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Learning to think alike: Using Sociocultural Discourse Analysis to explore examiners' standardised professional discourse

Conference Paper Abstract

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Abstract

In the UK, many school and professional qualifications are delivered and administered by Awarding Organisations. The administration of qualifications involves a great number of examiners who are responsible for assessing individual performances according to pre-specified mark schemes. In the case of the Awarding Organisation in this study, groups of examiners work under the remote supervision of a senior examiner (Team Leader [TL]). A TL is responsible for remotely overseeing the training of a group of examiners, and for ensuring that high quality marking performance is maintained throughout the marking period for that group of examiners. Feedback communication has an important role in this training and monitoring process. During the training and supervision period TLs give feedback to each examiner on their work quality via electronic mail or telephone messages. Sociocultural Discourse Analysis is a methodology for studying the use of language for collective thinking that employs methods informed by the traditions of Discourse Analysis, Ethnomethodology, and Corpus Linguistics. It was specifically designed for studying the talk of children working together in a group in a classroom, but it has also been used for studying talk amongst adults. In this article we discuss the use of Sociocultural Discourse Analysis for exploring the professional discussions of examiners who are involved in making assessments of the essays of school students. The study data comprises of 991 professional feedback interactions that take place remotely between three TLs and 27 examiners working for a UK-based Awarding Organization. We explain how and why the methodology was chosen and adapted, and show what its use reveals about collective intellectual activity in this particular context. The insights gained from the chosen methodology suggest that feedback interaction affords professional learning by allowing less experienced examiners an awareness of the marking procedures and linguistic interpretations that characterise the professional examiner community of practice. In addition, we also see how feedback is used to coordinate divided labour across the marking teams through becoming a form of unnoticed and taken for granted work that is carried out during interactions to ensure that coordinated task completion is managed.

Full paper (if abstract only)

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<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2210656118302940?via%3Dihub>