Chapter 3: Traditions in genre pedagogy

3.1 Introduction

As we have noted in the previous chapter, there are various interpretations of what constitutes a genre approach to the teaching of (academic) writing. Genre-based pedagogy has been conceived of in distinct ways by researchers in different scholarly traditions, and in different parts of the world, *viz.* English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics following the Hallidayan tradition (also known as the Sydney school), and North American New Rhetoric Studies. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss each of these schools in terms of similarities and differences regarding their target learners, theoretical foundations, pedagogy, terminology, and genre analysis procedures.

3.2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

The general focus of the ESP movement has been to develop teaching procedures appropriate to learners whose main objective is learning English for a purpose other than just learning the language system. This purpose may be educational or professional (Dudley-Evans 2000:3). Researchers in ESP are interested in genre as a tool for understanding and teaching the kinds of writing required of additional language speakers of English in these contexts. The ability to function competently in a range of written genres is a central concern for additional language learners, as it can determine their access to career opportunities, positive identities, and life choices (Hyland 2004:43).

3.2.1 Target group

ESP applications have been mostly concerned with the teaching of international (additional language) students at English-medium universities in Britain and abroad. The focus has been on "demystifying" the use of English in academic contexts and providing students with the language resources and skills that may help them to gain access to English language academic discourse communities (Paltridge 2001:16).

3.2.2 Theoretical underpinnings

It is difficult to identify ESP with a particular linguistic or pedagogical tradition, since the movement claims to be non-theory-centred, but pragmatic. In fact, ESP never intended to develop an elaborate theory based on a theory of learning. Swales (1988:xvii) says of ESP practitioners that they "distrust theories that do not quite work out in the litmus-paper realities of classrooms".

However, no set of procedures for teaching language can exist separate from a view of language and how learners learn that language. According to Dudley-Evans (2000) there are two possibilities of how a theory of genre has developed within ESP:

1. As a result of their mutual focus on learner and learning needs, language functionality, authenticity, etc., ESP became associated with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).
2. In the same way as the teaching procedures of ESP are linked to a view of language and learning, all ESP activity has to be linked to a view of text.

Dudley-Evans (2000:4) regards the latter to be the more productive of the two, and mentions the following possible influences:

- **Register analysis**, associated with the identification of key grammatical elements of scientific communication;
- **Rhetorical analysis**, associated with Lackstrom, Selinker and Trimble (1972), and Trimble (1985);
- The **Functional/notional approach** associated with textbooks;
- **Genre analysis**, which became the dominant approach in ESP through the work of Swales (1981; 1990) and Bhatia (1993a).

The above-mentioned two "foci" or "tendencies" in ESP have developed further over the past 30 years as a result of different influences. The first tendency (a focus on learners and learner needs), which developed under the influence of the sociology of science, has been a rather detailed analysis of the concept of discourse community and of actual discourse communities in practice. John Swales has been the leading actor in this trend. Initially, genre analysis in the Swalesean tradition seemed to be a fairly rigid and prescriptive text-based approach. However, proponents of ESP realized that text

analysis attempting only to establish a set of moves for a given genre or part-genre is insufficient. The move analysis needs to be supplemented by an analysis of sociological features of the context within which the text is used and of the discourse community that will read and judge the text (Dudley-Evans 2002:235). Between 1981 and 1990 Swales moved from the initial moves and steps analysis, towards the following description of the close relationship between discourse communities and their genres:

> Discourse communities are sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals. One of the characteristics that established members of these discourse communities possess is familiarity with the particular genres that are used in the communicative furtherance of those sets of goals. In consequence, genres are the properties of discourse communities (Swales 1990:9).

More recently, he modified this emphasis on communicative purpose as a defining feature of genre, and now suggests that genre may rather be seen as a "metaphorical endeavour" that can be more adequately characterized by the following metaphors, which offer a multifaceted view of genre (Swales 2004:61):

- **Genres are frames for action:** guiding principles for achieving purposes using language
- **Genres are language standards:** expected conventions of layout and language
- **Genres are prototypes:** instances of a genre are more or less similar to "core" exemplars
- **Genres are speech acts:** the conventional actions a genre is intended to perform

The second tendency within ESP (a focus on texts) has been the detailed analysis of specific features of language as used in particular genres, such as hedging, reporting verbs, verbs with inanimate subjects, boosters, differences in epistemic modality between genres and between different disciplines, and integral *vs.* non-integral citation structures. Although Ken Hyland has never officially aligned himself with any of the three genre schools, he has been widely credited for initiating and steering a function-oriented, text-based approach to genre analysis. It should, however, be stressed that although micro-level analyses of the Hylandian kind may remind of the structuralist/behaviourist approach in applied linguistics, and current-traditional approaches in language teaching, his approach to teaching and research never occurs without reference to purpose and function, which is also a defining characteristic of ESP. It is then perhaps no surprise that Hyland (2004:43) sees the theoretical framework

of the ESP genre school as eclectic (drawing from both Systemic Functional and New Rhetoric perspectives), and therefore difficult to separate from other theoretical strands. He in fact makes the following observation: "[L]ike the New Rhetoric, ESP employs notions of dialogism and contextual situatedness, but it also draws on Systemic Functional principles of pedagogy" (Hyland 2004:44).

3.2.3 Genre pedagogy

Initially, descriptions of genres served primarily as discourse models for ESP writing instructors, but did not provide them with detailed instructional methodologies for presenting this content in the classroom (Hyon 1996:702). However, more recently an increased prominence of genre-based approaches to the teaching of academic and professional writing has become a salient feature of ESP (Dudley-Evans 2002:225). The research has fed into the design of classroom activities. For instance, John Flowerdew (1993) developed classroom activities to raise foreign language students' awareness of new genres in English for professional communication, and Bhatia (1993a) developed materials for business and technology students. According to Hyon (1996:703) these materials have provided valuable insights for students into the ways of structuring these genres. Since the 1990s a number of publications with activities and classroom exercises to support genre approaches have seen the light. Two of the most widely cited works are Swales and Feak's *Academic writing for graduate students* (1994), of which a revised and updated edition was published in 2004, and Weissberg and Buker's (1990) *Writing up research: experimental report writing for students of English*, which is still highly relevant, especially for the natural sciences.

3.2.4 Genre terminology

ESP genre terminology derives from the writing needs of particular academic and professional groups, and teachers as well as researchers look to the naming practices of these groups. The approach is ethnographic, in that the point of departure is the a priori categories of the discourse community, and not those of the researcher.

Swales (1998:20) describes the relationship between communities, their genres and their naming practices as follows:

> Discourse communities evolve their own conventions and traditions for such diverse verbal activities as running meetings, producing reports, and publicizing their activities. These recurrent classes of communicative events are the genres that orchestrate verbal life.

Examples of the **academic** genres that have been identified and explored by teachers for use in ESP classrooms are *research articles*, *conference abstracts*, *book reviews*, *grant proposals*, *undergraduate essays*, *PhD theses*, *textbooks* and *reprint requests*. Examples of **professional** genres are *direct mail letters*, *business faxes*, *engineering reports*, *legal cases and briefs*, *e-mail memos*, *company annual reports*, *charity donation requests (fund-raising letters)* and *letters of recommendation*.

Although the basic level of organization for genres within ESP is that of the full text, in recent years some proponents have added higher- and lower-level terms to the metalanguage. Swales (1990:61) suggests an additional higher-level tier or layer in the taxonomy, *viz.* **pre-genres**, which are "multigeneric generalizations". One example is the *letter* (which may be realized in, for instance the *e-mail memo* and *the letter of application*). Grabe (2002) uses the term **macro-genre** for the two main classes under which all genres can be subsumed, *viz.* **expository** and **narrative** genres. Martin (2002:270; 274) situates his view within the cognitive theory of family resemblances, and distinguishes **families** or **galaxies** of meaning, such as *the service encounter family*, *the appointment family*, *the interviewing family*, and *control genres*. Bhatia (2002a:280) uses the term **genre colonies** when referring to *reporting genres*, *letter genres* and *promotional genres*. Furthermore, the terms **genre sets** or **genre systems** have been coined to refer to genres that cluster together as parts of broader social practices, and that are often sequenced in a particular way. For example, when seeking employment a person will search newspapers and the Web for *job advertisements*. Before applying for a job, the prospective applicant will first search *company profiles* on the Web, or perhaps *annual reports*. When he/she has decided that it may be a good prospect, a *curriculum vitae* is written or updated and attached to a *letter of application*. If the person is shortlisted, he/she is invited to a *job interview*. The successful candidate receives a *job offer*, upon which he/she either writes a *letter of acceptance* or *a letter of rejection*.

