

A Study of EFL Students' Argumentative Writing through the Lens of Activity Theory

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Abstract: *This qualitative study employs Activity Theory to investigate the role of previous activity systems in EFL students' learning of argumentative writing.*

The participants of the study were twenty eight EFL female students at Al-Zahra University in Iran who participated in this study for over a period of two semesters.

The primary data, gathered through questionnaire, audio-taped interviews, writing samples and the students' observations and interpretations of their learning over the semesters, were triangulated and in order to obtain the best possible results regarding reliability and validity the researcher employed thick description techniques.

Findings of the analyzed data revealed that students' previous activity systems played a great role in their appropriation of tools and concepts of argumentation and self-evaluation by providing the flexible building blocks for learning the new concepts presented in class, and influencing students' goal formation which itself affected the nature of their participation and appropriation.

Keywords: *Activity theory, appropriation, argumentative writing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Activity Theory is a tradition of psychological theory and an important concept in the socio-cultural theory of learning proposed by Vygotsky. This theory holds that the properties of any activity are determined by the socio-historical setting and by the goals and socio-cultural history of the participants. (Leontieva, 1981).

While most second and foreign language research focuses on the individuals and the products and processes they use in writing, the focus in Activity Theory is on the socio historical nature of learning setting. As Horner (1997) puts it, Activity Theory has its roots in the social activities of human beings and language learners are investigated as social beings whose consciousness are socially produced.

In fact by taking a sociohistoric perspective to investigating argumentative writing we can focus on what has been less emphasized in the literature, that is the nature of learning and explain why and how students develop over time as they do. As Pripior (1997) mentions, writing includes not only semiotic processes but also the sociohistoric processes leading to the present, processes that create tensions between the past, present, and future natures of literate activity and disciplinary enculturation.

So, the present study aims at looking at how EFL students' previous activity systems influence their appropriation of tools and concepts of argumentation and self-evaluation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Activity Theory

For Activity Theory, the activity system-not the individual-is the basic unit of analysis. The activity proposed by Vygotsky has three components: subject, object and cultural tools. The subject interacts with the tools on some object with some shared motive to achieve an outcome.

Engestrom (1987) developed Vygotsky's basic mediational triangle and added 3 more elements: rules (norms and values), community and division of labour.

Activity systems don't work alone. Multiple activity systems are always at work and will have varying influences on the local or focus activity system at hand.

Activity theory has attempted to "dialectically link the individual and social structure" (Engeström, 1990), and holds potential for bettering our understanding of how students learn to write in a second language classroom. Cole and Engeström (1993) pointed out two important insights of using an activity system as the basic unit of analysis. First, it forces us to consider the influence of other people along with the subject. And second, institutionalized activity systems, continuing past the lives of individuals, "gain the status of cultural practices" (p. 8) whose mediation of students' learning and development must be taken into account.

A key concept in AT is appropriation which refers to the process through which a person adopts the intellectual tools in order to employ it for certain purposes and in certain situations.

Or as Roger Säljö (2000) puts it:

Appropriation means that one acquires an intellectual tool or learns to master a particular material

Appropriation differs from internalization in the sense that it does not rest on a notion of a mental representation of an external world; it does not subordinate social and cultural aspects to cognitive processes. It, involves transformation of tools and contexts as well as agents but not necessarily without resistance. According to Smagorinsky, P., & Coppock, J.(1994) appropriation has five degrees: Lack of appropriation, appropriating a label, appropriating surface features, appropriating conceptual basis, and achieving mastery.

Using a sociohistoric approach, Coughlan and Duff (1994), argued that the same task does not produce the same results, when it is carried out by different people because of different individual perceptions of the task.

Helen Basturkmen & Marilyn Lewis (2002) focused on how students assess their own achievement in a writing course and investigated how individual learners constructed activities and their own success in the course. The data revealed learners' ideas of success were highly individual in nature. Despite following the same course, students' views of success in it varied in many ways. As (Van Lier, 2000) asserts, the writing course offered differing affordances to the students. It was also evident that teachers' perceptions of their students' success differed in several ways from their students. Leki and Carson (1997) have also shown that instructional activities are usually perceived differently by teachers and students.

MacCafferty et al (2001) applied Activity Theory, to incidental learning of second language vocabulary. They used AT as a different framework for examining and explaining the effects of embeddedness on recall.

