


Demands and expectations concerning academic writing: an analysis of freshman students' narratives/
Demandas e expectativas em relação à escrita acadêmica: uma análise de narrativas de estudantes calouros


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ABSTRACT

In this article, the objective is to examine demands and expectations regarding academic written production, from the perspective of students in the Pedagogy course at a Brazilian federal university. It is a research anchored in the theoretical and methodological foundations of literacy studies, particularly academic literacies, also based on the concepts of literacy events and practices. The corpus, explored in the light of the qualitative approach and the ethnographic perspective, consists of transcription records of semistructured interviews, carried out with freshmen students of the referred course, which integrate a database of a broader research focused on the meanings of academic literacies in specific contexts. The analysis of the demands and expectations for academic writing production in the investigated context shows the recurrence of two patterns of behavior related to academic writing: (1) the non-presentation of guidelines as to the way of writing, when proposing a writing activity to the students and (2) the presentation of generic feedbacks about the writing done by the students. These behavior patterns seem to hinder the process of familiarizing students with the forms of writing demanded at the university, since, as they are still freshmen, they are probably unaware of the specifics of academic writing.

KEYWORDS: Pedagogy; Academic writing; Literacy practice.

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RESUMO

Neste artigo, objetiva-se examinar demandas e expectativas quanto à produção escrita acadêmica, sob a ótica de estudantes do curso de Pedagogia de uma universidade federal brasileira. Trata-se de uma pesquisa ancorada nos fundamentos teórico-metodológicos dos estudos dos letramentos, particularmente dos letramentos acadêmicos, baseando-se também nos conceitos de eventos e práticas de letramento. O corpus, explorado à luz da abordagem qualitativa e da perspectiva etnográfica, é constituído por registros de transcrição de entrevistas semiestruturadas, realizadas com estudantes calouras do curso referido, que integram um banco de dados de uma pesquisa mais ampla voltada para os significados dos letramentos acadêmicos em contextos específicos. A análise das demandas e expectativas para a produção da escrita acadêmica no contexto investigado evidencia a recorrência de dois padrões de comportamento relacionados à escrita acadêmica: (1) a não apresentação de orientações quanto ao modo de escrever, ao se propor uma atividade de escrita aos alunos e (2) a apresentação de feedbacks genéricos sobre a escrita feita pelos alunos. Esses padrões de comportamento parecem dificultar o processo de familiarização dos discentes com as formas de escrever demandadas na universidade, visto que, como ainda são recém-ingressos, desconhecem provavelmente as especificidades da escrita acadêmica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pedagogia; Escrita Acadêmica; Práticas de Letramento.

1 Introduction

Entry into higher education demands from students the knowledge and understanding of specific and situated literacy practices in the academy, which can be configured as a great challenge to be transposed for new entrants. In this new context, students are challenged to discover and understand the ways of reading, writing, talking and interacting with colleagues, professors and texts characteristic of university life.

Thinking particularly about the ways of writing demanded at this level of education, research shows that academic writing has specificities that differentiate it from other writings, such as school writing (FERNÁNDEZ; CARLINO, 2010). Even within the academic discourse community (SWALES, 1990), variations in this writing are identified that reveal its particularities, depending on the disciplinary culture (HYLAND, 2004 [2000]) in which it is produced (BERNARDINO; ABREU, 2017; PACHECO, 2016; PEREIRA, 2019). The propositions made by these authors indicate how the understanding of the specificities and diversity of academic writing can be problematic for students who are becoming familiar with the university world.

Given this situation, we see the need to know and understand the process of insertion of these students in university life, upon entering graduation, concerning writing - what and how are the demands and expectations presented about the written production for students? What do they have to say about these demands and expectations?

