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## **WRITING WASN'T USUAL FOR ME: ACADEMIC LITERACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

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***Abstract:** This paper discusses how the process of pursuing academic literacy for teachers in continuing education within a community of practice can boost their professional development and the (re)building of their identity. In this qualitative research, data were generated in a continuing education context during a semi-structured interview with a participant. Data were analysed based on the articulation of two research traditions, namely, sociodiscursive interactionism and literacy studies, which evidences the awareness that the teacher acquires in her process of pursuing academic literacy and professional development. The results suggest that the professional development of teachers requires an environment that legitimizes their participation and facilitates the development of significant forms of affiliation.*

***Keywords:** Academic literacy. Professional development. Identity. Community of practice. Continuing education of teachers.*

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

A teacher in a Brazilian elementary school is involved in a variety of literacy practices that require him or her to be acquainted with a variety of genres in order to participate in various literacy-related events, such as the following: planning classes; conducting roll calls; writing notes to parents; preparing, applying and correcting exams; writing student performance reports; and entering final grades for report cards. A teacher partakes in such activities on a daily basis.

More specifically, considering the writing practices that teachers undertake to foreshadow (or self-prescribe) their work, we have a world of possibilities for analysing what we have named praxeological writing (CARNIN, 2015). This writing, which is consistently related to a teacher's professional identity, privileges the dimension of *savoir faire*, which is materialized, for instance, in the teaching materials that the teacher prepares. Produced to guide the teacher's own work, praxeological writing, as we

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understand it, has the role of conducting a teaching action (praxis). Teachers rarely have opportunities to stop and reflect on their practice and even fewer opportunities to write about it. In this respect, this article aims to underscore the different writing that we find in the Portuguese language teacher's workspace and continuing education: epistemic writing and its relationship with issues of literacy and professional development.

In contrast to praxeological writing, which is very common in teaching practices, epistemic writing evokes another dimension of this competency: knowledge (and the construction of such knowledge) through writing. In a study of continuing education led by one of the authors of this study (GUIMARÃES; KERSCH, 2015), Portuguese elementary school teachers were also the actors in their own development. Their voices were heard, and this process led to the redirection of the paths of such education, among other aspects. As part of this exercise, with a firm belief that academic literacy and authorship development can contribute to the empowerment of these teachers (KERSCH, 2014), we made a substantial investment in producing texts that reflect on the teaching practices that teachers developed based on their participation in continuing education. The choice to produce written accounts (several of which later became articles published in a book) supported the task of fostering teachers' awareness of their own process of professional development. This paper discusses how the process of pursuing academic literacy for teachers in continuing education within a community of practice (CoP) can boost their professional development, and it explores one teacher's reflection on her own process.

Wenger (1998, p. 86) states that communities of practice can be thought of as shared histories of learning. We have been experimenting with this notion in the context of a community that was established by the authors' research group in January 2011. The aim of this CoP is to articulate, in cooperation with the teachers, teaching objects/materials that regard reading and writing as social practices. Since the founding of the community, we have shared specific stories reflecting our belief that the purpose of reading and writing is to perform actions in the world and develop practices while also boosting professional development.

As social beings, we belong to countless communities; we build and negotiate different identities as we interact with others. This article discusses the story of Márcia, a public-school teacher who joined the research group as a participant in September 2012. To keep the discussion brief for this article, we have selected two moments of her participation. The first is an excerpt illustrating her participation in a meeting with the CoP, and the second is her semi-structured interview, during which the researchers and Márcia revisited several points that had been discussed in the meeting. These data are used to establish the relationship between Márcia's appropriation of a writing practice and the impact of that practice on her relationship with both her knowledge (and knowledge production, through writing) of academic literacy issues and her identity(ies).

The article is divided into five sections. After this introduction, we present the theoretical basis that supports our investigation. Anchored in an interactionist view of language, we begin by discussing the concept of a CoP (WENGER, 1998) to underscore its importance in (re)building identities. We start with the premise that learning occurs in the CoP context. We also revisit the perspective of academic literacies (LEA; STREET,

2014) because the object of analysis is Márcia's relationship with academic writing (hence, epistemic writing). Our reflections establish a dialogue with sociodiscursive interactionism (BRONCKART, 1999; 2006) and focus on the relationship that language actions represent in the course of the teacher's professional development, specifically in terms of the role of epistemic writing within the continuing education process. We then present the methodology, underscoring the context in which data were generated and characterizing the research participant. In the fourth section, we analyse and discuss the data. We close the article with final remarks<sup>1</sup>.