At the level below the basic level (the genre level), Swales and Lindemann (2002:106) distinguish **part-genres** or **sub-genres.** This category is what the name says: part of a real-world genre. An example of a sub-genre with wide significance in the academic world and in graduate education is the *literature review*. Much of the work done within the framework of ESP has centred upon the discourse structures of such subparts of genres. Swales (1981), for example, has focused on *article introductions*, and Dudley-Evans has done substantial research on the *discussion* and *introduction* sections of MSc dissertations (1986).

The majority of ESP genre scholars make a distinction between **genre** and **text type**. Text types "represent groupings of texts that are similar in their linguistic form, irrespective of genre" (Biber 1988:170). Examples are *exposition*, *narration*, *discussion* and *description*. Whereas genre is defined in terms of external criteria, text type is defined in terms of mostly linguistic criteria. The ESP notion of text type largely coincides with the **rhetorical modes** of North American composition studies of the 1950s and 1960s, and the Current-traditional paradigm in academic writing. Rhetorical modes include, for instance, *illustration*, *exemplification*, *comparison*, *contrast*, *partition*, *classification*, and *causal analysis* (Johns 2002a:6). This classification of text types seems to go back to the much older tradition of **modes of discourse** in the rhetoric studies of the eighteenth century, which became formalized in the 19th century (compare Grabe 2002:252). More recent rhetorical studies present similar categorizations of rhetorical types. Tribble (1996), for instance, *lists expositions*, *examples*, *processes*, *definitions*, *cause and effect*, *compare and contrast*, *division and classification*, *description*, *narration*, *argumentation* and *persuasion* as commonly taught text types. Bazerman (1998:24) describes these entities as **patterns of semantic organization** that dominate passages of text longer than a sentence, and Bloor (1998) describes them as **language styles**. Others, such as Kiniry and Rose (1993), describe *defining*, *summarizing*, *classifying* and *comparing*, which writers use across genres in different academic disciplines, as **critical reading and writing strategies**.

In essence all these classification schemes merely refer to functional notions in academic language usage (compare Jordan 1997, who calls this level of organization **rhetorical-functional**).

Hoey (1983) and Crombie (1985) suggest that there is an intermediate level of organization between genre and text type, which they refer to as **constituent structures** (Paltridge 2002a:77-78). Hoey (1983) distinguishes the following three structures:

- problem-solution (*advertisements*, *scientific reports*, *short stories*, *novels*);
- general-particular (*poems*, *novels*, *scientific texts*);
- matching-contrast (*poems*, *letters to the editor*);

to which Crombie (1985) adds

- topic-restriction-illustration (*advertisements*, *news reports*).

Grabe (2002:252) criticizes taxonomies of genre and text type by saying that they have been "conventionalized as a generic instructional format with unrealistic models that artificially highlight each mode (as well as patterns of arrangement such as comparison and contrast, cause and effect, classification, definition, and so on)".

The first serious attempt to standardize genre terminology in ESP that departs from an empirically based model probably came from Bhatia (2002a), who supports the teaching of genre, but criticizes "approaches that do not have any grounded description". Yet, in line with mainstream ESP thinking, he expresses the opinion that genre-based research should draw its strength more from application, rather than from theory, whether it is aimed at school, university or professional ESP-level application (Bhatia 2002:282).

On the basis of his profound experience in using a genre approach in teaching, Bhatia (2002a:280-282) proposes a three-tier hierarchy, comprising (from top to bottom):

- **Generic values** are independent of any grounded realities of social context. Examples are *narration*[2], *description*, *explanation*, *evaluation* and *instruction*.

[2] Narration and narrative genres are different in terms of theory, practice and application. **Narration** is a functional value that will be instantiated by a particular lexicogrammatic realization, depending on the genre. However, it is independent from a specifically defined rhetorical context. Narration may, for instance, also occur in non-narrative genres, e.g. in *persuasive genres*, *recounts*, etc. **Narrative genres**, on the other hand, constitute a colony comprising specific genres, such as *short stories*, *novels*, *epic poems*, etc.

Generic values are realized through lexicogrammatical choices, which in turn depend upon the nature of the specific genre of which it is a part.

- **Genre colonies** are clusters of genres rather loosely grounded in broad rhetorical contexts, and are identified on the basis of flexible and fluid overlapping of generic boundaries. Examples are *promotional genres*, *reporting genres*, *letter genres* and *expository genres*.
- **Individual genres** are typically grounded in sociorhetorical contexts. Examples are *book blurbs*, *book reviews*, *advertisements*, *sales letters* and *job applications*.

Bhatia (2002) sees two distinct applications of this hierarchy in language teaching, one at school level (associated with the Australian genre tradition), and the other at university and professional level (associated with ESP). The first one has a clear focus on the generality of genres, indicated by a downward movement from generic value to genre colony. The second one has a much narrower focus on the specificity of genres, indicated by an upward movement from individual genres toward genre colonies.

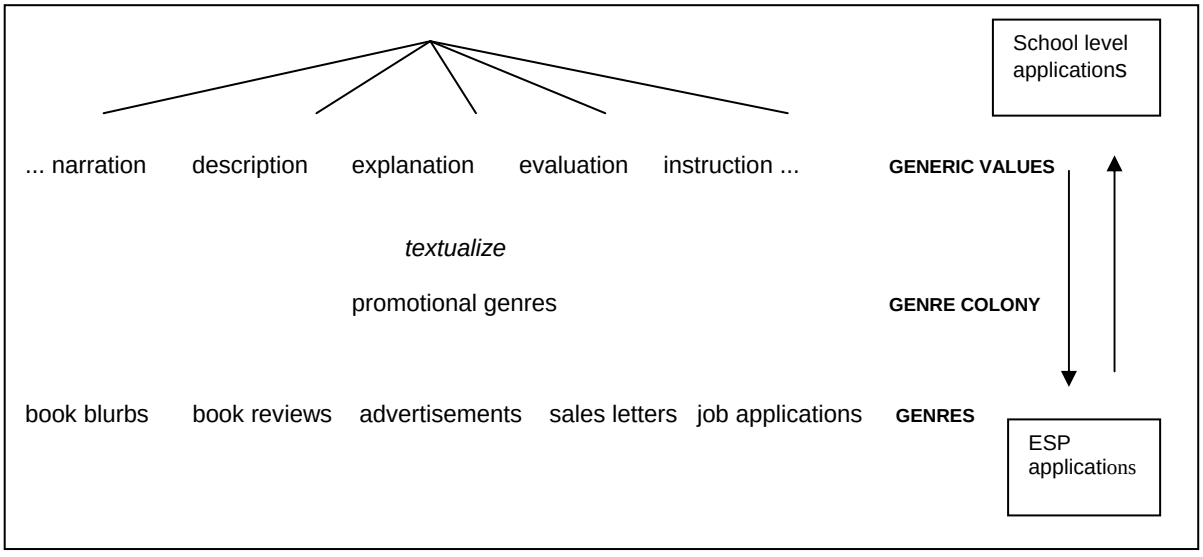

Figure 3.1 Bhatia's (2002a) genre hierarchy

According to Bhatia (2002a:283) the two applications have developed along these lines for good reasons. School-level writing tasks are often difficult to contextualize too narrowly, as the learners have a limited experience of the world and a limited awareness of the contexts in which language is likely to be used. It is also difficult to define the actual needs of the learners at that stage of their sociocognitive development. At the

ESP level, however, learners are more likely to have the discipline-specific and sociocultural knowledge associated with narrowly defined professional and academic contexts. They may also have specific needs in terms of effectiveness and pragmatic success of the intended communication.

Bruce (2008) proposes a distinction which coincides with that of Bhatia, for which he uses the terms **cognitive genre** and **social genre**. The choice between these foci for a genre-based syllabus relates to the level of the writers and the context of the course:

> If the course is pre-sessional and interdisciplinary, and the discourse competence level of the writers is relatively low, it is proposed that cognitive genres should be the central focus and should provide the basis for syllabus units of such a course. On the other hand, if the class is homogenous – containing writers all studying in the discipline – the discoursal focus of the course may involve both social and cognitive genres of the particular field or subject area of the writers (Bruce 2008:115-116).