Lund (2004) investigated the concept of appropriation. His research focused on how teachers appropriate technologies and what kind of teacher expertise emerges in technology-infused practices. He argues that the processes of appropriation are crucial in developing teachers' professional expertise in technology rich settings. Teachers appropriate technologies through their practices and by designing, orchestrating, and participating in technology-intensive activities. Their expertise

manifests itself in their ability to assist, respond to, and elicit increasingly sophisticated response from learners who populate such settings.

Grossman et al (1999) also analysed the concept of appropriation with a focus on teachers and professional development.

2.2. Argumentative Writing

Argumentative writing or genre refers to a genre of writing which involves arguments, facts, evidence, reasons, description or explanation which support the side being argued, use reference to expert authority whom the reader is apt to believe, to make the writer's position seem indisputable (Crossley and Wilson, 1979; Smalley and Hank, 1982;). It is also concerned with the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the world around us and its emphasis is on persuading someone to our point of views (Derewianka, 1990, p. 75). Because of the varying demands inherent in the genre Argumentative writing is found one of the most difficult writing genres in writing to learn. Genres such as argumentation are thought to require students to process information deeply and to construct relationships among ideas, thereby attaining increased understanding and recall of curriculum material.

Toulmin's model of argumentation (1964) contains six interrelated components for analyzing arguments, including:

Claim: the statement the arguer wishes to have accepted or to prove.

Data: evidence to support the claim.

Warrant: connects the data to the claim. This is the reasoning upon which the data relies. *Backing:* further supports the *warrant*. This is not always included or made explicit.

Qualifier: defines the importance or the extent of certainty of the claim.

Reservation (Rebuttal): may anticipate a counter-argument or prescribe circumstances that may allow for exceptions.

A number of studies have used Toulmin's model of argumentation (Connor and Lauer ;1988; Connor1996). Connor and Lauer operationalized Toulmin's model for a quantifiable, reliable analysis in order to evaluate the level of argumentative strength of the essays. In the series of studies, they found that Toulmin's model was a powerful predictor of writing quality in the sample essays. The emphasis of Toulmin's model on the diversity of purposes and tasks is what makes it relevant to today's writing research. Toulmin et al. (1979) describe analyses of arguments in the special fields of law, science, the arts, and business management, showing how warrants – shared values or premises – determine the development of an argument.

Toulmin's model has been applied in writing pedagogy for native English speakers for a number of years. The model can be found in different textbooks on writing and argumentation, the best known being Toulmin et al.'s *An Introduction to Reasoning* (1979) and Rottenberg's *Elements of Argument: A Text and Reader* (1985), which presents the model through a variety of readings. Toulmin's model also appears in two articles in the *Journal of Teaching Writing*. Karbach (1987) focuses on a need for different warrants for different argument fields. She shows how students' critical thinking skills can be challenged when they construct arguments on the same subject for different argument fields or audiences. One of her examples deals with the differing argument developments in America between "language purists" and "linguists" regarding the issue of "English only as the official language." Evidence from L1 instructional practice supports usefulness of Toulmin's model in second and foreign language writing classes. It is appropriate for second and foreign language situations since it recognizes field-invariant aspects of argument (structure and development of argument) but allows for field independent evaluations of argument. Therefore, as Karbach (1987) has shown, writing classes benefit from the Toulmin model because it encourages the development of arguments for different purposes.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were twenty-eight undergraduate female students at Al-Zahra University majoring in English literature who mostly ranged in age from 20 to 25 and had previously participated in a writing course called “Composition 1”.

They were from different cities of Iran and therefore of various cultural backgrounds. For the first semester they participated in Oral production class every Saturday from 8 am to 10 pm and in the second semester in reading journalistic materials on Sundays from 10 to 12.

It should also be mentioned that these courses were both required ones which they had to pass in order to graduate.

3.2. Instrumentation

The instruments that were used during this study consisted of:

The Connor & Lauer’s (1988) criteria to assess the soundness of arguments as proposed by Toulmin et al (1984)

The other instruments of this study consisted of the reflections that the students had to write of their own development, their samples of work all through the term, their observations of their class-related activities and their summary interpretation on their development.