## 2 COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE – A SPACE TO DEVELOP AND (RE)BUILD IDENTITIES

Learning stems from active participation in social practices. More precisely, learning occurs as we engage in CoPs, within which meanings are negotiated and identities are built. People are active participants in their learning and 'they have their own individual aims located within a cultural environment and their learning is purposeful and self-directed. They have their own motivations and make their own meanings and connections to their existing knowledge'. (BARTON; LEE, 2015, p. 167)

We have our own objectives in the social world that drive us to forge and build new identities. In our relationship with others within CoPs, we may be required to do things we do not know how to do. To learn these skills, we need the actions and aid of other participants. In other words, learning is always social because it occurs in interaction with others. Evidently, as we make our way into a social practice, we do not start with zero knowledge: we always have existing knowledge. Practice exists because people participate in actions whose meanings are negotiated amongst them, and people are shaped by their participation in a wide variety of social spheres. To be a community of practice, as defined by Wenger (1998, p. 73), its participants must have mutual engagement (one that requires interaction and affiliation), a joint enterprise (relationships of mutual responsibility among the people involved) and a shared repertoire (produced results: routines, words, instruments, ways of doing, actions or concepts created or adopted by the community).

Social interaction within CoPs is essential for personal development. We learn constantly, and in interactions, we learn how to engage in a variety of activities. Frequently, as is the case with this research, we may be learning how to produce an academic genre (a paper that will become a book chapter). In interaction within a community, we discover what we know (existing knowledge) and what we need to learn. Therefore, we learn by engaging in practices together with others. In this research, Márcia, the teacher in the case under analysis, along with the remaining members of the community, was required to learn practices with which she was not familiar. These practices included submitting an abstract to a congress, having that abstract accepted and then travelling to the city of Goiânia (state of Goiás, Brazil) to present her project, writing the paper based on her congress presentation, and writing a paper that would become part of a book. She learned by watching and by doing.

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<sup>1</sup> To preserve the identity of our research collaborator, we give her a fictitious name.

One of the founding concepts of the continuing education programme in which Márcia was involved was the notion of reading and writing as social practices. We aimed to offer this experience to the teachers in the group: they were able to read articles and book chapters (therefore undergoing academic socialization, as termed by Lea and Street, 2014) in order to also write a paper that would become part of a book produced by the research group. In our CoP, we are aligned with the model of academic literacies (LEA; STREET, 2014, p. 480), which ‘relates to the production of meaning, identity, power and authority; foregrounds the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in any particular academic context’. Therefore, the issue was not simply about executing a task; it was about producing meaning, empowering oneself, and building knowledge and new identities.

Although Márcia had a degree in modern languages and had taught her students how to read and write, she faced her own share of difficulties when she had to undergo a similar process to that which her students experience. According to Lea and Street (2014), we learn when we foreground the production of meaning and identity in the writing process. That is, Márcia and her colleagues needed to see meaning in what they were reading and in what they were doing with their students (in order to later write about it). The teachers needed to believe that what they did in class with their students was relevant and thus worth writing about in order to stimulate other teachers to invest in continuing education themselves. In other words, they needed to rebuild themselves by taking on new identities. Márcia had to appropriate a genre that was not familiar to her (in terms of its characteristics, structure, spaces of circulation, and assumed readership, among other aspects). She needed to undergo academic socialization to learn how to share her doubts and insecurities with the other CoP members. This experience certainly influenced her professional activity as a teacher, and it triggered a process that enhanced her professional development, as we will demonstrate.

As expected, within our CoP, this learning was always mediated by language actions. Following a sociodiscursive interactionism framework (BRONCKART, 1999; 2006), we understand that in various forms of social participation, we use language as a mediator for our actions in the world. This occurs because language (more specifically, linguistic signs structured within text-discourses) is used to build representations of discourse worlds (implicated narrating, autonomous narrating, implicated exposition, autonomous exposition, cf. Bronckart, 1999)<sup>2</sup>. These worlds in turn guide language action. The analysis of this language action, which can be imputed to a particular agent, leads to considering the existence (or nonexistence) of a particular reason and intention that may uncover indexes of its development (and action course) through one’s use of language and participation in CoPs. In other words, Márcia’s language action in this article stems from her participation in a CoP that fosters the continuing education of Portuguese language teachers, with emphasis on the language actions that she performed in that space. More specifically examining representations surrounding the use of writing and understanding that these representations are materialized in empirical texts, the theoretical-methodological framework of sociodiscursive interactionism proposed by Bronckart (1999) will help us describe the way(s) in which Márcia’s representations

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<sup>2</sup> To better understand the notion of discourse worlds, we recommend Bronckart (1999).

surrounding epistemic writing may reveal traces of professional development as well as (re)building identities through interacting with a new object of knowledge within a CoP.