In his view higher-level, such as tertiary-level, interdisciplinary writing classes also need to focus on both social and cognitive genre knowledge.

3.2.5 Genre analysis

Genre analysis, as conceived by Swales (1990) and elaborated on by Bhatia (1993), is based on three key and interlocking elements: the concepts of discourse community, genre, and language and learning task, driven by communicative purpose. Traditional genre analyses focused sharply on identifying a series of moves that make up the genre. Each move coincides with a distinct communicative act that is intended to serve a particular communicative purpose. Moves are often subdivided into a number of steps.

A fairly recent example is Yakhontova's (2002) study of conference abstracts in applied linguistics, as represented in table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 Move analysis of conference abstracts (Yakhontova 2002)

Move structure	Rhetorical strategies (steps) for realizing the move
Move 1: Outlining the research field	a. Referring to established knowledge b. Referring to previous research c. Asserting the importance of the area
Move 2: Justifying the research study	a. Indicating a gap in the previous research b. Making a counterclaim c. Raising a question about the previous research
Move 3: Introducing the paper to be presented	a. Stating the purpose of the paper (aims) b. Stating the focus of the paper (content)
Move 4: Summarizing the paper	a. Giving an overview of the whole paper b. Giving an overview of its parts in sequence
Move 5: Highlighting outcomes	a. Reviewing the most important results of the study b. Stating the implications or applications of the results

In recent years the scope of genre analysis has become broadened to include a more dynamic notion of genre in which "members of the discourse community (along with their physical situation) now become a primary focus of the analysis, equal to if not more important than the text" (Flowerdew & Peacock 2001:16). In both Britain and Australia research and pedagogy has shifted away from detached product-centred analyses of genres to research-centred analyses which provide a much richer account of the contexts in which the genres occur. In other words the process of genre-analysis has become a more critical and ethnographically informed account of the contexts in which writers (students in particular) are writing. This has also resulted in research-based evidence of the disciplinary variation of genres and a shift away from the view of academic discourse as homogeneous and monolithic (Jones 2004:257). This, in turn, has strengthened the role of linguistic theory, particularly the role of SFL in genre analysis. Flowerdew (2002:91) describes the approach as "grounded in the linguistic, but with a theoretically and ethnographically informed account of context and discourse communities".

3.2.6 Main advantages of the ESP approach

ESP **genre analyses** are known for the detailed information they provide about lexical and grammatical regularities: Bhatia (1993b), for instance, shows that legal documents are characterized by a high frequency of complex prepositional phrases, and Hyland and

Hyland (2001) emphasize the high frequency of interpersonal strategies in teachers' feedback comments on L2 essays.

One of the main advantages of ESP **genre teaching** is its efficiency in identifying the texts learners will need to write in a particular context (compare Hyland 2004:46) and the rationale it provides for sequencing and grouping texts. Furthermore, ESP has a systematic way of describing the typical features of key genres that students can draw on for their own communicative purposes in their professional or academic lives. ESP type curricula also provide, first, a way of seeing how genres are interrelated in real life and, second, an authentic context for developing skills in a range of spoken and written genres. Furthermore, they focus on an understanding of the roles and purposes of writers and readers.

3.3 The Australian genre movement (Sydney school)

The Sydney school emerged from linguists and teachers working to create a genre-based pedagogy consistent with Systemic Functional Linguistics, developed in particular by Halliday (1978), Martin (1992), Matthiessen (1995), Halliday and Mathiessen (2004), and a number of educational linguists (Christie 1999:759). In this view, language is a system of lexical and grammatical choices by which writers can communicate certain functions. The principles of SFL are combined with the Vygotskyan notion of scaffolding.

3.3.1 Theoretical underpinnings

This approach views texts as being connected to particular contexts. Two levels are of importance, *viz.* register and genre. When people create a text they make choices in register, along the dimensions of field (type of activity), tenor (relationships between participants) and mode (channel of communication) (Christie 1999:759-760). At the level of genre, linguistic choices are influenced by the writer's social purpose in using language, in other words what he/she sets out to do.

3.3.2 Domains of application

The Sydney school initially applied genre theory and research to pedagogy in the public school system, working with disadvantaged students and additional language students, and in adult migrant education (Johns 2002a:5). They have recently also applied their pedagogy to English-in-the-workplace programmes and to ESL in university settings (Paltridge 2001:12).

3.3.3 Genre pedagogy

In line with their theoretical underpinnings, genre is taught at a general, rather than a specific level. The Sydney school developed a curriculum to teach learners the structure and linguistic patternings that occur in important school genres, *viz.* the *recount*, *procedure*, *narrative*, *description* and *report* (Devitt 1996:608). Some teachers have also included *exposition*, *discussion* and *argument* (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks & Yallop 2000). For pedagogical purposes, the Sydney school proposes a model of how language works to build the genres associated with school success, and to enable teachers to guide their students in learning them. This tradition has developed an instructional framework known as the Teaching Learning Cycle (LERN), initially comprising three phases: (1) modeling, (2) joint construction of text, and (3) independent construction of text (compare Hyon 1996:705; Cope & Kalantzis 1993:11), as exemplified by Figure 3.2:

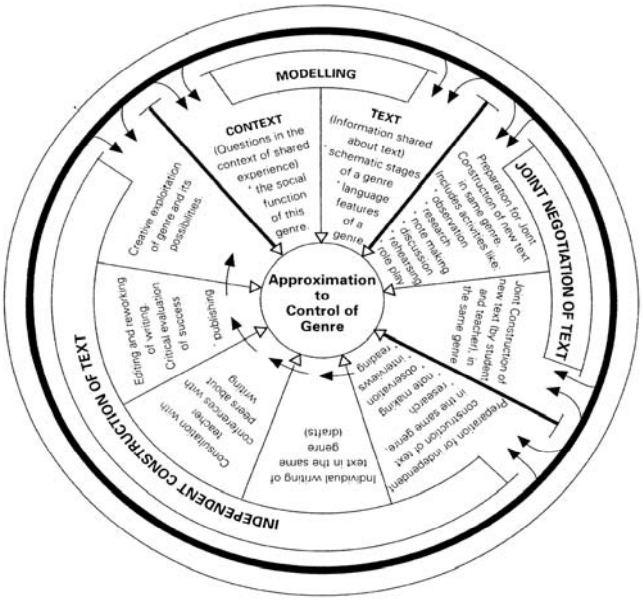

Figure 3.2 The Teaching Learning Cycle (Cope & Kalantzis 1993:11)

A later version comprised four phases, *viz.* (1) Building knowledge of the field (cultural context, shared experience, control of relevant vocabulary, grammatical patterns), (2) Modeling of text (cultural context, social function, schematic structure, linguistic features, using spoken language to focus on written text), (3) Joint negotiation of text (schematic structures, linguistic features, knowledge of the field), and (4) Independent construction of text (schematic structures, linguistic features, knowledge of the field) (Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan, & Gerot 1992:17).

Although the structure of the model has remained essentially unchanged since its introduction in the 1970s, a number of changes have occurred regarding the interpretation and implementation of the stages in the cycle. In addition to the sociocultural emphasis of the model, a critical dimension has been added. The modeling stage, for instance, has become known as the **deconstruction** stage, comprising "a critical analysis of models of the genre under focus" (Ellis 2004:211). However, in following Bernstein (1971; 1975; 1996) Ellis regards the most prominent "pedagogical renovation[s]" to be the introduction of "waves of weak and strong framing and classification" as appropriate to different stages of the learning cycle. According to Ellis (2004:212-213) **framing** refers to the degree of control the teacher and learner have over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship. **Weak framing** means that there are more options available to the learners during learning and **strong framing** means fewer options (more control) are available. **Classification** refers to the degree of boundary maintenance between contents. When framing weakens, students exercise more control, and when framing strengthens, the teacher is more in control. Similarly, with strong classification, the boundaries of the pedagogic discourse are strongly controlled, while weak classification would allow other discourses to enter into the substantive discourse.

