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Vierailuluento: pe 18.1.2019 klo 9.00 (Lyhty, Seminaarinmäki, Jyväskylän yliopisto)

*Going deep, reaching far – Facing methodological challenges of finding sustainable solutions to socially relevant problems of text production*

If language matters, the text production does so, too. The shift from an industrial to an information society has increased the importance of writing and text production in education, in everyday life, and in more and more professions related to fields such as economics and politics, science and technology, culture and media. Through writing, we create, store, and communicate knowledge, build up social networks, develop projects, inform colleagues and customers, and generate the basis for decisions. The quality of the products of all these processes is often decisive for social participation and resonance, opportunities in the labor market, and professional success.

Nevertheless, many people experience writing and text production as a painful duty or a tedious routine. Beginners as well as experienced writing professionals have to fight in order to find the right words and sentences, they struggle to find the most convincing form and content, and they complain of writing problems or even blocks. Obviously text production places demands on semiotic and linguistic, intellectual and motivational capacities in quite different ways from speaking, which usually seems much more manageable. This gap between the importance of writing and people's competence raises the questions of how text production can be conceptualized, taught, and learned – and, above all, what writing and text production are in terms of human activities.

In my presentation, I use the case of collaborative professional text production to discuss the concept of linguistic practice from both theoretical and practical perspectives. By drawing on large corpora of real-life data and applying the multi-method approach of progression analysis, practices are identified that allow for flexible planning in the dynamic system of text production. Findings show that key features of the text production practices under investigation, as well as of the writing phases they dominate, scale up. This means that the patterns found in both practices and phases recur in similar forms throughout the various levels and time frames of text production. They are manifested during the split seconds it takes to make stylistic decisions as well as over the days, weeks and months of organizational document cycling. This understanding of scalability reaches far beyond former concepts of planning in text production research.

In conclusion, it appears text production research conducted in real-life contexts sharpens theoretical approaches to linguistic practices on one hand, and contributes to sustainably solving practical problems on the other.