Notably, our participation in CoPs changes even our form of participation. As established below, we observe a change in Márcia's way of engaging with the community's practices. She shifts from a marginal position, of someone who listens more than talks, to a more central role, of one who articulates arguments, expresses her points of view and makes herself heard. Additionally, we see a shift in the text-discourses she produces in terms of her personal positioning related to certain aspects of what a scientific paper is and the social practices to which the genre is connected in the Brazilian academic scenario. This shift is somewhat predictable given her newfound 'academic literacy'.

Regarding the notion of professional development adopted herein, we return to the principles of Vygotsky (2009), who conceives human development based on the idea of an active organism, in which an external activity is internally reconstructed as a result of interactive processes that occur over time. The notion of psychological instrument, which comes from Vigotskian theory, is important to us because it enables us to link professional development – or, at least, part of it – and the necessary transformation of the instrument to a psychological instrument and the psychic process required to perform a given task (CARNIN, 2015). This influence of the psychological instrument could reasonably be linked to certain conflicts or contradictions (BRONCKART, 2013) experienced by the individual making use of it. These conflicts and contradictions could drive professional development processes in the sense that they destabilize the consolidated representations and require them to be restructured to address the demands of what Vygotsky (2009) referred to as the zone of proximal development.

Gaining an awareness of this process, which occurs through reflection, through interpretive debate (of the action) and through assigning new significance (totally or partially) to the representation of writing and academic literacy, for instance, has led us to formulate the following hypothesis: a teacher's professional development involves reconfiguring the individual's representations of certain aspects of the teacher's work – as well as representations of the role that academic literacy plays in this process. This occurs in a social context (within a CoP, as we have argued thus far) whose interactional dynamics enables 'epistemic learning'. The traits of such learning can be indirectly apprehended in the language actions of individual engagement in (continuing) professional development. This work underscores the importance of mediation, which occurs through the interaction between individuals and the social medium. In other words, we can envision a possible interrelation between Márcia's interaction with the other members of the CoP and her professional development, with the aim of finding 'clues' in these interactions that enable us to evidenciate the (re)building of her identity and the impact on her professional development. We are doing this from the perspective of academic literacies that she reveals in her discourses.

Learning – and developing, as we have underscored – means assuming new identities sustained in shifts in the ways of acting and representing certain practices. Changing the mode of participation can be a way of learning. As we learn, starting from a more peripheral position, we can gradually move into a more central position from which we speak up and negotiate meanings, as we will observe in the data. Therefore, 'building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities'. (WENGER, 1998, p. 145).



### 3 METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research is characterized as research action and, according to Wells (2006), as collaborative research. According to the perspective that our research has adopted, teachers both problematize and reflect on school practice. Based on that process, they propose or consider other forms of action within their work context.

#### 3.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

The story of our research group begins in 2010. As researchers in the Post-Graduate Programme in Applied Linguistics at Unisinos University, we have established a partnership with the Secretary of Education in the Novo Hamburgo City Hall, state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. This partnership aims to bring together academic output on teachers' professional role in a collaborative process as a means to leverage student performance in reading and writing as social practices, regarded as pillars of an education concerned with the challenges of the world ahead. What lies at the basis of our investigation is therefore a teacher's education – his or her own literacy process, which is consequently expected to impact students' literacy processes.

The idea was then, as it is now, to join efforts with our collaborators and develop educational teaching proposals that qualify educators to critically manage knowledge and empower them to meet the educational challenges of the third millennium. We underscore that our project was approved for a Capes Education Observatory grant, which became an asset in creating the team: in addition to researchers from the Post-Graduate Programme in Applied Linguistics, the team also had six teachers from the Novo Hamburgo municipal school system, including a Portuguese department head, two doctoral students, three master's students, and six undergraduate research fellows. Between 2011 and 2014, the group met weekly around an oval table to ensure that everyone was on the same plane, which facilitated face-to-face interaction.

