

**Classroom talk and the negotiation of academic  
English: A linguistic analysis of collaborative  
text creation**

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment  
of requirements for a  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
**University of Technology, Sydney**

June 2015



## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

*I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.*

*I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.*

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Date: June 22nd, 2015

## Dedication and Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and my grandparents. Mum and Dad taught me to swim in rough seas (both literally and figuratively). They have also passed on genes of perseverance, of which I never knew how much I would need! Thank you for your love, support and inspirational attitude to life. My fabulous grandparents have always been tuned in each step of the way. They have provided a frequent place of rest and many a delicious meal. PhD-land would have been so much harder without their kindness and generosity.

I would like to thank the teachers and students who made this study possible. It takes courage and a certain degree of vulnerability to welcome researchers into the classroom. Your teaching practices and learning needs are the motivation for this study.

I extend deep gratitude to my supervisors, Associate Professor Sue Hood and Dr Ross Forman. Your insightful feedback has constantly challenged and extended my thinking. I appreciated your encouragement at crucial times, the 'tough love' that has been instrumental in the rigorous fine-tuning of ideas and your support with editing. I am particularly grateful to Sue for her patience and explicit guidance with the drafting of chapters. I am so glad (especially retrospectively) that throughout my candidature you have continuously poked all that wobbled!

There are a number of people who have been a significant source of support and inspiration in relation to commencing this study. I would like to thank Ari Heinrich for encouraging and supporting me with my first steps into postgraduate study. Thanks also to Professor Jim Martin, Dr Sally Humphrey, Dr Shoshana Dreyfus, Dr Ahmar Mahboob and the SLATE research team at the University of Sydney for sharing the joy of collaborative research and showing me what academic generosity looks like. It is from my work with you that my research topic arose as well as the passion to pursue it.

I am also very grateful for the invaluable conversations and encouraging chats that I have had with extremely generous colleagues and inspiring fellow students, including: Dr David Rose, Dr Clare Painter, Associate Professor Jenny Hammond, Associate Professor Karl Maton, Margarita Vidal, Dr Trish Weeks, Dr Erika Matruglio, Dr Beatriz Quiroz, Yaegan Doran, Jennifer Blunden, Jing Hao and Talia Gill.

In Sydney, I received tremendous support and encouragement from many people, including: my dear twin sister Carrie and her wonderful husband, Peter, who have showered me with affection and treats; and Sal, Justin and their girls who so kindly shared their home with me for extended periods. Thank you all for sustaining me in practical and emotional ways.

My research assistant work was also a source of on-going inspiration. My thanks to Professor Jim Martin, Professor Peter Freebody, Associate Professor Karl Maton and Dr Erika Matruglio for bringing me on board the DISKS project, and also to Dr Sally Humphrey for fascinating work on the ELK and MELK projects. You have shared some of the best dimensions of academic life.

In New Zealand, I am grateful to: my dear brother Malcolm and his wife Anna for chats, dinners and timely hugs; the quirky Narrowneck 'Buckets', who kept me laughing on our Sunday ocean swims; my pooch, Max, for keeping me fit and for being my constant buddy; and finally to my wonderful partner, Karen, for enduring this journey with me. Yes honey, one only has to do a PhD once!

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## Abstract

In Australia, a significant number of international students undertake intensive language instruction immediately prior to tertiary studies (Australia Education International 2014). These courses aim to prepare students for a successful university experience. Difficulties with academic writing pose a barrier to tertiary entrance and also to the completion of future studies, with emotional and financial ramifications for all those involved. With much at stake, effective support for academic writing development is an on-going concern for researchers and educators in many sectors including pre-tertiary teaching and learning contexts.

A substantial body of research has analysed the linguistic demands of texts that students are expected to write. However, fewer studies explore *how* the valued meanings of texts are negotiated through classroom interaction. In this study, I examine five lessons of a collaborative writing step, known as joint construction. In this kind of writing lesson the teacher takes a leading role as the class co-creates one communal text (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Rothery, 1996; Rose & Martin, 2012). Previous studies of joint construction with advanced English language learners have provided insight into the overall structure of lessons, the negotiation of social roles, and adaptations to online learning environments (Humphrey & Macnaught, 2011 who draw on Hunt, 1991, 1996; Dreyfus, Macnaught & Humphrey, 2011; Dreyfus, to appear). However, as yet, there is limited understanding of how meanings are negotiated to achieve the 'end product', i.e. the scribed text. There is also limited understanding of how language choices are related to each other as well as to future writing.

The study aims to better understand the process of co-constructing academic language. Classroom talk is analysed by using methods of qualitative phasal analysis (Gregory & Malcolm, 1995; Malcolm, 2010) and discourse semantics tools of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin, 1992; Martin & White, 2005; Martin and Rose, 2007). The transcripts and video recordings of joint construction lessons focus on three main aspects of collaborative text creation: what students

do; what teachers do to support student activity (without taking over); and how meanings are negotiated at the time of text creation (rather than through prospective or retrospective instruction). Findings illuminate reoccurring kinds of student activity, how classroom talk is structured to support the negotiation of meaning, and the scope of semiotic resources that teachers and students use to talk about language choices. Overall, findings provide insight into patterns of interaction that target the academic language development of students.