In this text, we examine these issues using records that make up the database of a case study of an ethnographic nature, carried out by one of the researchers. The general objective of

this study was to explore the meanings of academic literacies in Pedagogy and Psychology courses at a Brazilian federal university, from the perspectives of professors and students of these courses. In the case of the present article, we aim to examine demands and expectations regarding academic written production, from the perspective of students in the Pedagogy course. We chose to examine the demands and expectations regarding academic written production in the light of guiding propositions of the Academic Literacies approach (LEA; STREET, 1998) because we share the concept of writing as a social and situated practice, involved by issues of identity, authority and power, and based on the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in a particular academic context, as discussed in the next section of this article. In Brazil, some researches are already being developed in this area (CASTANHEIRA; STREET; CARVALHO, 2015; FIAD, 2015, 2016, 2017; FISCHER, 2007, 2011; MARINHO, 2010; SILVA, 2017, among others), however, it is still a field that needs further investigation, since the discussions are recent and relatively sparse.

This paper is divided into five sections. First, in this introduction, we briefly discuss the social context that led us to raise questions about academic writing processes and present the focus of our investigation. In the second, we explain the concepts that support the data analysis - literacies, academic literacies, literacy events, and literacy practices. In the third, we situate the methodology adopted in the study. In the fourth, we analyze the data generated, considering the outlined objective and the defined theoretical propositions. In the last section, we present the final conjectures.

2 Academic literacies as social practice: theoretical foundations of research

We defined as conceptual apparatus for our research four central concepts — literacies, academic literacies, literacy events and literacy practices — that dialogue with other concepts to be explained in the course of this section.

For this work, we adopted the assumptions that underlie the sociocultural aspect of Literacy Studies (KLEIMAN, 1995, 2016), in Brazil, inspired by the studies developed by researchers linked to the group of New Literacy Studies — NEL (STREET, 1993, 2001, 2003, 2014). In these studies, we seek to observe writing in specific communities, societies, and social

groups, paying attention to the type of relationship that people establish with writing and how they use it in their daily lives (SCRIBNER; COLE, 1981; HEATH, 1982; STREET, 1984).

This socio-cultural approach to writing challenges the perspective centered on the “great divide” (FINNEGAN, 1974) between the written and oral cultures, treated dichotomously. Street (1984, p. 1), for example, enriches the debate promoted by the theoretical current of NEL, by arguing that the meanings of particular practices and concepts of reading and writing are different from one to another society because they depend on the context; they are embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated or treated as “neutral” or merely “technical”. As a result of this understanding, literacy is seen as a social and situated practice, not restricted to the simple acquisition of skills.

Street (2013) highlights the concern, when it comes to focusing literacies, on directing the investigative lens to certain questions: What counts as literacy in this specific time and space? “Whose ’are the dominant literacies and ‘from whom’ are the marginalized or resisting literacies?” (STREET, 2013, p. 53). These are questions whose answers show that there is not only one type of literacy, of a homogeneous and invariable nature but literacies, in the plural, flexible, heterogeneous, changeable, and situated (STREET, 2012).

With regard specifically to academic writing, Lea and Street (1998), anchored on the premises of NEL, developed a seminal research. The objective was to investigate the discourse that the supposed “crisis” in education was related to the expansion of higher education in England (in the mid-1980s), from which British universities were receiving students with many “writing problems”. At the time, they conducted a research project, in two universities in the United Kingdom, intending to observe what was happening with academic written production, in the English university context; sought to investigate whether the discourse of students’ individual writing deficit really made sense.

To this end, guided by an ethnographic perspective, Lea and Street (1998) interviewed professors and students from selected institutions, made group observations, and collected examples of students’ writing. The focus of the research was not to judge writing as “good” or “bad”, but to examine the expectations of professors and students about written productions, as explained by the authors (LEA; STREET, 1998, p. 158). In their research, “they maintained that approaches to student writing and literacy in academic contexts could be conceived through the

overlapping of three perspectives or models: (a) study skills model, (b) academic socialization model and (c) academic literacy model” (LEA; STREET, 2014, p. 478).