Within the genre-based teaching cycle both **double framing** and **double classification** occur. These terms refer to the use of both weak and strong framing and weak and strong classification if deemed appropriate by the participants. If students demonstrate good control of the genre they need to master, then the framing and classification can be weakened. If they require more guidance, then the framing and classification can be

strengthened. Table 3.2 illustrates the waves of weak and strong classification in the genre pedagogy of the Australian school:

Table 3.2 The double classification and framing potential of genre-based pedagogy in the Australian tradition

Stage of the model	The nature of framing and classification at each stage
Deconstruction/ modeling	• Weak framing and classification occurs as teachers find ways of starting where students are at in order to open up the field and context of the genre. • Framing and classification values strengthen when a model text is introduced.
Joint construction	• Weak framing and classification occur as students open up a new field. • Framing and classification values strengthen when teacher guides the students into organizing the material. • Framing values split according to field (content offered by students) and genre (structure guided by teacher).
Individual construction	• Weak framing and classification occur as students open up a new field. • Weak framing but relatively strong classification occur, since students are aiming for a specific genre as they write a text on their own.

In other words the application of the cycle has become more pragmatic, and less focused on rigid application of a method.

3.3.4 Genre terminology

The scholars and teachers working in the Australian tradition tend to characterize genres in terms of broad rhetorical patterns. Although the naming of the patterns is based on current-traditional nomenclature, the patterns themselves have not been identified on an *a priori* basis. They are based on analysis of written work undertaken by theorists such as Martin (1989), Christie (1991) and Rothery (1996). According to these scholars their research has shown that different types of texts (e.g. *narratives*, *recounts*, *arguments*, *expositions*, *reports*, *procedures*, *explanations* and *descriptions*) are distinguished by distinctive patterns of vocabulary, grammar and cohesion. These patterns structure texts into stages, and in turn, each stage supports the purpose of the genre. Proponents of this school do not use the terms **text type** or **rhetorical mode**. They prefer the generic term **genre**, or the more specific terms **elemental genre**, **educational genre** or **curriculum**

genre to refer to texts that are similar in terms of discourse structure and internal linguistic criteria, rather than as discrete document types. For more complex genres such as *newspaper editorials*, *dissertations*, *laboratory reports*, etc., they sometimes use the term **macrogenre** (compare Hyland 2004:28). A macrogenre, such as a *newspaper editorial*, may be composed of several elemental genres, such as an *exposition*, a *discussion*, and a *rebuttal*.

Table 3.3 below is a summary of Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks & Yallop's (2000) "core educational genres" (elemental genres), showing their social purpose and possible "social locations" (macrogenres):

Table 3.3 Examples of important educational (elemental) genres, their main purposes and the (macro)genres of which they form part

Genre	Social purpose	Social location (macrogenre)
Recount	To reconstruct past experiences by retelling events in original sequence	Personal letters, police reports, insurance claims, incident reports
Procedure	To show how something is done	Instruction manuals, science reports, cookbooks, DIY books
Narrative	To entertain and instruct via reflection on experience	Novels, short stories
Description	To give an account of imagined or factual events, or of objects in real life	Travel brochures, novels product details
Report	To present factual information, usually by classifying things and then describing their characteristics	Brochures, government and business reports
Explanation	To give reasons for why a thesis has been proposed	News reports, textbooks
Exposition	To argue a case	Editorials, essays, commentaries

The genres are arranged from more simple and concrete to more complex and abstract. *Expositions* and *explanations*, for example, contain more complex forms and are therefore considered to be more demanding to write than *recounts* and *procedures*. Procedures, for instance, comprise of a series of steps that shows how to achieve a goal, and are typically based on simple imperative clauses using familiar action verbs and everyday objects. *Explanations*, on the other hand, typically require students to use sequential, causal and conditional conjunctions (compare Hyland 2004:29).

3.3.5 Genre analysis

The genre analysis done by the Australian school entails identifying the purposes of communication, the typical structures and linguistic features of each elemental genre that features prominently in the school curriculum, and the discourse structure (or stages) that each genre (or communicative act) requires.

From outside the strict boundaries of the Australian school, genre pedagogues working mainly in tertiary contexts have identified more of these curriculum genres (compare Grabe 2002), without necessarily drawing up inventories of their discourse and linguistic structures. *Evaluation*, *summary*, *hortation*, *recommendation*, *prediction* and *compare and contrast*, are mentioned by Paltridge (2002a:81) in reporting on Moore and Morton's (1998) study on genres at two Australian universities. Grabe (2002:255) refers to the educational psychologist Mosenthal, and adds patternings such as *classification*, *time sequence*, *cause and effect*, *problem-solution*, and *conditional* as examples of curriculum genres.

3.3.6 Main advantages of the Australian approach

According to Christie (1999:762) genre-based language teaching for second language students in Australia has been successful for reasons such as the following: First, it offers a principled way to identify and focus upon different types of English texts, providing a framework in which to learn features of grammar and discourse. Second, it offers students a sense of the generic models that are regularly revisited in an English-speaking culture, as well as the capacity for initiating students into ways of making meaning that are valued in such communities. Third, they form a potential basis for reflecting on and critiquing the ways in which knowledge and information are organized and constructed in the English language.

3.4 The New Rhetoric movement

The rhetorical perspective on genre made progress in the mid 1990s through three scholarly books, *viz.* Freedman and Medway's collections *Genre and the new rhetoric* (1994a) and *Learning and teaching genre* (1994b), as well as Berkenkotter and Huckin's

Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: cognition/culture/power (1995). As indicated in chapter 2, the roots of the rhetorical movement reach back to the work of Aristotle. However, the most valuable contribution of the later rhetoricians was their anti-taxonomist approach, and their emphasis on genre as a means of social action within a wider sociorhetorical context. Devitt (1996:607) emphasizes that action receives precedence over form in the New Rhetoric.

3.4.1 Theoretical underpinnings

The New Rhetoric perspective on genre is not informed by linguistic theory. Rather, the New Rhetoricians draw on postmodern and literary theories (Bakhtin 1986), North American research into L1 rhetoric and composition (Freedman and Medway 1994a), and later Activity Theory (Russell 1997), of which the main tenet, according to Johns (2008:241), is that the cognitive cannot be separated from the social.

The New Rhetoricians are primarily interested in how contextual factors and institutional power relations may influence the practitioners of genres – to such an extent that their ways of thinking are influenced. In turn, genres may be challenged and reshaped to fit the needs of their users. From this perspective genres are ideological in nature. Coe (2002:198-200) identifies and discusses three important principles on which the New Rhetoric view is based:

1. Genres embody socially established strategies for achieving purposes in rhetorical situations.
2. Genres are not just text types: they imply/invoke/create/(re)construct situations (and contexts), communities, writers and readers (that is, subject positions).
3. Understanding genre will help students become versatile writers, able to adapt to the wide variety of writing tasks they are likely to encounter in their lives.

For the New Rhetoricians, then, understanding genres involves not only describing their lexicogrammatical forms and rhetorical patterns, but also investigating their social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Hyland (2004:36) summarizes the contribution of this movement in his observation that "through these contexts, we can understand the circumstances in which creativity is employed in writing and how meanings are negotiated". Textual regularities are not ignored, but they are regarded as evidence of

how people respond to routine situations in ways that differ by culture and by community.

The New Rhetoric has theorized and researched much about contexts and ideologies. A central topic is the socially constructed power relationships between texts, their writers and students who are learning about and are potentially oppressed by them. Regarding research methodology, the New Rhetoric movement is characterized by the use of ethnographic methods of data collection (participant observation, interviews and document collection) and analysis, and by "thick" descriptions of academic and professional contexts surrounding genres as well as school genres (including literary genres). Research publications of the New Rhetoric focus primarily on the historical evolution of genres (Bazerman 1997), the social processes involved in constructing important genres for a specific, powerful audience (Myers 1985), the study of genres in the workplace (Van Nostrand 1994) and contrastive studies of the attribution and uses of power within genres (Scollon 1997). Studies on genre in the workplace include sites such as tax accountants' offices, high technology companies, social work agencies, central banks, and industry (Paré 1991).

3.4.2 Domains of application

North American New Rhetoric studies have been geared toward a more academic audience than has ESP. The main audience comprises first language university students and novice professionals, rather than additional language learners.