Moreover, a qualitative researcher, according to Davis (1995), employs techniques such as long term participant observation, interviews, and other forms of data collection that result in descriptive data. Davis (1995) mentions that establishment of research credibility is an essential aspect of an interpretive qualitative study which is enhanced through prolonged engagement and persistent observations and triangulation by using multiple sources.

Accordingly, this study made use of some questionnaires at the beginning and end of the course for evaluation purposes, and some tape-recorded interviews with each of the students at three points during the term. In addition, the researcher made observations while students were engaged in class activities, and to have a collective reflection on the class, audio-taped conferences were held too.

3.3. Procedure

This study was conducted in two consecutive semesters. The first course being oral narration of stories (oral production) and the second one a course in reading journalistic materials.

During these two semesters the participants were acquainted with tools and concepts of argumentation and practiced argumentative writing based on Toulmin model of argumentation (1964).

For each session in the first semester, students were assigned a short story of world literature (e.g. The Nightingale and the Rose by Oscar Wild, The Lottery by Shirley Jackson, The Bet by Anton Chekhov) which they had to read before coming to the class. It was believed that these stories would stimulate discussion in the class and help students share their “voices,” see one another as equal yet different human beings. Moreover it would help them to practice the argumentation concepts learnt in class as Connor (1988) mentioned, argumentation is fostered by a context in which student -student interaction is permitted and fostered.

On the whole it can be said that, the general inside class approach all through the course was:

Discussing argumentative concepts, having some oral discussion on the assigned stories (the discussions could be about the theme and characters of the stories or the students’ feelings toward them, they could also include an analysis of how the authors have embedded their values into their written stories).

This oral discussion was followed by asking students to write an argument of about 200 words for the following session, indicating their positions toward the stories based on the Toulmin model of

argumentation. It is also worth mentioning that the students were free in choosing any element of the story on which they wanted to comment and make an argument and they had to include their work in their blogs.

In fact their blogs acted as a portfolio record that included both class activity and assessment.

It consisted of different section, in one part The students had to write reflections of their development, each section.

In the second part students had to collect their samples of on-going work and also write observations of their class-related activities.

To draw students' attention on the presence of argumentation in everyday life, out of class observations were highly emphasized, this could also help them to form connections between classroom learning and their other activities.

Moreover, the students had to write a Summary Interpretation on their development based on their observations and samples of work twice throughout the semester.

In the last section students made evaluations of their development and proposed some ways to improve both themselves and the class.

Students' blogs were also a manifestation of the argumentation concepts that they had learnt in the class as they had to write arguments for their improvement. In fact, students presented a *claim* for a grade; backed it up with *reasons* and had *evidence* for their analysis with their samples of work and observations.

The general approach of the course was the same for the second semester and the same argumentative concepts were discussed and developed, the only difference was about the subject of the in *class discussions* and the writing topics which instead of being related to stories were related to issues in the press and advertisements.

3.4. Data Analysis

This case study adopted a qualitative research methodology and for generating reliable and valid results on how students' previous activity systems influence their appropriation and how contradictions influence their learning process of argumentative writing, a Triangulation of collected data and a thick description technique was applied.

Triangular techniques in social sciences attempted to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint.

Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research (Campbell and Fiske, 1959).

Cohen (2000) defines triangulation as:

“Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspects of human behaviour.

In its' original and literal sense, triangulation is a techniques of physical measurement (p.112)”.

Another technique of data analysis used in this study was thick description. Morrison (1993) argues that thick description lends itself to accurate explanation and interpretation of events rather than relying on researchers' own interferences.

According to Deniz (1994) a thin description simply reports facts, independent of intentions or circumstances. A thick description, in contrast, gives the context of an experience, states the interactions and meanings that organize the experience, and reveals the experience as a process.

A further means to validate qualitative data, according to Chaudron (1988), is to apply an independent theory to the interpretation of such data, so the theoretical framework used in this research is Activity Theory.

Besides, due to the qualitative nature of observation, interview and the information gathered from students' blogs and their written documents, no statistical analysis was performed on the data; rather a content analysis of recurring themes in the data was conducted. That is, the researcher transcribed all the taped recorded interviews and conferences, read the questionnaires and students' observations and written works for several times and organized the data into themes which then acted as headings in the study.

Moreover, the analysis of the qualitative data, observational notes, class discussions, interviews, conferences, and students' self-evaluations as well as their blogs was an on-going process.