In the first model, study skills, writing is seen as a set of cognitive and individual skills that the student needs to appropriate. Once the mastery of these skills has been built — which include grammatical, syntactic rules, and writing conventions — the student would have ensured the possibility of producing any texts, in any situation, since it would be enough to mobilize them for that (LEA; STREET, 1998). In this model of skills, writing is presented, therefore, as neutral and universal, in line with the guiding premises of the autonomous literacy model (STREET, 1984). Furthermore, from this perspective, the student occupies a central role in writing, with responsibility for both success and failure in writing (LEA; STREET, 1998).

In the second model, academic socialization, there is a slightly broader characterization of writing — a set of context-specific skills, such as ways of reading, speaking, writing, reasoning, materialized in genres and discourses that are produced and circulated in different areas and disciplines (LEA; STREET, 1998). Unlike the previous model, centered on “surface aspects of the shape of the language” (LEA; STREET, 2014, p. 479), in this one, writing is focused on genres and discourses. “It is assumed that disciplinary discourses and genres are relatively stable and that, having students mastered and understood the basic rules of a particular academic discourse, they would be able to reproduce it without problems” (LEA; STREET, 2014, p. 479). This way of conceiving academic writing is guided, similarly to the study skills model, by the autonomous literacy model (STREET, 1998), that is, by the understanding that writing is homogeneous, neutral, and invariable, in the case of that academic discourses and genres have these characteristics, so they could be mobilized for other contexts.

In the third model, writing is conceived from a broader perspective than that of socialization, based on the understanding of institutional, authority, power, and identity aspects that influence and are influenced by writing (LEA; STREET, 1998). The focus, in this model, is on the meanings attributed to writing by those who use it at the university (professors, students, researchers), on the relationships they establish with writing, on the issues of identity, power, and authority that permeate such relationships. In the approaches to teaching writing guided by this model of academic literacies, the social nature of writing is considered, thus anchoring itself in the postulates that underlie the ideological model of literacy (STREET, 1984).

Lea and Street (2014, p. 479) argue that “these three models are not mutually exclusive, rather they overlap. All of them could be applicable to any academic context.” They even suggest that, in the teaching process, we can contemplate the aspects of skills, socialization, and the nature of social practice that characterize academic literacies.

From the research point of view, in the literacies and academic literacies studies, two concepts are often adopted that allow the researcher to observe how literacies are constituted as social practices in certain groups: literacy events and literacy practices.

Street (2012, p. 75) defines literacy events as observable episodes that allow the researcher to “focus on a particular situation where things are happening and can be seen as they happen. This is the classic literacy event in which we can observe an event that involves reading and/or writing and begin to outline its characteristics”. It is a very functional concept for the literacies studies, because it allows us to not only observe the situations in which writing appears but also to photograph them as they happen, as Street (2012) himself adds. Being possible to photograph them, in the sense of having the possibility to identify their characteristics — where they happen, when, how, with whom —, we are able to discover specific and recurring patterns of behavior of the groups in which these events arise, which leads us to one of the aspects contemplated in the concept of literacy practices, which we explain below.

Street (2012) draws the attention of literacy researchers to not assume a posture of just describing the observed events. The description is the first step, but not the only one. It is necessary, stresses the British researcher, to discover that “conventions and assumptions [are] underlying [a] the literacy events that make them work” (STREET, 2012, p. 76). As a result of this understanding, he proposes the concept of literacy practices, understood as broader conceptions of reading and writing, conceptual models, which allows linking events to “something broader of a cultural and social nature” (STREET, 2012, p. 76).

Practices are thus related to the meanings that are built in the relationships established between reading and writing “patterns and something broader of a social or cultural kind”. According to Street (2012, p. 76), we need to consider the fact that when we participate in a literacy event “we have brought to it concepts, social models regarding what the nature of this practice is and that make it work and give it meaning.” To reach these models, which are abstract, we then need to interact with the people involved in a given literacy event and listen to

them, so that, in this way, we can “link their immediate experiences with reading and writing to other things that they also do”(STREET, 2012, p. 76).