3.4.3 Genre pedagogy

In general, the New Rhetoricians have expressed reservations as to whether genres can and should be taught. Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995:11-13) argue that what we know about genre and appropriate communicative behaviour results from our participation in the activities of our ordinary and professional lives, rather than being explicitly taught. They see genres as too complex and varied to be taken from their original rhetorical situations to be taught in the classroom.

The New Rhetoric assumes that genres can only be taught if they are static, as it would make no sense to teach flexible entities that are perpetually subject to change and reshaping by individual users. Therefore, New Rhetoric pedagogues do not provide students with explicit frameworks for learning the language features and functions of academic and professional genres (compare Freedman & Medway 1994a:10; Hyon 1996:703). A second reason why many New Rhetoric theorists reject the possibility of teaching written genres is that the classroom is seen to represent an inauthentic context for acquiring an understanding of writing. Like Social Learning theorists, New Rhetoric scholars believe that learning involves co-participation in community activities, and neither writing nor learning to write can be removed from its local historical and cultural context (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995:162-163). Another reservation they have is that education might assist students in acquiring conventional genres, and this may lead to reinforcing, rather than challenging the genres of power.

Despite their reluctance to teach genres explicitly, a number of New Rhetoricians have devised classroom procedures for raising university students' awareness of the social contexts that shape their writing, and some have devised tasks aimed at sensitizing students to the influence of rhetorical contexts on genres that they write (Adam & Artemeva 2002:185). Even Bakhtin (1986:41) has admitted that writers must be able to control the genres they use before they can creatively exploit them.

3.4.4 Genre terminology and genre analysis

New Rhetoricians have in general not been interested in naming genres or describing the linguistic similarities of texts for teaching purposes. Instead, the New Rhetoric has devoted more attention to investigating the ways in which such similarities are related to regularities of social activity (cf. Dias and Paré 2000).

3.5 The three genre traditions: similarities and differences

Even while most linguists and applied linguists today would call themselves anything but structuralists, categorization remains an important tool to gain control over a field of study, and to refer to important concepts in the field. Flowerdew (2002) prefers to divide genre scholarship into only two categories: a **linguistic** and a **nonlinguistic**. In

his view ESP and the Australian school take a linguistic approach, applying theories of functional grammar and discourse, and concentrating on the lexicogrammatical an rhetorical realization of the communicative purposes embodied in a genre, whereas the New Rhetoric is more focused on situational context, *i.e.* the purposes and functions of genres and the attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours of the members of the discourse communities within which genres are situated. Johns (2002a:4) echoes this view.

Flowerdew (2002), however, neglects to highlight that ESP and the New Rhetoric are related in certain respects. Both ESP and the New Rhetoric prefer to depart from the *a priori* categories identified by the discourse communities themselves. The Sydney school, in contrast, departs from broad purposes or functions related to the school curriculum, which they have termed **elemental genres** or **curriculum genres**.

What the New Rhetoric and the Sydney school seem to have in common are their political agendas. However, the Sydney school emphasizes empowerment through genre knowledge: "Learning new genres gives one the linguistic potential to join new realms of social activity and social power" (Cope & Kalantzis 1993:7), whereas the New Rhetoric encourages students and professionals to challenge genre boundaries, and thereby resist the power of hegemony. This difference in the political agendas of the two schools has presumably been further influenced by differences between the audiences they target: the Sydney school focuses primarily on L2 learners and adult migrant labourers, whereas the New Rhetoric has L1 university students and novice professionals as its target group.

In summary, it would be possible to make a long list of partial similarities and differences regarding the three genre schools. However, since this exercise may have only peripheral value in supporting the main objective of this thesis, which is to design and evaluate writing courses for undergraduate university students in the humanities, it will not be pursued further at this stage.

Despite various differences between the three schools, as expounded in the foregoing analysis, they seem to agree at least on the following five principles (cf. Johns 2002:12; Hyland 2004:51):

1. Genres develop as a result of the recurrent ways people get things done in their social groups. Therefore, the influence of community and culture is important, both in text processing and production.
2. Because discourse communities are relatively stable, the genres produced in and by institutions achieve a certain stability over time, and this assists in giving coherence and meaning to social experience. This measure of stability entails that genres develop identifiable characteristics at the level of discourse structure and language. However, these characteristics are not only determined by the genre itself and the context in which it is used. They are also partially determined by the individuals reproducing the genre.
3. Genres are relatively stable, but they may change over time, both in terms of product and process, in response to changing needs.
4. When and if genres are taught, the discourse structure and the language (lexis and grammar) should be in line with the purpose of the text in a particular context, and the norms and conventions of the discourse community they serve.
5. Genres have social origins, and therefore different genres carry different degrees of power and status. Thus, some genres are valued more than others within a community, and these genres are therefore more worthy of being taught. Even in institutional contexts there are no texts that are free from the values, purposes and interests of those involved in producing and processing them. Since genres embody social and ideological dimensions, knowledge of text characteristics and of their social power, and critical reflection on these, should form part of any writing curriculum.

These five principles, as well as a considered combination of other best practices and principles from the three genre approaches, was observed in the design of the genre-based interventions discussed in chapters 6 to 8. However, first it is necessary to explore the context in which the interventions and their evaluation will be situated. Thus, in chapter 4 we turn to a survey of the writing demands facing undergraduate students in the humanities at the University of Pretoria.

Chapter 4: A survey of humanities genres

4.1 Introduction

Knowledge about the texts students need to write, the contexts in which they are written, and the ideologies that underlie them is a prerequisite for designing genre-based writing interventions.

The first important step for the applied linguist, after having explicated his/her approach to language and language learning, is to perform a contextual analysis (steps 1 and 2 of Lynch's CAM model). Such an analysis should ideally comprise both a **target context analysis** (the knowledge and skills required to perform competently in a target context) and a **source context analysis** (information about learners' current abilities, familiarity with writing processes and written genres, and their skills and perceptions). This chapter is aimed at exploring the target situation in its broader sense, *viz.* the institutional and disciplinary context of undergraduate students of the humanities, with specific reference to the University of Pretoria. It addresses the problem that students frequently find themselves having to meet different writing demands in different disciplines. What is more, knowledge of disciplinary variation is becoming especially important, with a growing trend towards inter- and multi-disciplinary study in higher education. Hewings and Hewings (2001:72) note that syllabi for academic writing in higher education are therefore focusing more and more on teaching students about the features of differing written genres, which, in their opinion, is a valuable development from earlier approaches which treated academic writing as a homogeneous entity.

In order to address the issue of genre variability on tertiary level, and to establish learner needs from an institutional point of view, this chapter has two main objectives: providing an overview of previous research on university genres and text types, and reporting on the survey conducted for the purpose of this thesis. The main aims of this phase of the research are to establish the types of writing required by undergraduate students in the humanities, and to pinpoint the similarities and differences between the various disciplines in terms of preferred genres and text types. This information will

then feed into the designs of two genre-based interventions – one with a subject-specific focus and the other with a cross-disciplinary focus.

4.2 A survey of the institutional context: university genres, text types and their characteristics

A target situation analysis for designing a genre-based syllabus should include an exploration of the institutional context, including the system in which genres are used.

Recent years have seen a renewed interest in the variability of genres in university settings. Genres vary over time (Bazerman 1988; Dudley-Evans & Henderson 1990), from one cultural context to another (Taylor & Chen 1991), and from discipline to discipline (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995; Prior 1998). Research on academic genres, their components and linguistic characteristics have been conducted from more than one angle. Some researchers have focused on compiling classification schemes in order to authenticate large-scale tests, such as TOEFL, others have attempted systematic, computerized analyses of corpora to refine the knowledge about the linguistic characteristics valued by particular disciplines, while others have departed from a rhetorical-functional perspective seeking correlations between rhetorical-textual features on the one hand, and the values, epistemologies and ontology of academic discourse communities.

4.2.1 Typological studies

A number of studies have examined the written genres and genre requirements for students studying at English-medium universities in the United States and Australia empirically.

Rose (1983) analyzed essay prompts, take-home examinations and assignment topics for undergraduate students from 17 academic departments at the University of California, Los Angeles, and developed a hierarchical scheme of simple to complex writing activities, including *listing*, *definition*, *seriation*, *classification*, *summary*, *comparison/contrast*, *analysis* and *academic argument*. She found that most writing assignments required *exposition* and *argument*.