It should also be mentioned that all through the study, Connor & Lauer's (1988) criteria to assess the soundness of arguments as proposed by Toulmin et al (1984) was applied for evaluating the written arguments.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on activity theory principles students are influenced by the previous institutions and activity systems in which they have participated, (Engestrom 1987) and for this reason, how and how well they appropriate concepts and tools of argumentation and self-evaluation vary accordingly.

As Russell(2000) says, "all of us have carried on multiple activities in multiple systems. For instance, activity systems of family, school, friends, university etc....which have all been influential in the present performance of each person. But research shows that some of these systems have a more important role on people than others, as Paul bourn (2006) says, "Family and the school inculcate many of students' values and beliefs as they spend a large per cent of their formative and primary years in their care."

Moreover "The family is an important agent of socialization because it represents the centre of children's lives" (Macionis and Plummer, 1998) but children's upbringing and value formation is not only owing to family but also equally as a result of formal schooling and social institution.

The strong influence of the activity systems of family and school has also been noticed throughout the data in this study.

Accordingly, the two most important and influential activity systems in which students had participated previously and have had a great role on their beliefs and values were identified as home and school.

As Mana said:

Now when I think carefully about my life I see that my family and what I learnt at home affected my personality a lot and I learnt many things there and also school, yes after 7, I spent a lot of time there I think teachers, system...and in general school was also important to what I am now, this Mana with all her ideas, background...

Or Sara adds:

Home is where you learn the first things and then at school you lose some of them ...you replace others...anyhow I think both of them were important to my opinion about everything

These examples highlight the role of family and school, and also show that activity systems overlap.

The role of these previous systems on appropriation can be investigated from two different angles, the first one is the role they have in providing the opportunity for students to experience the concepts in an authentic context and consequently having the prior basic knowledge of the concepts before entering the course and secondly the role these systems play in participants' goal formation and consequently their participation and appropriation.

In order to investigate the role of the previous systems, that is family and school, on students' appropriation of the argumentative and self-evaluation concepts, these systems were carefully examined to find the presence or lack of presents of the concepts in them.

According to Cole (1996) the congruence of a learner's prior experiences with the new concepts they are learning determines the extent of their appropriation.

Moreover, what participants mentioned in the interviews, questionnaires or their daily observations about their previous systems and its comparison with their level of appropriation of these concepts suggests that there existed a direct relation between these two factors.

As Adeleh one of the students who was successful in appropriating the concepts to the 5th level of appropriation; that is mastery and could transform what she had learnt in the class to her daily life, said about her family:

When we were told we should do self-evaluation in this term, at first I didn't know what it mean, most of my classmates didn't know either and when you explained we were confused but this was not long for me, soon I said ok that's what I do about my life, I remember my mom taught me this, and said it's very good that every night you think about what you did that day...and consider good and bad points...also at school I remember my theology teacher emphasized that....so that was not strange for me, only this time I had to do it about my course...

From the example it seems that students accustomed to frequent discussions, dialogue and arguments at home and other previous systems as well as self-evaluation had a better understanding of the concept of arguments and self-evaluation and it took them less time to appropriate the new concepts.

This point is supported by Marzano's (2002) view about learning, that what students already know about a subject is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to the subject.

On the other hand there were students who were totally unfamiliar with these concepts and tools of argumentation and it took them a long time to appropriate the new forms, moreover they could only achieve the surface levels of appropriation and did not move to the fifth level. As Fataneh one of the participants who was successful at learning different components of Toulmin model separately but could not use them all together and make a comprehensive and sound argument mentioned:

We didn't and don't have reasoning and dialogue in our family that's why we always fight and can't come to an agreement... I don't remember we discussed things based on reason...it was not important in our family so having dialogue and being persuasive is so strange for me...

It seems that the degree of difficulty students felt for appropriation as a result of unfamiliarity with the concepts in their previous systems was not the same for the argumentation and self-evaluation concepts. In fact despite the confusion they felt at first for not being accustomed to self-evaluation they seemed to appropriate it sooner than the tools and concepts of argument.

As Fataneh said:

Both argumentation and self-evaluation concepts were new for me, I didn't know about them before, but I learnt self-evaluation easier...at first it was new and strange, but I learnt it soon, but argumentation concepts was not like that...

