supervision, as instructions are followed (Amerine & Bilmes, 1988), in the sense of being put to use in revisiting and revising the text.

What all this points to is the centrality of tutor-student dialogue for understanding academic writing (see Carless 2016, Nicol 2010). This conclusion applies to the perspective of learners as well as to that of researchers. As regards the former, it is difficult to see how the kinds of incremental, iterative, local and context-sensitive meaning-making processes that are discernible in our data could be implemented short of organizing access to some form of 'space for talk' (Lillis, 2001), underscoring the relevance of AL critiques of written comments as the primary form of feedback on student writing (Lea & Street, 1998). From the researcher's perspective, the present study shows that a methodological approach which includes granular analyses of proximal textual practices is critical for an adequate account of students' and teachers' efforts at learning and teaching academic writing. To recall, Lillis and Scott (2007) discuss possible methodological developments of academic literacies, to address the risk of losing sight of the textual level. For instance, "ethnographically sensitive text analytic tools" (p. 7) are suggested as a means to bring texts back into focus. The present article provides arguments in support of methodologies that capture proximal textual practices in their constitutive detail. Indeed, signs of such a dialogue between academic literacies and the analysis of talk-in-interaction are evident in some prior work – see for instance Eriksson (2015) on the situated practices involved in guiding the construction of argumentation in producing "conclusions" in academic writing, Blåsjö and Christenson (2018) on "questions as literacy practice" (p. 85), and Poole (2008) on language socialization and literacy. The present study suggests such connections could be developed further.

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