Horowitz (1986b) examined 54 undergraduate writing tasks at a Western Illinois University. Faculty members representing 29 courses from 17 departments provided copies of writing assignment handouts and essay examinations. The required genres were (in order of frequency): *research essays*, *assignments requiring the connection of theory and data*, *summaries of/reactions to readings*, *case studies*, *research projects*, and an *annotated bibliography*.

Canseco and Byrd (1989) researched writing prompts in 48 postgraduate business courses at the Georgia State University. The most common writing requirements were the *formal examination*, *written versions of problems in the textbook*, *projects*, *case studies* and *reports*. Less commonly required genres were *surveys*, *business plans*, *audits*, *critiques*, *evaluations*, *diaries*, *project proposals*, and *political polls*.

Braine (1995) examined undergraduate writing requirements in 17 courses (80 assignments) in the natural sciences and engineering at the University of South Alabama. The required genres included *summary/reactions*, *laboratory reports* (75% of all assignments), d*esign reports*, *case studies*, and *research papers*.

In a study for the redevelopment of the TOEFL test that examined written genre and text type requirements of 162 undergraduate and graduate courses at eight North American universities, Hale, Taylor, Bridgeman, Carson, Kroll and Kantor (1996) found the most commonly required written genres to be *documented essays*, *summaries*, *plans/proposals*, and *book reviews*. The most frequently required rhetorical tasks in the humanities were *exposition*, *argument*, *cause-and-effect*, *problem-solution*, *classification/enumeration*, *compare-contrast* and *analysis*.

Moore and Morton (1998) did research into the written genre and text type requirements of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Monash University and the University of Melbourne in Australia. The most commonly required undergraduate genres were the *academic essay* (58%), *case-study reports* (7.2%), *exercises requiring the application of a discipline-specific model* (9.6%), *research reports* (6.4), *experimental reviews* (4.8%), *experimental research reports* (4.8%), *literature reviews* (1.8%), *summaries* (1.6%),

short answers (1.6%), and "*other*" *genres* (4.8%). The text types they identified are *evaluation* (26.8%), *description* (17.2%), *summary* (14.9%), *compare/contrast* (15.6%), *explanation* (10.8%), *recommendation* (7%), *hortation* (4.5%), *prediction* (2.8%), and *instruction* (1%).

Melzer (2003) analyzed 787 writing assignments from four disciplinary categories at tertiary institutions in the US, *viz.* the hard sciences, the social sciences, business and humanities. The most commonly required genres were the *short-answer exam* (23%), *journal* (13%), *term paper* (6%), *summary/response* (4%), *laboratory report* (4%), *abstract* (92%), and *review* (2%).

Dunworth (2008) conducted an empirical study at an Australian University of which more than 25% comprises international students. Her aim was to identify the range of tasks (including tests and examinations and oral participation in class) undertaken by first-year undergraduate students according to the four institutionalized academic divisions: business, engineering and science, health sciences, and humanities. Assessment of written work varied among disciplinary areas, but *timed essays* in examinations or tests were accorded the highest status in business, whereas *non-timed essays* (short essays and extended essays) were prominent only in the humanities (15% of all communication tasks undertaken by humanities students).

Studies that relied on self-reports by students, and survey questionnaires filled out by lecturers, e.g. Bridgeman and Carlson (1983) and Carson, Chase, Gibson and Hargrove (1992), were not included in this overview because of the fact that responding lecturers sometimes exaggerate the importance of writing or the variety of writing in their classes, either to put themselves in a positive light, or trying to give the researcher what the lecturer thinks he/she wants.

Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis and Swann (2003:46) generalized research outcomes to come up with groups of subject-fields that share particular written genres. The **natural sciences**, (represented by physics, chemistry, biology and geology) typically write *laboratory reports*, *project proposals* and *reports*, *fieldwork notes*, *essays*, and *dissertations*. The **social sciences** (for example, sociology, geography,

economics, politics, cultural and media studies, and psychology) prefer *essays*, *project reports*, *fieldwork notes*, and *dissertations*. **Humanities** subjects, such as English, history, languages, classics, fine art, religious studies, and nursing are known for *essays*, *critical analyses*, *translations*, and *projects*. A fourth grouping identified by Coffin *et al.* (2003:46) is the **applied disciplines**, under which business and management, philosophy, music, engineering, and health and social welfare are subsumed. They admit that it is a convenient way of grouping disciplines with certain similar characteristics, while acknowledging the complexity of demarcating disciplines and their affiliations. Unfortunately, however, no indication of the empirical base of the research is offered.

In all the studies that overtly included the humanities (Horowitz 1986b; Hale *et al.* 1996; Moore & Morton 1989; Coffin *et al.* 2003; Dunworth 2008) the *academic essay* (whether timed or non-timed; short or extensive) features prominently. However, generalization from these studies is complicated by the vastly different research designs, including different sampling techniques, variable definition of categories *(a priori vs. a posteriori*), and variable selection and definition of research units (genre, rhetorical mode, cognitive demand, etc.). Moreover, the frequency of task types depends heavily on how disciplines are clustered together in bigger groupings, such as schools or faculties, at a particular time.

In order to design and develop genre-based interventions for the purposes of a particular institutional context it was necessary to establish which genres and text types were preferred by the various disciplines, and to explore possible rhetorical-functional reasons for these differences.

4.2.2 Corpus linguistics

Douglas Biber (1988; 1989; 2006) is well-known for his research on university genres and text types from the perspective of linguistic theory. Initially, his work was aimed at describing linguistic variation across a large variety of spoken and written genres in English. He departed from the premise that a typology of texts is a prerequisite to any comparative genre analysis (Biber 1989:4), but contended that although there is wide agreement on the importance of four basic modes of discourse, *viz. narration*,

description, *exposition* and *argumentation*, there is a lack of agreement on the particular parameters distinguishing among them. Different definitions of *exposition* have, for instance, focused on one or a combination of the following parameters: content type, organization, objectivity, purpose, or information density.

Biber (1988) conducted a comprehensive linguistic analysis in order to present a unified model of genre variation in English. The model was developed by analyzing the co-occurrence distribution of 67 linguistic features in 481 spoken and written texts of contemporary English. He used large-scale text corpora, *viz.* the LOB corpus and the London-Lund corpus, representing 23 different genres, such as *conversation*, *broadcast*, *public speeches*, *academic prose* and *fiction* (Biber 1988:56). Some of these genre categories represent several distinct subgenres. For the genre *academic prose* there are seven sub-genres (Biber 1988:171): *natural science academic prose*, *medical academic prose*, *mathematics academic prose*, *social science academic prose*, *politics/ education/law academic prose*, *humanities academic prose*, and *technology/ engineering academic prose*.

Standardized computer-based text corpora and automatic identification techniques were then used to compute the frequencies of salient lexical and syntactic features. The co-occurrence patterns among these features were analyzed through multivariate statistical techniques (factor analysis) to identify the functional dimensions of linguistic variation among texts and to provide an overall description of relations among genres with respect to these dimensions (Biber 1988:56). Seven dimensions or factors were initially identified in this way, which were later (Biber 1989:10) narrowed down to five:

1. involved versus informational production
2. narrative versus non-narrative concerns
3. explicit versus situation-dependent reference
4. overt expression of persuasion
5. abstract versus non-abstract information

Biber (1988:170) concedes that genres are not necessarily coherent in their linguistic characterizations, and findings regarding humanities subjects are not really enlightening, such as that humanities prose can be either markedly narrative in focus or

markedly non-narrative (Dimension 2), which reflects the differences between historical studies on the one hand, and philosophical and analytical studies on the other (Biber 1988:193). He also notes that political sciences are quite persuasive relative to other academic sub-genres, while social science prose is typical of academic exposition in being non-persuasive. Thus it could be claimed that no systematic characterization of genres and their linguistic features resulted from Biber's research.