It should be mentioned that, these comments are also supported by their class performance, in other words, a thorough analysis of their assignments and performance revealed that all the participants had appropriated the concepts of self-evaluation up to the 4th level by the first semester, while they did not show the same degree of appropriation for concepts of argumentation.

Consequently based on participants' comments, and a careful analysis of students' performance through the system of classification presented by Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia's (1999) of different levels of appropriation, it seems that this point can be related to the less complicated nature of self-evaluation in comparison to tools and concepts of argumentation.

To summarize, it can be said that the experiences the students had with tools and concepts of argumentation and self-evaluation as a result of participating in the previous activity systems of

family and school, provided the flexible building blocks for learning the new concepts presented in class.

In other words the larger the distance between participants' past sociohistorical experiences and the concepts they were learning, the more difficult it was to appropriate the new concepts.

And this point highlights the importance of previous activity systems in appropriation of new concepts.

Based on the framework of Activity Theory, participation is key to appropriation. The data in this study also support this concept, as Mahnaz in one of the interviews said:

Understanding all these new concepts was really difficult at first, I was very confused...I didn't understand how I can make a good arguments with all the parts and mostly about daily arguments I didn't know what I should look for and I thought I can't find any, but as I just started and attended the classes, started doing the assignment and got involved in the process it became more clear and I learnt them soon...

This comment and the others suggest that participation enabled students to appropriate the argumentation concepts despite much confusion they had at first and underscores its key role in appropriation.

Moreover, Gillette (1999) mentions that students' participation in class practices depends on their goals. In fact if their goals match with those of the course then this entails participation. She adds that it is not primarily schooling but life goals that may influence the effort a learner makes in learning an L2 and the success he or she may enjoy as a result.

Goal directedness principle of Activity Theory supports this view. Based on this principle, "Actions are goal directed processes that must be undertaken to fulfill the object" and "the properties of any activity are determined by the goals of the participants (Leontiev, 1981), in fact "the initial motive of an activity determines the character of that activity" and as Galperin (1980) said, "different learning outcomes can be expected when learners have divergent orientations to a task."

So it can be claimed that it is the learners' goals that lead them towards different degrees of appropriation and they reach different degrees as much as their goal drives them.

Moreover, it is not the concrete realizations of activities as actions that differentiate them from each other but their objects and motives play a part in this regard. Two individuals may set about the same 'task' and engage in the same activities as seen from the outside. However, if the motives and goals of individuals for doing the task and carrying out the action differ, then the activity means different things to them and different things will be learnt (Roebuck, 2000). That is, they will not be engaged in the same 'activities' because the motives and goals underlying their behaviour are different (Platt and Brookes, 1994; Roebuck, 2000).

Similarly, Wretch (1985) maintains that "the motive that is involved in a particular activity setting specifies what is to be maximized in that setting. By maximizing one goal, one set of behaviors, and the like over others, the motive also determines what will be given up if need be in order to accomplish something else" (p.212)

Throughout the study two general goals were identified for students' participation in class:

One of obtaining a grade and in activity theory terms that of "school going activity" and the other one of "learning activity".

Setareh said:

I think learning new things is very important, even more than marks, and in this class I'm happy because I'm learning very new points every session...and we're having interesting assignments...I try to do them in the best way, not because I want to get complete mark but because I want to learn in the best way and improve my education and also my life...

On the other hand, Fatemeh said:

I participate in class discussion, I do the assignments because I want to get a good grade, it's very important to me... if I get bonus for voluntary presentation yes, I'll do it but if I'm not rewarded, then no...

These comments suggest that students who considered class practices as a requirement limited their learning effort to what they thought was necessary to pass the course or get their desirable grade, so based on that certain grade they had in mind they fossilized somewhere between the second, third or fourth degree of appropriation and never got to the fifth one as they had been able to reach their particular needs.

On the other hand, those students who viewed class practices and the course as valuable in itself made much more effort to appropriate class practices, these students went beyond the class requirements, were always ready to do voluntary work and connected class practices to their life so these learners were more likely to reach the mastery level.

Based on the framework of activity theory "each learner's social history is the key to goal formation" (Gillette 1999), that is each person's goals and values are shaped as a result of participation in different activity systems.

As it was previously mentioned, two general goals were identified for students' participation in the course activity system, one of learning and one of fulfilling another requirement as efficiently as possible.

