

Academic Literacies: reading and writing in a Course of Textile Engineering

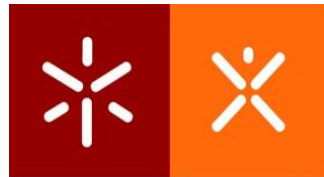
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PORTUGAL

2000∞
CIENCIA



Universidade do Minho

Centro de Investigação em Educação

FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia

MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA, TECNOLOGIA E ENSINO SUPERIOR Portugal

*UKLA's
46th Annual
International
Conference.
The Changing Face
of Literacy:
Yesterday, Today
and Tomorrow*



Outline

- Research contextualization
- Methodological aspects
- Data and analysis
- Conclusions

Introducing...

- “They do not produce anything, only the exam” (2nd year teacher 1)
- “It is hard for them to understand the problem and resolving it” (2nd year teacher 2)
- “They find it difficult not only to produce something but also to comprehend it” (2nd year teacher 3)
- “Nowadays they have many difficulties in writing their reports. And they do it badly” (2nd year teacher 4)

1st year of the research

Aim

Identify and characterize **genres that specialize reading and writing practices** at the University of Minho (Portugal)

Research questions

- What genres are to be used to acquire and to produce knowledge?
- How do students cope with genres generalities and specificities?

The context and the object of the research

Engineering students: genres for reading and writing



Reading and writing difficulties are linked to new discourse objects that students discover at the university.

Literacy in academic context

LITERACY: a set of flexible cultural practices

-institutions, public interests, power relations, identities (*Street, 1995,2009; Lea & Street, 2006*)

“Academic literacies”:
ways of knowing in different disciplines
(Donahue, 2007)

A university course:
a social and cultural context
(Gee, 1999, 2001)

Genres:

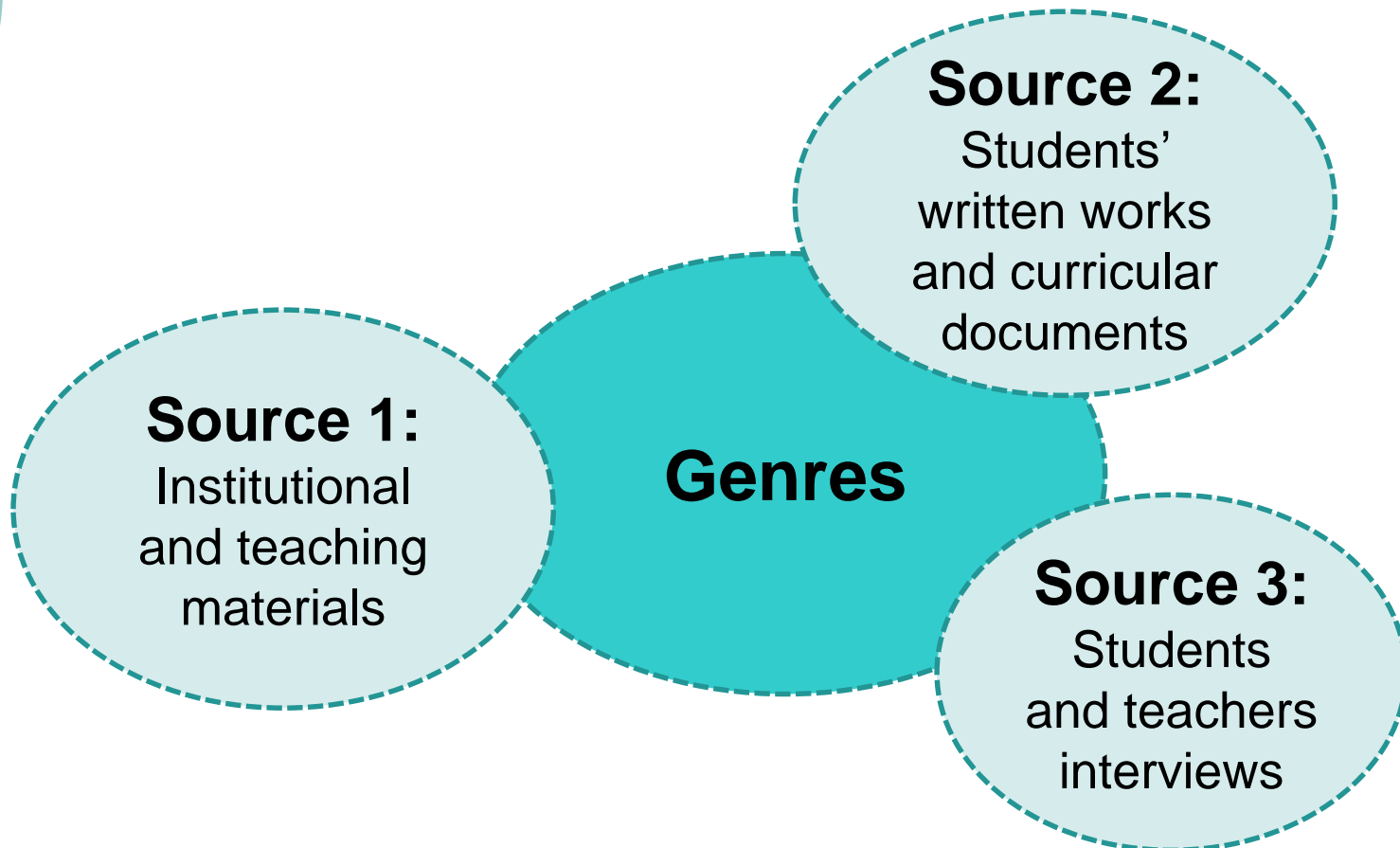
- structural and rhetorical features, ‘hidden features’ (*Street, 2009*)
- discourse socialization and participation
- ‘mediators’ (*Bazermann & Prior, 2005*)