4.2.3 Rhetorical-functional research

The following differences between the so-called "hard sciences" and "soft sciences" have been noted by Hyland and other colleagues, and linked to functional explanations:

- Genres such as *laboratory reports*, *project proposals and research reports* feature prominently in the natural sciences and engineering, whereas *academic essays* and *critical analyses* are frequently required in the humanities. The explanation offered by Hyland (1994:352). is that in the natural sciences describing procedures, defining objects, and planning solutions are required, whereas in the humanities analyzing and synthesizing multiple sources are important
- Research articles in the natural sciences and engineering are much more conventionalized in their discourse structure than articles in the social sciences and humanities (Holmes 1997:332). The latter, on the other hand, display greater complexity and elaboration at the beginning rather than the end (the reverse is the case in the hard sciences). Furthermore, the discussion sections in the social sciences are less complex and less predictable than those in the hard sciences (Holmes 1997:332). The conventionalization in the natural sciences is a reflection of the higher degree of bureaucratization (use of quantitative data, collaborative authorship and external financial support). Hewings and Hewings (2001:74) explain this by contending that hard disciplines have a more cohesive body of agreed knowledge than soft disciplines. Given the lack of consensus on goals and methods of research in the social sciences, there may be greater need to establish the parameters of research more overtly.
- Articles from the humanities contain 75% more stance items (hedges and boosters, and explicit markers of evaluation and attitude) than the sciences and engineering. On the other hand, articles from science and engineering contain more arguments based on theoretical models and experimental results (Hyland 2006:30). This can be

explained by the fact that in the soft sciences problems are less clearly defined and thus explanations are likely to be less assured. Thus, writers have to "work harder" to engage their audience and shape their arguments to the shared perspectives of the discipline. Furthermore, writers of science and engineering frequently offer their research as contributions to pressing real-world issues, whereas writers in the humanities tend to examine unresolved disciplinary relevant problems (Hyland 2006:24).

- Self-citation is more common in the hard knowledge fields than in the soft fields (Hyland 2003). However, natural science writers usually downplay their personal role or own voice, whereas first-person reference is common in the humanities. The explanation given by Hyland (2006:32) is that downplaying personal involvement in the natural sciences highlights the phenomena under study, the replicability of research activities, and the generality of the findings. On the other hand, in the humanities personal credibility, explicitly getting behind the arguments and personally intervening to evaluate material and express a point of view play an important role in creating a convincing discourse en seeking agreement for it.
- Articles in the humanities comprise twice as many citations as in the science disciplines. In the soft sciences the writers also give more prominence to the cited author through use of integral structures and by placing authors in subject position (Hyland 2006:25). This is ascribed to the fact that scientific knowledge in the "hard" sciences develops in a more linear way than in the humanities. As a result, natural scientists participate in relatively discrete areas of study and their research proceeds along well defined paths. Therefore, they can presuppose a certain amount of theoretical, background, procedural expertise and technical lexis (Hyland 2006:25).
- Reader pronouns occur much more in humanities and social science papers (particularly philosophy) than in science and engineering papers, which can be explained by the fact that reader pronouns are intended to appeal to scholarly solidarity, presupposing a set of mutual, discipline-identifying understandings, which link the writer and reader (Hyland 2006:33-34).
- In the choice of grammatical subject the humanities have a preference for animate subjects. On the other hand disciplines with epistemic subjects, such as the natural sciences, foreground research methods, inferences and findings, and prefer inanimate subjects. The explanation for this finding is that the humanities are more

concerned with specific people, places and events, whereas the social sciences and natural sciences rely more on generalizations and abstractions. This is particularly reflected in the choice of grammatical subject.

Understandably, the genres and the language of the humanities demonstrates much more human involvement than the language of the natural sciences, and even the social sciences, and the intrusion of the writer-researcher into the academic text is much more acceptable than in other disciplinary clusters.

Against the backdrop of existing typologies and the relationships between genre preferences and disciplinary purposes, a survey was done in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria to establish which genres and text types were preferred by various disciplines in the humanities, and to explore possible rhetorical-functional reasons for these differences.

4.3 Survey of writing requirements in the humanities

4.3.1 Methodology

During the first quarter of 2007 ten university departments were approached to contribute copies of their study materials for analysis, *viz.* Music, Sociology, Historical and Heritage Studies, Visual Arts, Communication Pathology, Philosophy, Political Sciences, English, Social Work and Criminology, and Biokinetics, Sport and Leisure Sciences. The goal was to obtain a balanced representation of the humanities. Toward that end, the following procedure was used.

First, an appointment was made with each head of department to explain the purpose and goals of the project, and to request copies of undergraduate study guides as well as other materials containing writing prompts. Some of the heads of department preferred to consult with their lecturing staff first. Two departments mentioned complicating factors, *viz.* the Department of Music and the Department of Communication Pathology. It was then mutually agreed to exclude these departments from the study. Written, informed consent was obtained from the heads of the other eight departments, as well as from each individual author who contributed materials. One of the limitations of the

sampling method was self-selection: Lecturing staff contributed study materials on a voluntary basis. This entailed that generalization would be restricted.

The format/medium in which study materials was received, varied: Philosophy, Social Work and Criminology, Biokinetics, Sport and Leisure Sciences, Visual Arts, and Sociology provided hard copies of study guides, whereas English, Historical and Heritage Studies and Political Sciences provided their documents in electronic format. When entering the data it was observed that the interpretation of certain writing prompts depended on guidelines for academic writing provided in general departmental manuals. These departments were requested to provide copies of such documents for contextualization purposes. However, the manuals were not used to contribute data for the investigation.

Writing tasks were recorded by discipline. The procedure entailed search-reading the study materials, marking all writing prompts, and converting them to a computer readable text format. The word-processing data was then transferred to a multicolumn matrix in Microsoft Word. This matrix contains slots for the code and name of each module, the full text of each writing prompt, the name of the genre as it occurs in the study guide – unless only a generic label such as "assignment" or "task" appears in the study guide, or the prompt has not been labelled – and a column for assigning a generic label that would form part of a formal classification scheme. Hale *et al.*'s (1996, 11-12) scheme, which was designed to assist in conceptualizing the manner of assessing writing on the 2000 TOEFL test, was minimally adapted for this purpose. A possible weakness of this procedure is its reliance on a set of *a priori* genre categories combined with an interpretive categorization procedure. However, the fact that many departments use only superordinate labels in their study guides rendered the use of *in vivo* categorization unsuitable.

The first version of the classification scheme comprised seven genre categories: *essay* (the statement or development of a proposition or a point of view in a discursive format); *summary* (condensing information, without discussion or elaboration); *case study* (*analysis* and presentation of a case situation); *research report* (a combination of prescribed forms of writing, such as a statement of objectives, description of a method,

and presentation of results); *plan/proposal* (the approach used for addressing an issue or solving a problem); *book review* (summary of the content and analysis/evaluation of the points made); *unstructured writing* (putting thoughts on paper without structural constraints, or where the writer records thoughts and events as free-standing observations, such as journal entries).

During the process of analyzing and categorizing data, the following adjustments were made to the schema:

- Instead of adding a category to accommodate the *literature review*, it was subsumed under the category *essay*, as most essays require the consultation of external sources.
- For the genre *critical analysis* a separate (eighth) category was created because the discourse structure of this genre is largely standardized. A critical analysis typically involves a summary of the content, relating some aspect of that content to the topic, providing a thesis statement, and developing the argument by providing details from the artefact being analyzed.
- The category *research report* was found to be too specific to subsume the large variety of report types required, and therefore the superordinate *report* was used.
- Following Hale *et al.* (1996, 11), assignments in which the writer is asked to analyze an already written case study were subclassified as a *case study analysis* in the *essay* genre.
- To accommodate multimodal genres involving a substantial amount of written text, a ninth category was added, *viz.* the *audiovisual presentation.*
- For the sake of completeness *portfolio* was added.

Based on the assumption that the instructional verbs used in writing prompts provided students with cues about the modes of writing that are required, a systematic analysis of all writing prompts was conducted, using Wordsmith Tools version 4.0. A point of criticism that might be raised against this procedure is that the boundary between rhetorical mode and cognitive demand, as instantiated by Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, becomes blurred. Although such reservations might be warranted, one could also argue that instructional verbs have a dual function: They give an indication of whether the required action is at a higher or a lower level, and of the rhetorical organization of the content. *Describe*, for instance, represents a lower-level

cognitive demand, and it also indicates to the student that a recording has to be given of sense impressions and qualities of a type, class or group (compare Hale *et al.* 1996, 12-13).