Maybin’s (1998 apud STREET, 2012, p. 80) explanation of how she used the term “practices” is helpful for understanding the ways we are exploring this notion in our study. Practices as “conceptual models” would correspond, according to Maybin, to one of the aspects to which this concept of practices refers: “ideological aspects [...] [that] belong to a more abstract conceptual level and have to be inferred from observation and interview data”. Another aspect included in this concept refers to “what people actually do, and recurring patterns within this” (MAYBIN 1998 apud STREET, 2012, p. 80). In her study on the everyday speech of children at a school in the United Kingdom, Maybin (1997) used the concept of practices covering both aspects:

I used the term 'practices' to refer to observable patterns of behaviour across events eg a contrast between different practices would be between children often using reference books to announce newsworthy bits of information while teachers use them to frame observation and epistemology. These different behaviours assume different beliefs about what the texts are for, values, ideology etc and therefore to me signal different 'practices'. So I was focusing at the more empirical end of the term. (MAYBIN, 1998, e-mail communication apud STREET, 2002, p. 79).

This empirical notion of the concept of literacy practices, centered on “behavior patterns observable in [literacy] events”, adopted by Maybin (1998), helped us to identify, in the transcription records of students' speeches, behavioral patterns of this group regarding the demands and expectations for academic writing in their field. These identified behavioral patterns, in turn, revealed different meanings, values, and ideologies regarding this writing, that is, they signaled academic literate practices.

3 Methodology

The analysis in this article is part of a broader research¹ whose general objective was to explore the meanings of academic literacies in two specific contexts — Pedagogy and Psychology courses, from a Brazilian federal university, as we signaled in this text. For this, we carried out a case study of an ethnographic nature (GREEN; BLOOME, 1995; HEATH; STREET,

¹ Approved by the Ethics Committee under CAAE 39898414.4.0000.5149, opinion number 1,258,409.

200) on literate actions developed in the classroom of the selected contexts — reading, requesting, producing, and evaluating written texts —, from a qualitative approach (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994).

Having chosen the courses that would become fields of study, contact was made with the respective coordinators in order to present the research proposal to them. Once accepted, students from these courses were initially contacted by e-mail who were, at the time of the investigation, in the condition of freshmen and graduates, given the interest in investigating as students who were in extreme moments of the undergraduate course (in the beginning and end) related to academic reading and writing. In order to get more collaborators for the research, the invitation was also made in person, in classrooms. Twelve students made themselves available to participate in the research, four freshmen and eight seniors.

Via email, the days, times, and place for the semi-structured interviews were negotiated with each participant. Two interviews were conducted with each of the graduates, except for two of them who were unable to attend the second meeting. In the first interview, the graduates reported experiences that they considered more significant regarding their relationship with academic writing, throughout the course. In the second, they shared written texts mentioned in the first interview and reported a little more about their production.

As for the freshmen, three interviews were conducted with each of them. In the first, made in the class' first week, they reported a little about their expectations about academic reading and writing. In the second, done in the middle of the academic semester, they shared texts produced in the disciplines they were attending at the meeting and reported the experience of having written them. In the third and last interview, held at the end of the semester, the students shared other texts and also reported the experience of writing them. It should be noted that the participants had complete freedom to choose and share, in the second and third interviews, the texts they wrote, since the proposal was not that they should make available all the texts they had produced until the day of the interview, but those that were striking for some reason, whether positive or negative.

While conducting the research, professors from the investigated courses who were teaching (or had already taught) subjects to freshman students were also contacted by email to participate in the investigation. This teaching profile choice was justified by the fact that they were the first to have contact with the newly enrolled students in the academy, therefore, they would

probably have more property to point out the advances and challenges faced by them and the novices, when dealing with reading and writing in an academic context. Five professors accepted to participate in the research and each one of them gave an interview.

The thirty-one semi-structured interviews (twelve with the freshmen, fourteen with the graduates, and five with the professors) were carried out individually, lasting between forty to sixty minutes, predominantly in the fields of investigation. The realization of these interviews, conducted in line with the ethnographic look presented by Patai (1988) and Spradley (1979), made it possible to follow the academic routine of these participants and to understand how they related to writing, but also the reading required in their undergrad courses. In the interviews, students shared texts that they had written for different discipline courses and narrated the experience of having produced them, allowing us to also examine them, in addition to, sometimes, putting themselves in a reflective position, when recalling their experiences with academic writing.

