

COST IS0703

The European Research Network on Learning to Write Effectively

**Report of the Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) made by Rui A. Alves and
Teresa Limpo to the University of Staffordshire**
COST-STSM-IS0703-05579; COST-STSM-IS0703-05580

Porto, March 5 2010

Dear Dr. Denis Alamargot,

We are pleased to submit for your approval the scientific report of the STSMs that we made to visit Prof. David Galbraith, at the Staffordshire University, from the 2nd to the 10th of February 2010. The mission was successfully executed and resulted in a good fulfilment of the scientific objectives of Cost Action IS0703. Importantly, the cooperation between Porto and Staffordshire universities was settled, joint research was carried out and discussed, future experiments were planned, and joint publication will be sought.

Please find attached to this letter three other documents: i) STSM scientific report; ii) STSM host report; iii) STSM final payment request form.

Best wishes,

Rui A. Alves

Teresa Limpo

STSM Scientific Report

Aims

Prime objectives of the current STSMs were to discuss the results of a first joint experiment, to prepare future experiments and to strengthen the research cooperation between the English and Portuguese teams. These aims were largely accomplished, resulting in very successful and fruitful missions. Next, we describe the works carried out during the visit, the main results achieved and future prospects.

Works

The visit started with a meeting with Prof. Galbraith, in which the STSM work plan was discussed and updated.

A first point in the mission was the discussion of findings from the joint study carried out in Portugal. This experiment was a follow-up to a previous one carried by Alves, Branco, Limpo and Castro (2008) in which they found that writing can activate stereotypes and, simultaneously, be influenced by them. That is, participants writing about an old man were less fluent than participants writing about a teenager. Taking further these results, we planned an experiment to test whether these priming effects are mediated by empathy or self-monitoring.

Confirming the previous study, we found that participants who wrote about a stereotypic old man were less fluent than others who wrote about a counter-stereotypic character. Interestingly, this basic finding seems to be mediated by both perspective taking and self-monitoring. As hypothesized, high perspective takers and low self-monitors were more prone to priming. Teresa Limpo presented these results and they were discussed with reference to the knowledge-constituting model (Galbraith, 1996, 1999, 2009). Since the knowledge constituting model provides a good account of these priming effects, Prof. Galbraith presented a seminar on it. The dual process-view of writing considers two paths for text production: explicit organized planning, and dispositional spelling out. The first path is based on episodic system activation, and encompasses the knowledge telling and knowledge transforming processes (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). It is a retrieval process mostly driven by rhetorical goals. The second process depends on semantic system activation, operating without interference from extrinsic goals. The latter is a synthetic process that expresses a particular internal organization (i.e., disposition), which drives writing and is influenced by it.

During the mission the submission of these results to scientific conferences was discussed. An abstract was prepared and submitted to the forthcoming 12th SIG Writing (Limpo, Alves, & Galbraith, submitted). The submission of these findings to an ISI indexed journal was also discussed. New questions arising from the current results and possible ways of addressing them in new studies were discussed.

During our stay, Prof. Galbraith organised a Psychology department meeting in which the first joint experiment was presented and discussed. This was a lively session in which colleagues from health psychology, statistics, research methods, neuropsychology, and social psychology participated and shared their insights regarding implicit processes in writing.

We were fortunate that the last two days of our visit coincided with the visits of Thierry Olive and Veerle Baaijen. The opportunity was taken to carry out a joint workshop. Galbraith talked about his knowledge-constituting model; the role of working memory in writing (Galbraith, Hallam, Olive, & Le Bigot, 2008); and some text analysis tools, particularly Coh-metrix (Graesser, McNamara, Louwerse, & Cai, 2004). He ended by presenting new findings on a selective effect of expressive writing on working memory capacity. Olive presented an ongoing experiment also on expressive writing, and some new results on planning and working memory. Limpo and Alves presented their study of priming effects in writing, and described how empathy and self-monitoring seems to mediate them. Baaijen closed the workshop by presenting an interesting experiment on discovery in writing (Baaijen, Galbraith, & de Glopper, 2009).

During the visit we had a meeting with Josephine Beech, from the External Projects Coordinator of Staffordshire University. Different opportunities to foster cooperation between our universities were discussed, and some of them were initiated.

The mission ended with a joint review of the visit. Some final issues about next steps and possibilities for cooperation within COST were discussed.

Results

Important results within the COST network were achieved during the exchange visit. The expertise of Prof. Galbraith on the role of implicit processes in writing was an important contribution to the analysis and discussion of the Portuguese study. Two outcomes of several scientific discussions were: the submission of this work to the 12th SIG Writing conference, and the planning of new experiments to continue the study of priming effects on writing. Next, we present an outline of them.

Experiment 1. This first experiment aims to compare the active self-account (Wheeler, DeMarree, & Petty, 2007) and the knowledge-constituting model (Galbraith, 2009) as possible explanations of the proneness of low self-monitors to priming effects on writing. To do this, we will test whether making an outline before writing a text impacts on priming effects. The outline task should reduce the dispositional spelling out of low self-monitors during text production. If, as the knowledge-constituting model claims, priming effects depend on the extent to which text is produced by dispositional spelling out, then making a plan before writing should eliminate priming effects of low self-monitors. By contrast, if the outline does not eliminate them, the active self-account will be the more parsimonious explanation.

Experiment 2. In conjunction with the already conducted experiment, this second one will test whether writing is a special context for priming effects or not. Are these effects specific to writing or do they also occur while performing other verbal or non-verbal tasks? To answer this question, priming effects on writing will be compared with priming effects on reading, and also while performing non-language tasks.

Future collaboration

Cooperation between the two parties has started with this mission, and future joint research has already been delineated. The visit was also an opportunity to discuss several possibilities for student and staff mobility. Besides the channels within the

COST network, an Erasmus agreement was established encouraging scientific and academic cooperation between Staffordshire and Porto Universities.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Prof. David Galbraith for the insightful discussions we had during the visit, and for his gentle and kindly welcome.

References

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STSM Host Report

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10 March, 2010

Dear Dr. Denis Alamargot,

I hereby confirm that the STSM scientific report presented by Rui A. Alves and Teresa Limpo is accurate. The mission's aims were successfully achieved and the work plan for the visit was fully accomplished. I would like to thank Rui and Teresa for an extremely stimulating visit, and look forward to the future collaborations that the visit has enabled us to develop.

Best wishes,



David Galbraith
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