In these meetings, we discussed texts on topics that supported the research, such as language conceptions, literacy, linguistic education and the notion of text genre, which anchors the co-construction of educational genre projects (EGPs). We also created the EGPs that teachers would develop with their own classes at school. Meetings were used to plan and discuss the continuing education that we would propose as blended learning to all the language teachers in the city school system. We met monthly with a larger group including all teachers in the city school system, and we engaged in activities that used the distance-learning tool Moodle between meetings.<sup>3</sup>

The weekly gatherings of the smaller group were a type of safe haven for teachers to express their doubts and insecurities and to weave their journey of participation and learning. Based on the group characteristics, we classified it as a CoP as defined by Wenger (1998).

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<sup>3</sup> Inspired by the educational sequences of the Geneva group (DOLZ; NOVERRAZ; SCHNEUWLY, 2004) and by the literacy projects (Kleiman, 2000), we developed a methodology of work that we refer to as an educational genre project, or EGP (KERSCH; GUIMARÃES, 2012; GUIMARÃES; KERSCH, 2015).

### 3.2 RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Márcia represents the majority of teachers in Brazil. She works 40 hours a week, dividing her time between two schools. This requires commuting from one school to another. Normally, the 20-hour contract for each school is divided into 16 hours in the classroom and 4 hours to prepare lessons and correct students' assignments. The time allocated for class preparation and assignment correction is insufficient, however, which means that all teachers perform a great deal of work at home.

Márcia belongs to a group of teachers working to improve their qualifications. She had an existing specialization in school management, but when the Novo Hamburgo education secretary mentioned the possibility of joining the research group, Márcia did not apply at first because she taught only elementary school classes rather than the whole primary school cycle. Nevertheless, she participated in the training that we offered to all teachers. In 2012, at the occasion of a new call, she applied and joined the group. She remained with us as a grant holder until the project funding was depleted in December 2014.

### 3.3 DATA FOR ANALYSIS AND ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES

Data for this research were generated at different moments: a) weekly meetings, during which we discussed the writing of a paper that would later become part of a book by the research group; b) a semi-structured interview to clarify aspects of the weekly meeting; c) emails exchanged between Márcia and one of the researchers about the writing of her paper; and d) a testimonial written when she left the project, in which she narrates her participation in the group. Table 1 illustrates the general plan of the data supporting this research.

**Table 1 – General data plan**

Data for analysis	Data collection year	Predominant discourse types (cf. BRONCKART, 1999)
Videos of weekly meetings	2012-2014	Interactive report
Semi-structured interview	2014	Interactive report/Interactive discourse
E-mails about paper writing	2012	Interactive report/Interactive discourse
Individual testimonials	2014	Interactive report

It should be noted that for the analysis of the textual and discursive mechanisms mobilized by Márcia in her participation in the CoP, we follow some principles of the textual architecture model proposed by the socio-discursive interactionism framework (SDI) (BRONCKART, 1999), which offers a descending methodology to analyse texts/discourses.

This analytical model postulates that the composition of texts occurs at three levels that can be analysed by the researcher. The first level, the deepest one, corresponds to the textual infrastructure, which includes thematic organization, planning, and the discursive organization, referring to the types of discourse present in the text (namely, interactive discourse, theoretical discourse, interactive report, and narration). The second level concerns the mechanisms of textualization and refers to aspects of connection, verbal

cohesion and nominal cohesion. Finally, the third level, which is more superficial, relates to the enunciative mechanisms composed of the mechanisms of enunciative accountability, the insertion of voices and the expression of modalizations. These levels are segmented to carry out analyses, but in the texts, they can occur in a simultaneous and interrelated way. In this article, we chose to base our analyses on the first and the third levels of the analytical model of textual architecture. The first is based on the identification of the discourse types that support the discursive organization of Márcia's statements in her interactions in the CoP. These statements also provide clues for identifying the modes of reasoning that she employs. The third level is based on the identification of enunciative mechanisms that translate enunciative accountability for the thematic content that the analysed segments exemplify.

For a better understanding of types of discourse, it would be interesting to list some characteristics that distinguish each type. In the interactive discourse, verbal forms are found that imply at least one of the participants of the interaction, temporal and spatial deictics and verbal tenses that place the actions verbalized as concomitant to the moment of production. In the interactive report, we perceive the presence of linguistic elements that imply the participants of the interaction in the produced text, but unlike the interactive discourse, the narrated facts are distant from the moment of production.

The theoretical discourse does not present marks that refer to the participant in the interaction. We can note the presence of the generic present and of nominalizations, and the expressed contents are placed jointly at the time of production. Finally, the narration does not present marks that refer to the situation of textual production; moreover, there is reference to a past time, disjoined from the situation of production.