In this text, we focus on the data pertinent to the demands and expectations regarding the academic written production, from the perspective of fresh students in the Pedagogy course, according to the transcript records of the interviews conducted with them. The condition of freshmen, that is, newcomers to the university, allowed, it seems, an intense experience of the process of familiarization with university life, which confirms our interest in examining how this process took place, considering what we delimit on the investigative objective already presented.

When discussing, for example, about what they wrote, when and for what they produced academic written texts, the interviewees produced narratives about literacy events (STREET, 2001) in which they participated and had opportunities to relate to writing. The analysis of these narratives allowed us to make inferences about the literacy practices characteristic of the institutional context in which these students were inserted, as shown in the following section.

4 Demands and expectations regarding academic writing

The analysis of the narratives of the research participants, granted in the interviews, allows us to observe that they participated in some literacy events, in which writing was predominantly demanded from texts named logbook, portfolio, file, analysis, among others. By

retrospectively retrieving the events in which such texts were required and talking a little about the experiences they experienced, we were able to infer the recurrence of two “behavior patterns” (MAYBIN, 1998 apud STREET, 2012), in the investigated context: (1) the non-presentation of guidelines as to the way of writing, when proposing a writing activity to students and (2) the presentation of generic feedbacks about the writing done by students.

4.1 The non-presentation of guidance on how to write, when proposing a writing activity to students

When exploring the freshmen's narratives about their ways of relating to writing, a “behavior pattern” was quite recurrent in their speeches: they signaled that most of the time, they did not receive guidelines for the production of the texts demanded by their professors. Below, we present and analyze an example of how such a characteristic can be identified from the narrative made by the interviewee Luísa²:

P (Researcher): ³[...] tell me a little about the logbook. In the other interview, you said that the professor had not yet given guidance on how to prepare the logbook. And how did it turn out? Did she give it later?
L (Luísa): So, what many people in my classroom complained about [was] that she ((the professor)) left it very open, in the sense of not being very strict. Only, at the same time, she left [the work] unclear because [...] she said she wanted to see what our learning was like, what we had managed to understand from the subject. But she didn't make what she wanted clear. She left it very free. Then, [the logbook] was a little nuclear because of that.

In the excerpt presented, Luísa narrates her experience with the demand for the production of a “logbook”. What strikes us is the fact that the student highlights three times, in different ways, the idea that she did not obtain specific/explicit guidelines for the elaboration of the “logbook”: “[the professor] left a lot open”, “Did not make what she wanted very clear”, “left it very free”. Apparently, there was tension between the expectations of the professor and those of the student. She hoped to receive specific, clear, and possibly detailed guidance on how to produce the logbook. Perhaps the professor was not so interested in doing this detail of the step-by-step to be followed, because she wanted, as Luísa herself indicated, “to see what our learning

² All names are fictitious according to the legal requirements for conducting research with human beings.

³ Since our focus is not the way in which the interviewees spoke, but rather what they narrated, we suppress orality marks and paralinguistic elements, even seeking to make the reading of the text more fluid.

was like, what we had managed to understand from the subject". Probably, as a result of this objective, the professor left students more "free", with greater openness, to write, considering the logbook genre allows this freer, more fluid writing.

In any case, this tension that was possibly established between Luísa's and other students' expectations — "many people in my classroom complained" — and those of her professor stems from the fact that, even if it was unnecessary for the professor, to give guidance on how to produce the diary, Luísa and her colleagues lacked these guidelines since as newcomers to the course, they were probably still unaware of the writing in the area.

