



1. Issue

- In real-life interactions, discourse output is assessed by interlocutors through their emotional, cognitive & behavioural reactions to it
- In the classroom, student discourse output receives feedback from the teacher on its lexicogrammatical/textual (de)merits

2. Research question

- Is it possible to holistically assess student discourse in terms of its linguistic-textual properties and envisageable social effects?

3. Method

3.1 Primary data

- Written offers elicited from Italian graduate EFL learners through written prompts
 - 41 texts (5,225 words) from an entry test &
 - 17 texts (2,087 words) from a end-of-course test

3.2 Secondary data

- 6 L1 English lecturers'
 - comments on the texts (their annoying vs pleasant aspects, natural vs implausible aspects, envisaged verbal & non-verbal reactions, envisaged effects on the relationships)
 - ratings of their linguistic-textual properties (e.g. recognisability of communicative purpose, formal accuracy, coherence, situational and interpersonal appropriateness)

4. Findings

4.1 Comments

- Irritating aspects: invasiveness; confusing the reader; inappropriate register; poor language, punctuation, paragraphing; irrelevant or excessive information
- Pleasant aspects: considerateness; interest in the reader; rationally motivating the offer; downplaying the cost of the offer; making room for negotiations; presenting information in a well-graded fashion; good phrasing
- Natural aspects: positive feelings towards the interlocutor; awareness of the circumstances; explaining the scenario well & presenting a credible backstory; taking care of the next steps; appropriate openings and closings
- Unnatural aspects: contradictions, repetitions, no background information, confusing combinations of concepts, lack of awareness of the situation, no interaction management, excessive punctuation marks

4.2 Immediated reactions

- Emotional: uncomfortable, offended, tolerant of the writer's mistakes
- Cognitive: cautious, suspicious, wary, critical of the writer
- Behavioural: (not) replying; (not) accepting the offer; taking time; inquiring about what the writer means

4.3 Long-term effects

- Negative: Developing a negative opinion of the writer; keep them at a distance; compromising or failing to promote the relationship
- Positive: Developing a positive opinion of the writer and sustaining the relationship
- Neutral: Continuation of communication; no effects on the relationship

4.4 General

- Good/poor comments on the texts positively correlated with their good/poor rankings.
- In their comments, the L1 lecturers held the students responsible for (not) respecting
 - the Cooperative Principle & the addressees' illocution-specific rights.
- In their ratings, the L1 lecturers identified the objective strengths and weaknesses of student discourse.

5. Conclusions and implications

- As language experts and language users, the L1 lecturers were able to assess student discourse on its accuracy and acceptability, respectively.
- Communicative adequacy appeared to depend on: reader-friendliness, display of logical reasoning, face-work skills and language proficiency (esp. phraseologies)
- So, in preparation for real-life interactions, combined feedback could be provided in the classroom on both technical aspects of student writing and the emotional-psychological impressions that this makes on the addressee
- But also, correlations need to be explored between linguistic-textual features of student discourse and its projected impact on the addressee

Selected References

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