Commonly, texts comprise the various types of discourse, one of which is predominant. From the perspective of analysing a teacher's professional development, the verification of the type of discourse used by the teacher can reveal his/her development, since types of speech are configured as linguistic-textual units that highlight the relations established by the producer in the production situation of the text. Bronckart (2011) also associates types of discourse with modes of reasoning, as we will show later.

With respect to the enunciative level analysis, Machado and Bronckart (2009) suggest that the mechanisms of enunciative accountability for their realization should be used. Among those mechanisms, they cite the marks of person, deictics of place and space, marks of insertion of voices, and modalization markers of the utterance, the subjectivity and the adjectives. From this data set, as previously mentioned, we will prioritize data from the meeting in which Márcia's paper was discussed and the semi-structured interview in order to avoid an excessively lengthy analysis.

#### 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learning is a process that spans one's entire life, and it occurs mainly in relation to other people. Our experience with teachers has shown us that they require continuing education on a permanent basis, such that academic research on education can actually affect the classroom and create a shift in schools, teachers and students. As applied linguists, we find that the work from the past four years has also impacted our way of conducting research because of the constant dialogue with teachers. This dialogue was cross-sectionally documented over the four years of research through video footage of



our CoP meetings, teachers' classes, documents and records (e.g., archiving texts produced by participants), and additional interviews.

The variety of criteria used to select the data presented and discussed herein guides our focus to the moments in which Márcia (a) interacted with the group in a discussion that addressed the writing of an academic paper and (b) interacted with a researcher from the group in a semi-structured interview, seeking a better understanding of what occurred in the meeting and discussing aspects that were also related to the meanings that Márcia assigned to the production of the academic text. In both interactions, Márcia's representation of her own academic literacy is evident, as is her representation of the role of (epistemic) writing in this social practice. We can also find 'clues' that allow us to further understand her journey of (re)building her identity and pursuing professional development.

On 6 June 2014, during one of the continuing education meetings, we asked Márcia a question directly to elicit more direct participation from her, given her peripheral participation at that time:

Excerpt 1: community of practice meeting

*Researcher: [...] Márcia, how was your first experience, how was it, completing the paper? By the way, you were the one who finished the paper last year, when...*

*Márcia: I'll say this; I initially produced two things, right? Actually, last year I completed a draft, right, in September I finished, and I sent it, totally clueless, totally. Since I am also writing a SIMELP paper, I tried to bring them both together, and (...) I don't see it as hard; I see it as painful. It's very painful to write, especially when you don't know how. I've written a paper, but it seems to me that this situation of writing a paper for a book is very painful because you're totally exposed in it, and you're not the only one exposed. It's different writing a paper to show it to a teacher over there; it's a whole group that's exposed, a group of teachers, researchers. I, really, I felt even more pain when the professor sent me the corrections, not the corrections, she sent me the suggestions and a few questions, right, and then I came to the professor with this initial anxiety, and she said, 'oh, but it's the first time'.<sup>4</sup>*

Márcia's speech shows that her writing process on the path to academic literacy, which is understood as a social practice (LEA; STREET, 2014), involved literacy understood as academic socialization. She had the template of that paper that she wrote for SIMELP ('I am also writing a SIMELP paper too... so I tried to bring them both together'). Hence, literacy models are, in fact, non-exclusive: to appropriate a genre, one must understand its structure, have an assumed reader in mind, which affects the language used, and so forth.

In terms of the production context of this text-discourse, we underscore that the interaction under analysis is an excerpt from a continuing education meeting lasting approximately 2.5 hours, audio recorded and transcribed for the purpose of this article. During this meeting, researchers, and school teachers, as well as undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students gathered around an oval table to discuss a number of topics, including the production of their texts. This discussion was a way for the new members of the CoP to familiarize themselves with the task of writing. Given that the participation (turn taking) of individuals during the meeting is largely voluntary, Márcia had remained

<sup>4</sup> She is referring to the 'IV World Symposium of Portuguese Language Studies', which took place in Goiânia on 2-5 July 2013.

silent until the moment on which we are focusing. As a way to foster participation, the researcher addressed her directly and asked about her experience. Thus, when Márcia reports her experience writing an academic paper, she does so while resorting to the world narration, which follows a disjunction logic in relation the real world of enunciation, according to Bronckart (1999). However, as Márcia explicitly implied in the enunciation through the use of deictics and first-person verbal desinences, we can observe that she resorts to interactive reporting to organize her enunciation (e.g., ‘I completed a draft’, ‘I finished’, ‘I sent it’, ‘I’ve written a paper’). What can analysing the type of discourse tell us about her professional development and identity reconstruction?

