Self Regulated Learning In Doctoral Education: A Pragmatic Analysis Of Examiners’ Reports

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An expected outcome of a PhD is that a candidate is trained to become a member of an academic community. Supervisors play the most important role in scaffolding a candidate into a community of practice. Besides the supervisors, examiners of a PhD thesis also play an important role by providing developmental experiences to the candidate. The scaffolding by the supervisors and developmental experiences provided by the examiners are usually in the form of written feedback. Both supervisor and examiner feedback form the pinnacle of a gate-keeping process which postulates self-regulated learning for doctoral candidates.

In this paper, we present our linguistic, pragmatic analysis of a set of examination reports and discuss the results in the context of self-regulated learning (SRL). SRL depends on the fundamental role of interaction both in the supervision and examination process. We would claim that interactive feedback – when the supervisor or examiner comments on the issues by offering their understanding, asking for reflection, encouraging discussion and further exploration of ideas – deserves special attention, as our study points to the importance of interpersonal aspects in the self-regulated learning process.

This study paves the way for the development of a taxonomy of good practices in providing both feedback and developmental experiences to nurture self-regulated learning among doctoral candidates.