Ethnographic approach

- Classroom observations
- Document collection:
 - lists of texts to be read and actually read by students
 - curricular forms
 - instructional materials
 - students' written works
- Interviews and informal conversations (students; teachers)

the reason: to get a very complete portrait of the textual world of these people

Genres in the Course of Textile Engineering



Roles and positions of genres among people interaction

**genres as
*mediators***

- ✓ they structure and organise the teaching and learning processes
- ✓ they are related to the technical and business sphere

genres as *mediators*

- lessons' outlines
- students' notes and summaries
- equipment and textile catalogues
- technical books and documents
- teachers' presentations in PPT format



- tests and exams forms
- problems (calculus)
- manuals
- agendas and minutes of tutorial meetings
- technical laboratory procedures
- students' presentations in PPT format

- **reports and project reports**

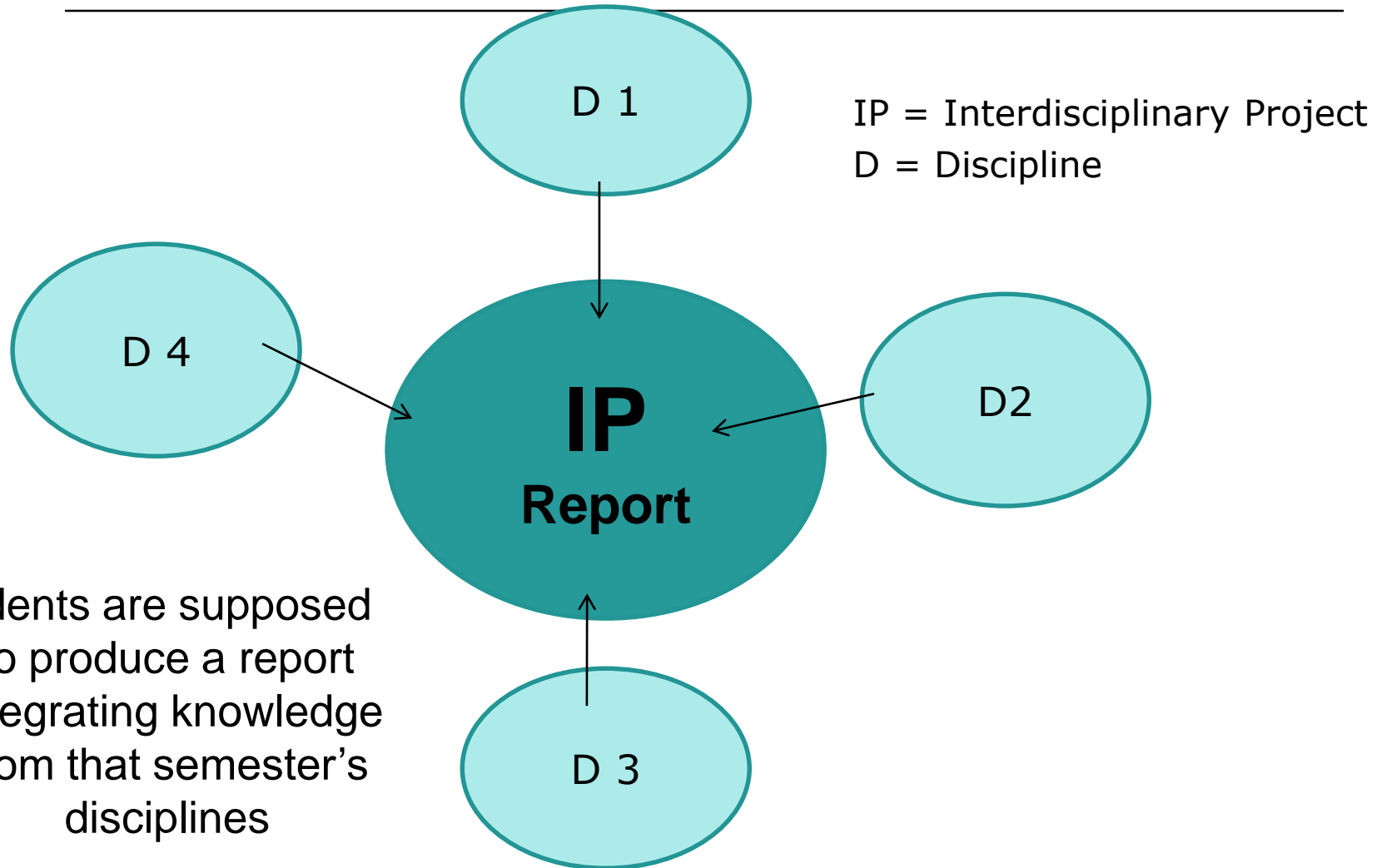
Report(s)

- the most frequent and specialized genre in the course
- uncertain procedures for writing
- support for writing: report models
- reports are not the “same” in the several disciplines

“We adapt, and we try to use more or less the same rules”. (Student)

“If it has been approved by teachers last year, why not to use it too?” (Student)

Project Report (part 1)

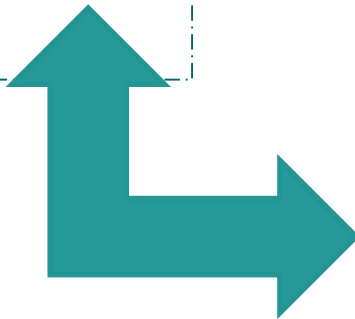


Students are supposed to produce a report integrating knowledge from that semester's disciplines

Project Report (part 2)

1) double nature

- ✓ written
- ✓ oral