These ways of acting and interacting with the texts demanded for the production, in the case analyzed with the "logbook", seem to indicate an understanding, on the part of the students, represented by Luísa, that writing is not a clear, self-evident, transparent and non-problematic action. This way of signifying academic writing seems to signal the understanding that its conventions need to be presented, explained, and explored in the context of teaching and learning. However, the lack of guidance on how to write, when proposing a writing activity to students, seems to indicate a contrary understanding of the students, that is, that the writing, by itself, is already clear, self-explanatory, and transparent. It is a signification that evidences a practice of literacy – in the sense of belonging "to a more abstract conceptual level", in which ideological aspects stand out (MAYBIN, 1998 apud STREET, 2012) – quite recurrent in higher education.

Lillis (1999, 2001) problematizes the non-transparency of academic conventions — either for those who participate in the academic community or for those who want to be part of that community. When exploring how ten students engaged with academic writing, during the first year of graduation, in the United Kingdom, Lillis (2001) problematizes teaching and learning as an implicit induction process, arguing that the expected conventions of students remain implicit, instead of being explicitly taught. The researcher illustrates this argument, exposing one of the instructions normally given to students when they are tasked with writing a certain academic text — "be explicit". She problematizes this imperative form, highlighting that it is not configured as a unitary textual phenomenon: What does it mean to be explicit? What should I be explicit about? Similar questions must have been asked by Luísa when her professor asked for the production of a logbook — How do you make a logbook? What criteria should I consider to produce it?

This behavior pattern regarding the non-presentation of guidelines on how to write, when proposing a writing activity to students, seems to show, therefore, that broader questions, of an institutional nature, interfere in the academic writing learning process, beyond linguistic, normative and structural aspects of the genres, in line with the premises of the academic literacies model.

In the following subsection, we continue to reflect on another behavior pattern related to academic writing identified in the freshmen's narratives.

4.2 The presentation of generic feedbacks about the writing done by the students

When reporting their experiences with academic writing, the freshmen showed yet another “behavior pattern” (MAYBIN, 1998 apud STREET, 2012): they stated that they frequently received generic feedbacks on the writing texts requested by their professors — “only the grade”. Below, we present and analyze an example of how such a characteristic can be identified from the narrative made by the interviewee Carla:

P (Researcher): Did you receive feedback from these texts? ((the freshman had brought some texts to the interview and was talking about the experience of having produced them)).

C (Carla): No. Just the grade

P: How do you evaluate this situation ((no feedback))?

C: First, that I feel a little disrespected, because, for me, feedback from work is a part of learning, of the learning process. It gives the impression that the professor deals with work the same as the student, it is an obligation. You have to be graded. Work serves to get a grade [...]. It seems that there are a lot of students who think “oh, I delivered the work, I received the grade, it's over. It doesn't matter what I did wrong”. But there are a lot of students who are waiting for feedback. And I'm the type of student who takes the job, flips through it, I see all the little details that I missed, because I don't want to make mistakes again. I know that this is not how most people act, but I think it should be cultivated in people. Many people end up making the same mistake from the beginning to the end of the course because they do not have feedback on the work.

In the excerpt presented, Carla unburdens, showing her frustration/indignation — “I feel a little disrespected” — for not receiving feedbacks from the texts demanded at the beginning of the course — “just the grade”. This frustration/indignation probably arises from a mismatch between the expectations of the student and the professors who, according to her, did not elaborate feedback on the evaluated texts. Feedback understood as an “instructional method” (WINGATE,

2015), formative comments on the text produced by the students. For presenting herself as a very dedicated and committed to her academic education student — “I am the type of student who when receives my paper back, scans through it, I see all the details that I missed because I don't want to make mistakes again” — unlike other students who, in her view, are only concerned with the grade and not with the mistakes made, Carla creates the expectation that she will receive her texts with comments prepared by the professors. The professors referred by her, possibly, thought it was unnecessary to elaborate feedback, driven by the most diverse reasons: from questions of a physical nature — work overload (many disciplines to teach, students to guide, opinions to produce, scientific production to handle, bureaucratic assignments to manage...) that results in tiredness — even pedagogical conceptions (focus of this article) — it would not be necessary to write anything in the student's text, because some teachers suppose that if the students had any doubt they check it with them.