Based on Bronckart (2011), we derive the hypothesis that employing the types of discourse can also help us identify how individuals address the conflict to which they are exposed in order to (re)organize their representations of it and make it intelligible to their interlocutors. Based on the types of discourse, we can also observe how writing a scientific article (and its relations to academic literacy practices) became part of the set of Márcia’s representations and, furthermore, how this can operate as a psychological instrument. The level of reflection that interacting with the CoP required from Márcia not only fostered her development but also brought to the forefront elements related to an awareness and reflections about writing, made possible by the interactive reporting discourse type. Let us continue by exploring how Márcia continues her participation in the CoP.

We believe that the type of discourse that Márcia used to refer to issues relating to the practice of writing and the socialization of knowledge based on an academic paper truly denotes a reasoning that is based on example, as suggested by Bronckart (2011). We can observe this in excerpt 1, both from the linguistic markers that indicate Márcia’s implication in what is being said (the first-person pronoun that appears abundantly throughout the segment) and from how time is organized within this reporting, which shows marks of sequentiality in the action described. This discourse structure had already been internalized by Márcia at a different moment in her psycholinguistic development. What is relevant in terms of professional development is underscoring its use in the specific context of producing an account about the writing of a scientific paper. This is perhaps new to Márcia in professional terms.

The pain that Márcia claims to feel when writing stems from her engagement in the group or, in the words of Wenger (1998), in the mutual engagement. After all, the group had a joint enterprise (producing and socializing knowledge based on practice). When she states, ‘you’re not the only one exposed (...) it’s a whole group that’s exposed, a group of teachers, researchers’, she is aligned with the group. This statement marks her as belonging to the CoP. Extending this positioning, she states that when she writes, the writing is not only hers but the group’s collective voice. Writing becomes painful precisely at the moment when her writing becomes the group’s writing.

Excerpt 1 also contains many of Márcia’s representations of what it means to write at school and for school. She states that the act of writing is painful because ‘it’s different writing a paper to show it to a teacher’; thus, in the mode of writing that she is accustomed to facilitating, students write and she corrects (a common arrangement in Brazilian schools). The situations in which she was invited to write were probably also situated in

that context: writing based on the literacy model that Lea and Street (2014) refer to as study skills. A student writes for a teacher to correct. In this writing perspective, the teacher is not interested in what the student has to say beyond verifying that words and letters have been properly employed and that complete sentences are used. Reading and writing in this case are not understood as social practices. Although it was also painful to be given a text with so many marks to be corrected, having an interlocutor who welcomed her doubts apparently mitigated Márcia's 'pain', as she could interact with the researcher, who believed that the problems in the text could be a product of her lack of experience with the text genre ('oh, but it's the first time').

Therefore, however briefly, we can state that writing a scientific paper and later reflecting on this process can be regarded as marking Márcia's academic literacy. Through the conflict ('it's very painful to write') that she reported experiencing, Márcia has helped us better understand what was occurring. To that end, on 19 March 2014, we talked to Márcia more extensively about this in an interview that focused on her experience writing an academic paper and her participation in the meeting. We sought to better understand her representation (at that time) of this practice and its implications for her job. The following excerpts present a few moments from the interview, in which Márcia underscores aspects related to her professional development and identity.

Excerpt 2: interview

*Researcher: [...] Oh, and about the first paper, at the Observatory meetings when it was evaluated by everyone in the group, you mentioned it was painful to write. Can you explain to us that... expression of yours?*

*Márcia: I continue to say that it's painful to write.*

*Researcher: Why?*

*Márcia: Ohh, first, because writing was not a practice for me. Like every teacher, I think, especially Portuguese teachers, they read a lot, correct the writing, but write very little. I often thought about writing, but then it was like, dang it, what for, what am I gonna write, where will it go, who's gonna read what I write? [emphasis added] And then I needed to. I really needed to have a goal to write, and then, as that was not a practice, it was not part of my routine... I felt and still feel it's very painful, especially because of what I said, about making myself understood... and... I'm writing for other teachers, so the way of writing, it's different... I can't say that I don't write, but you write to students when you're commenting on a situation (...) but writing an article is different.*

In this excerpt, we again observe a dominating presence of interactive reporting. For example, answering the researcher's question, Márcia states as follows: 'I continue to say that it's painful to write', 'I often thought about writing'. She evokes the discourse world of narrative (implied), which is apparent not only in the first person of the singular deictic but also in the text movement marked primarily by the use of verbs (or time markers) in the past, which are distant in time from the moment when the enunciation was produced. In the first answer, we can observe the presence of a verb clause in the generic present, but the sequential construction of the enunciation clearly suggests that this discourse resource is serving the purpose of reinforcing Márcia's representation of the difficulty that a Portuguese language teacher has when writing an academic paper reflecting on his or her own practice.