2) from written Report to Report Oral Presentation:

- ✓ “recontextualization”
- ✓ evidences of another “text”
 - ✓ different criteria of evaluation
- ✓ another “social language”:
the Report Oral Presentation

Project Report (part 3)

- *students seem sensible to some "hidden features"*
(Street, 2009)

“The project report is a creation of our own; it is our idea”
(Student)

HOW TO IDENTIFY HIDDEN FEATURES...

- to be successful... it is **expected** an argumentative line of reasoning
- **the integration** of knowledge: headings; calculus; figures, introduction and conclusion; theoretical references
- from written to oral mode of the Report: it **duplicates and increases** the “hidden features” of the genre

Project Report (part 4)

Challenging and misterious task...

When it comes to a written assignment we never know who participated. And when it comes **to oral task**, we do... They have to explain why they integrate some kind of knowledge.

(Course Director)

- students: learn “by doing” and by being “corrected” in tutorial sessions and after the Report Oral Presentation

Conclusions

- The role of genres: knowledge acquisition - assessment oriented texts

- **REPORT**

- the most important genre in the course

- it aims at making students more active in their knowledge acquisition process

- full of *hidden features* – both in written and oral modes



- the majority of students are always in *deficit* !

References

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Obrigada pela vossa atenção!

Thank you for your attention!

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