Underlying this way of acting and interacting with the text — presentation of generic feedbacks about the writing produced by the students —, there seems to be an understanding about writing similar to those identified in the previous subsection. The students, represented by Carla, seem to signify writing as an action that demands to make explicit and visible, the academics expected conventions, based on the production of feedbacks that contemplate not only the presentation of the grade attributed to the produced text, but also commentary on this production.

Professors who, for some reason, do not provide feedback on students' text production may, perhaps, consider that writing at the university requires student autonomy and ability to perceive s/he own mistakes and learn from them or, depending on the stage students are in, to have the initiative to seek professors and/or monitors of the discipline to clarify doubts if they have them.

This perspective writing meanings seem to be linked to what Lillis (1999) called “institutional practice of the mystery” that is, to a literate practice marked by the lack of making visible explicitly academic writing conventions, which can become a “mystery” for those who are part of the academy or — students, professors, and researchers —, when they are not the target of explanation, either in the presentation of guidelines for writing (see the previous subsection) or in the presentation of feedback.

We understand that, although academic autonomy is expected at the university (in fact, it should be), it seems to us, it is very challenging for newcomers to be able to demonstrate it right at the beginning of the course, when they are still getting to know how everything works, including how the texts that are demanded and what are their conventions are constituted. As a result, receiving feedback can be essential for students, especially for freshmen, because they could contribute to the construction of a broader and institutional view of writing, in line with what is foreseen in the academic literacies model (LEA; STREET, 1998). Furthermore, the presentation of feedback on the texts written by the students could contain explanations and explanations about the dimensions of academic writing that were configured as “hidden” (STREET, 2009) in the text produced, in addition to linguistic, normative, and structural aspects, in order to contribute to the familiarization of students with this writing.

Conclusion

In this article, we seek to examine demands and expectations regarding academic written production, from the perspective of freshmen students in the Pedagogy course at a Brazilian federal university.

Therefore we analyzed, in the light of the ethnographic perspective (HEATH; STREET, 2009; GREEN; BLOOME, 1995), transcription records of semi-structured interviews conducted with these students, which integrate a database of a broader research on the meanings of the students' academic literacies in specific contexts.

When exploring such records, we assume the sociocultural understanding of writing, as a social and situated practice (STREET, 1993, 2001, 2003, 2014), we consider theoretical propositions characteristic of the academic literacy model (LEA; STREET, 1998, 2014), as well as aspects involved in the concept of literacy practices — “behavior patterns” and “conceptual models” (MAYBIN, 1998 apud STREET, 2012).

The analysis of the demands and expectations for academic writing production, evidenced in the narratives of the students in question, revealed two behavior patterns related to academic writing: (1) the non-presentation of guidelines on how to write when proposing an activity of writing to the students and (2) the generic feedbacks on student's writings.

We signal, based on guiding premises of the academic literacies model, that the ways of acting and interacting with the texts required for production and correction seem to indicate, on the one hand, that students have an understanding that academic writing is not tacit, explicit, self-evident and transparent, that is, they seem to mean it as something that deserves clarification in the context of teaching and learning. On the other hand, that professors, according to these students' narratives, seem to mean it in another way — academic writing, by itself, is already clear, self-explanatory, and not problematic, leaving the student with autonomy to appropriate it, as well as ability to perceive their own mistakes and learn from them.

It seems to us, and the aforementioned authors point this out, that the lack of guidance for writing and the presentation of formative feedback can hinder the process of familiarizing students with the genres demanded at the university, especially when it comes to new students, who are probably unaware of them.

We understand that providing guidance and giving feedback may not be enough for the student to appropriate the academic writing demanded, since factors of another nature may interfere in this process. However, we defend the need to create (continue to create) learning opportunities, in academic literacy events, that favor students not only to engage in literacy practices but also to problematize, challenge, challenge, seeking to develop their academic autonomy from an active, critical and transformative posture.

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