

Social Constructivism in Graduate Student Advising: A Road Forward

Daniel Forgrave

University of Calgary in Qatar

Abstract

Literature on graduate student writing focuses on supervisors' concerns, especially lack of critical thinking, organization, focus, clarity, and voice. The use of artificial intelligence adds to these concerns. Many graduate students have not been taught the skills or genre understanding required for good academic writing. These challenges decrease graduate students' self-efficacy and motivation and increase the use of directive approaches by supervisors, compounding the above concerns. Literature rarely addresses the best pedagogical practices that support graduate students' academic writing growth. Conversely, my decade of Writing Centre work supporting master's students has shown that graduate students engaged in the dialogic exploration of their writing by their advisors significantly improve their academic writing. A literature review explored how this experience and Writing Centre and L2 best practice can inform graduate student advising. The literature shows that academic writing is a socially situated and constructed exercise. Dialogue is integral to the construction and internalization of knowledge as well as vital throughout the writing process. Dialogue positively impacts critical skills needed in academic writing: regulation of meaning, self-efficacy and identity formation, audience awareness, critical thinking, clarity of thought, access to and comfort in the academic community, and motivation. As a result, dialogue has the power to improve writing in all areas of concern. New pedagogies to support graduate students' writing that involve a dialogic team composed of a student, supervisor, research librarian, and writing specialist engaged in a Vygotskian approach to language should be further employed and studied as a road forward.

Keywords: academic discourse; collaboration; dialogue; graduate supervision; Vygotsky