Moreover, a thorough analysis of participants' interviews, questionnaires, blogs and handouts, suggests that the reasons for these goals can be found in the previous activity systems in which they had participated.

As Adeleh one of the students who ascribed her participation to love of learning said:

grades are not valuable for me, they can't show my real ability and value as a human being .My parents never measured my value with grades, when I got bad grades they didn't tell me we don't love you because you got a low grade. Always my mother told me you try and do your best to lean very well, whatever is the outcome it's ok, for us it's important that you try and learn something and add to your knowledge so you can improve your life not that you memorize something and forget the day after exam...

Or as Mona said:

I don't study for grades. One of my teachers at school taught me this...she somehow changed my view, in her class she didn't grade our final paper for her our trying was important and what we learnt...at first we didn't understand what she say but later she showed us how better it is when your goal is real learning not memorizing for exam and grade...

These comments highlight the role of family and school in students' perception about grades. In fact it was the parents and teachers emphasis on learning that had led participants to look for learning other than grades in the activity system of the course.

The influential role of previous systems in students' goal formation was also obvious in those students' comments who had the goal of obtaining a good grade.

As Bitia said:

Grades are important for me because I feel successful and so valuable and confident, it's always like this, everyone pays more attention to you when you are better than others, teachers love students who get better grades, parents too, I experience it so I'm sure. In our family my parents love me more than my sisters because I always have good grades, I don't make trouble... also at school it was the same, I was teacher's pet!! And so at university...

These comments suggest that for many of the participants obtaining a good grade was closely connected to notions such as success, value and even self-confidence.

In fact they thought there existed a link between obtaining a good grade and being successful and valuable, a perception which seems to be the result of participating in the systems of family and school.

Moreover, some other participants participated in the activity system of the course mainly to get good grades because they viewed marks as a doorway to future success! Success in finding a good job, continuing their studies till higher levels and even finding good partners!

So there seems to be an alignment between the values that students are exposed to in their family and those of school.

Or As Kanpol, 1998 says, "on one side there are parents who in still in their children that what is needed for a better job is an education, so they expect their children to gain high marks on exams; on the other sides are systems in school that in hidden ways make excessive competition to prepare students for the economy and for a market logic of the survival of the fittest mentality."

Besides, Mahnoosh mentioned:

I have heard that if I become the top student in 4 years I can study MA without entrance exam...that's really fantastic because I really want to study till PhD, or it's better to say I have to, because in our family most of the people are Drs, and when I was accepted in English...it was really like a failure for my parents and I, they said you should promise to continue till PhD, so I really try hard to get good grades and it's my goal to be top students...I'm sure my parents will be proud of me...

All these comments suggest that many students came to the class with the goal of getting good marks, in fact they were taught that having good grades was the only way to succeed in life; it guaranteed a well-paid job, a suitable partner, a comfortable life, and a good social status.

As Fasheh (2004) says, the way to heaven has many gates, but there seems to be only one gate to succeed in life in modern societies: the school.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study it can be said that students' appropriation of tools and concepts of argumentation and self-evaluation was mediated by their previous activity systems in two ways.

Firstly, the experiences the students had with these tools and concepts as a result of participating in the previous activity systems of family and school provided the flexible building blocks for learning the new concepts presented in class.

In other words the larger the distance between participants' past sociohistorical experiences and the concepts they were learning, the more difficult it was to appropriate the new concepts.

This point highlights the role of previous activity systems in appropriation of the new concepts.

Secondly, the previous activity systems were found to mediate students' appropriation through influencing their goal formation and participation.

In fact a thorough examination of the data revealed that learners' previous systems were crucial in determining their goals in the activity system of the course. And it is due to this difference in the previous systems that students formed divergent goals. In one case they had a tendency towards genuine learning of the concepts of argumentation and self-evaluation, and in the other, towards fulfilling a requirement in the best possible way.

Such different goals and orientations for the course affected students' nature of participation in class practices. Thus, those students who had the goal of learning activity, did not limit their participation to course requirement, but transcended that. They were students who studied for their own learning, were always ready for voluntary work and had a wider range of activities than most of their other classmates and moved to higher levels of appropriation, in that much that they used the class practices in their own life. On the other hand, students who viewed class practices as a requirement never reached the fifth level.

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