Therefore, Márcia openly recognizes herself as a participant in the community, as marked by her discourse. She is also negotiating her desire to be recognized as a

participant by the others. When she effectively begins to write as a social practice, identifying her possible interlocutors ('I am writing to other teachers') and doing something she was not familiar with ('writing was not a practice for me'), Márcia is then established as a teacher researcher, effectively being in the community; as Wenger (1998, p. 189) phrases it, the experience of identity is a way of being in the world. She also notes the complexity of the genre that she had to overcome; her familiarity with praxeological writing ('Portuguese teachers, they read a lot, correct the writing, but write very little') was not enough for her. To become a teacher researcher, she had to learn other practices: her identities forge new paths. Every act of learning is an act of identity.

Also noteworthy in excerpt 2 is the shift from the first person deictic (I/me), which reflects the enunciative responsibility (BRONCKART, 1999) of the one who enunciates over the enunciation, to the third person (they) when referring to Portuguese teachers and their writing practices and, finally, to the second person (you) in a general sense encompassing not only herself but also possibly all other teachers who write academic papers. Initially, Márcia takes full enunciative responsibility for her statements ('writing was not a practice for me'); she then transfers the responsibility to others by comparison ('Like every teacher, I think, and especially Portuguese teachers, they read a lot, correct the writing, but write very little'). Finally, she shares this responsibility, including both herself and others in the second-person discourse ('[...] so the way of writing, it's different... I can't say that I don't write, but you write to students when you're commenting on a situation'). Then, once again, she fully takes on the enunciative responsibility ('I even tried to write poetry to use in classroom practice here and there, but writing an article is different'). This shift in enunciative responsibility suggests that at this point in the interaction, it is not by chance that Márcia alternates/oscillates in terms of enunciative responsibility. It seems reasonable to assume that Márcia may have been seeking ways to reorganize her lived experience as well as to share, both with a broader collective (Portuguese teachers) and with her CoP peers, an evaluation of the writing activity that she integrated into her set of literacy practices. Naturally, all of this occurred during an interaction with the researcher, who is also part of the CoP. We would also like to add that this oscillation in enunciative responsibility probably points to a movement of tension between the individual and the collective, between assuming a discourse positioning that shows Márcia's attitude towards what she has learned with the CoP, in such a way that the mediation of this collective is related to her representation of the purpose of writing: one 'really needs to have a goal to write'.

Márcia also notes the isolation and silencing to which most teachers in Brazilian public schools are subjected, perhaps because of the lack of prestige of their profession: few have their voices heard, and the quality of their work is rarely recognized ('I often thought about writing, but then it was like, dang it, what for, what am I gonna write, where will it go, who's gonna read what I write?'). We could pose the following question: who is actually interested in what a teacher does inside the classroom? Who actually wants to listen to what a teacher has to say?

One excerpt remains to be discussed. Here, Márcia indicates an appropriation of the forms of doing (co)related to her professional development by expanding her academic literacy and appropriating the ways to build a scientific paper:

*Excerpt 3: interview*

*Researcher: And when you are writing, what are the greatest writing challenges you face?*

*Márcia: Well, it's trying not to repeat what's already been said by the theories themselves. Using the theory but in a way that I can introduce it to the practice of what was done.*

In this excerpt, we can observe that Márcia signals an awareness of how a scientific paper must be written and of what makes the genre of a scientific article: one must not merely repeat what the theories postulate; instead, one must use them to introduce (account) the singular experience of teaching practice. This experience, when reflected and described in a scientific paper, can help build (situated) knowledge on the job developed with students. As we have underscored, this was not a typical practice in Márcia's work before the CoP. Therefore, being part of the CoP has been a transformative experience for Márcia because it gave her a space in which to learn and develop and in which to form new identities.

The professional development process is evidently not linear but instead is marked by breaks. In this research, we could outline the hypothesis of a 'clash' between the continuity of prior concepts and writing practices and breaking these concepts/practices to incorporate new ones, introduced by CoP participation. It is thus important to reflect on the developmental effects of a continuing education programme that invested in written output as an empowerment practice for teachers (because literacy is empowering). This programme legitimated the teachers' knowledge as deserving of space in the practices of the construction and socialization of knowledge on Portuguese language teaching and the continuing education of teachers. In that sense, the continuing education of teachers and the appropriation of scientific concepts implicated in their process of professional development and academic literacy, as well as their later transformation through a psychological means, could in this scenario be linked to a movement that helps individuals forge new meanings. Obviously, this does not occur directly; instead, it is mediated by concepts, (identity) reconstructions, and access to participation in CoPs that challenge (and foster) professional development.

## 5 FINAL REMARKS

Learning is an ongoing, continuing process – one that is part of our human nature. When discussing education/identity, Wenger (1998, p. 271) stated that in order to form identities, students (and we believe that this applies to everyone who is learning) need (a) places of engagement, (b) materials and experiences with which to build an image of the world and of themselves, and (c) ways to influence the world and make their actions matter.

In that sense, we underscore that recognizing Márcia's journey of professional development, which is situated in her participation in the continuing education programme and apparent in the various pieces of data under analysis (although only some of these data have been explored in depth in this article), has enabled us to consider the existence of a movement in which representations of writing, academic literacy, and even belonging to a CoP are reconfigured and implied in the process of professional development that we have experienced with this research project. Analysing Márcia's representations of the writing experience has provided evidence of her (re)building an



image of the world (and herself). In this image of the world, epistemic writing was something distant from the academic practices in which she engaged, and she did not regard herself as a legitimate participant in this environment. Her awareness about learning epistemic writing caused conflicts in her social representation of herself as someone who had no reason to write, influencing her assumptions on the limitations and implications of this practice in her activity. This experience caused Márcia to reconsider this representation, thus expanding her academic literacy practices, which undoubtedly signals a (re)building of her identity as a teacher who now has reasons to share her experiences as part of a group of researcher teachers.

In conclusion, the professional development of teachers requires that they be offered a 'participation space'. In such a space, teachers can speak up and have their voices heard, and their actions are deemed relevant and legitimized as capable of producing scientific knowledge, among other possibilities. A CoP with mutual commitment to joint enterprise and shared repertoire appears to be the proper space for meaningful forms of affiliation to develop.

Note that this study is not an end in itself. New possibilities for action and intervention in teacher development can arise from this work, with the aim of understanding in greater depth the relationship between teachers' professional development and their participation in various literacy practices.

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**Título:** *Não era uma prática para mim escrever: letramento acadêmico e desenvolvimento profissional em comunidade de prática*

**Autores:** Dorotea Frank Kersch; Anderson Carnin

**Resumo:** *Discute-se, neste texto, sobre como o processo de letramento acadêmico de professores em formação continuada, junto a uma comunidade de prática, pode impulsionar seu desenvolvimento profissional e sua (re)construção identitária. A pesquisa é qualitativa, e os dados foram gerados em encontros de formação continuada e em entrevista semiestruturada com uma participante da formação. Os dados, analisados a partir da articulação de duas tradições de pesquisa, o interacionismo sociodiscursivo e os estudos de letramento, evidenciam a tomada de consciência da professora sobre seu processo de letramento acadêmico e desenvolvimento profissional. Os resultados sinalizam que, para que o desenvolvimento profissional do professor aconteça, é preciso que lhe seja oferecido um lugar que legitime sua participação, e no qual formas significativas de afiliação se desenvolvam.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Letramento acadêmico. Desenvolvimento profissional. Identidade. Comunidade de prática. Formação continuada de professores.*

**Título:** *No era una práctica común para mi: letramiento académico y desarrollo profesional en comunidad de práctica*

**Autores:** Dorotea Frank Kersch; Anderson Carnin

**Resumen:** *En este texto se discute sobre cómo el proceso de letramiento académico de profesores en entrenamiento continuado junto a una comunidad de práctica puede impulsar su desarrollo profesional y su (re)construcción de identidad. La investigación es cualitativa, y los datos fueron generados en encuentros de entrenamiento continuado y en entrevista semiestruturada con una participante del entrenamiento. Los datos analizados desde la articulación de dos tradiciones de investigación, el interaccionismo socio discursivo y los estudios de letramiento, evidencian la toma de conciencia de la profesora sobre su proceso de letramiento académico y desarrollo profesional. Los resultados señalan que para el desarrollo profesional del profesor ocurrir, es necesario le sea ofrecido un lugar haga su participación legítima, adonde formas significativas de afiliación se desarrollen.*

**Palabras-clave:** *Letramiento académico. Desarrollo profesional. Identidad. Comunidad de práctica. Entrenamiento continuado de profesores.*



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