First, a list of search terms for building concordances was compiled from scholarly sources, including Weissberg and Buker (1990, 184-192), Cope and Kalantzis (1993, 9-10), Hale *et al.* (1996, 12-15); Macken-Horarik (2002, 21-22; 37-38), Paltridge (2002a, 81-82), and Hyland (2006, 48). The eventual list contained search terms (mostly wildcards) for the following rhetorical modes: *analysis*, *argumentation (give your opinion)*, *cause and effect*, *classification*, *comparison and contrast*, *definition*, *description*, *discussion*, *exemplification*, *explanation*, *exposition*, *evaluation*, *illustration*, *narration*, *procedure*, *process*, *recount*, *reflection*, and *summary (make a synopsis)*. The following screen capture (Figure 4.1) shows the first twenty-one lines of the concordance for the search term *expla** (representing *explain*, *explanation* and *explanatory*):

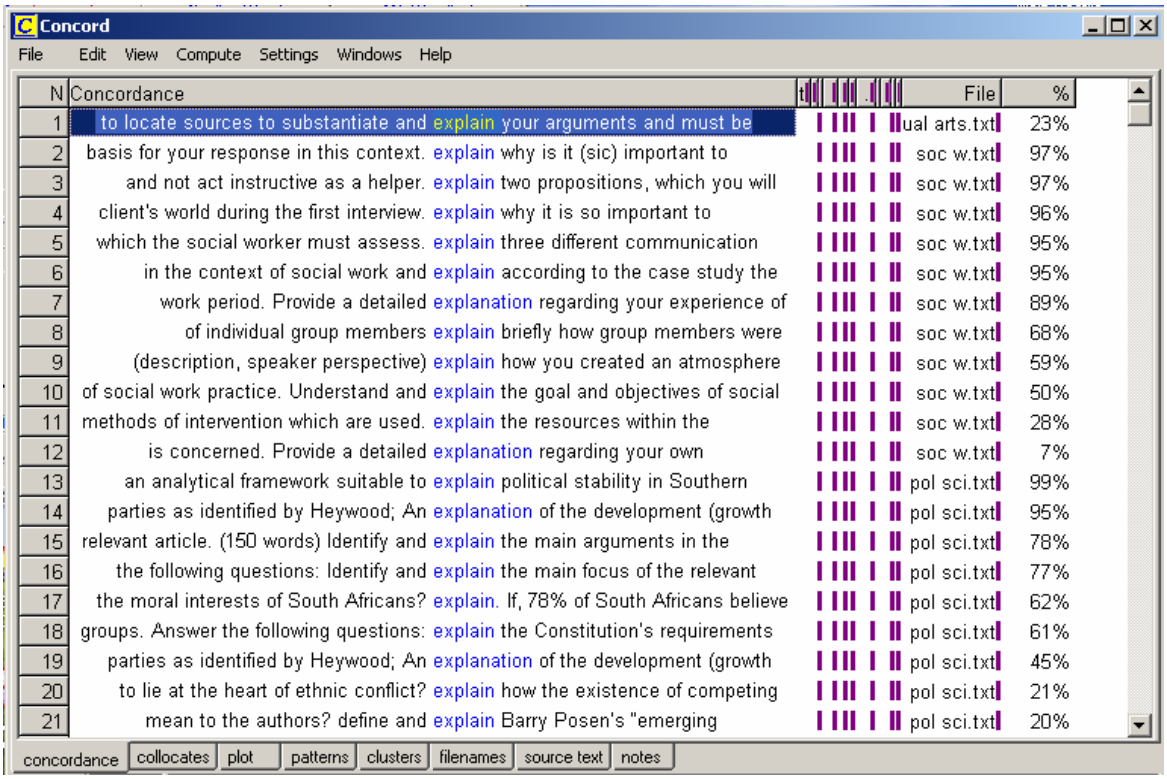

Figure 4.1 Screen capture of the concordance for *expla**

After recording the findings by department, a summary was sent to each head of department, with an invitation to comment if it was felt that the discipline was misrepresented. Three departments responded: English, Historical and Heritage Studies, and Social Work. English and Social Work were satisfied, and Historical and Heritage Studies questioned the researcher's interpretation of their use of the verb *discuss*. The criticism was regarded to be valid and constructive, and the final report (included below) has been adjusted accordingly.

4.3.2 Findings according to discipline

Already at the data recording stage meaningful variation across disciplines became apparent, particularly in terms of reference to rhetorical modes, and preferences with regard to genre and rhetorical mode. In this section a partially quantitative and partially interpretive overview of the findings will be given according to discipline, followed by tabulated summaries of the data.

Department of Biokinetics, Sport and Leisure Sciences

The Department of Biokinetics, Sport and Leisure Sciences contributed 21 study guides. Since sport studies is largely an applied science, it was anticipated that assignments would be less "essayist" than other disciplines in the humanities, and more oriented towards application, teamwork and organization. This was, in fact, borne out by the findings: 17 of the 22 assignments in the subcorpus are *group assignments*, six of which are written *essays* with a strong emphasis on application of theory. Eleven assignments belong to a genre that does not occur in any of the other subcorpora, *viz.* the *expo assignment*, which is typically an oral group presentation, supported by a poster, a model, or an electronic slide show. The expo assignment was assigned to the category *audiovisual presentation* in the formal classification scheme.

Only one individual written assignment (*essay*) and one individual *oral presentation* occur in the subcorpus. The remaining genres comprise three *portfolios* (containing written work of restricted scope) and a *business plan*. The latter is required for a module on sports management.

In the Biokinetics subcorpus *illustrate*, with its variants *illustration* and *illustrated*, is the only rhetorical mode to occur relatively frequently, mostly in prompts for expo assignments (15 times out of 25 occurrences in the combined corpus). If one considers that in seven instances (in the combined corpus) *illustration* and *illustrated* refer to visual material, instead of speech acts, the number of occurrences of *illustrate* in the Biokinetics corpus is 15 out of a total of 18. Of the remaining three, one occurs in the Visual Arts corpus, one in the Historical and Heritage Studies corpus and one in the Social Work corpus. *Reflect* and its past tense form occurs six times out of a total of 15. However, it is not used to refer to a mode of writing, and therefore not relevant for consideration in this regard. Compare, for instance: "Expo material must reflect scientific research methods" (x2), "[…] reflect a specific theme", and "[…] reflect an understanding".

Department of English

The seven study guides volunteered by the Department of English contributed 31 assignments to the corpus: 14 *critical analyses* and 17 *essays*, of which six require a primarily argumentative mode of exposition, three require *compare and contrast* as their principal structuring mechanism, two call for the description of a *process*, and one is overtly *descriptive*. Five of the essays are described as "more challenging", including two *comparisons*, one *description* and two *explanations*.

The rhetorical modes that feature most prominently in the English corpus are *argumentation*, and (critical) *analysis*. This finding is not surprising, as much of the academic activity in English literature courses is focused on evaluating literary artefacts by analyzing them and giving reasons for interpretations. The collocation *critical analysis* occurs no less than 12 times in the subcorpus. A critical argumentative mode is further signalled by the prolific use of the word *comment* (both the noun and the verb). The English corpus accounts for 27 instances out of a total of 33. Furthermore, *discuss* and its morphological variants occur 20 times out of 107.

Department of Visual Arts

The Department of Visual Arts contributed 11 study guides containing ten writing prompts: five *essays*, four *critical analyses* (of works of art, exhibitions and artefacts),

and one *research report*. Four of the five essays are critical reflections on the artist's own work, required in practical modules such as Information Design. The importance of self-reflection is underscored by the use of cognition verbs such as *reflect*, *contemplate*, *consider* and *understand*.

The relative prominence of the rhetorical mode *analysis* in theoretical modules, *viz.* History of Art, is predictable in light of the salience of the *critical analysis* genre: eight out of 61 is quite significant given the moderate amount of data provided by the Visual Arts department. In most instances the instructional phase *critically discuss* is used (seven times out of a total of 35 occurrences of this collocation in the combined database), and usually involves selecting one or more representative examples, critiquing these, and supporting evaluative statements with evidence from an exhibition/work of art, theory, research, etc. Another rhetorical mode with a fairly strong representation is *argumentation*. The noun *argument* and its morphological variants occur eight times out of a total of 31. This finding is not surprising, as arguments usually need to be put forward in support of analysis and evaluation.

Department of Historical and Heritage Studies

The Department of Historical and Heritage Studies houses three subdisciplines, *viz.* History, Cultural History and Heritage and Cultural Tourism. Twenty-one study guides were received in an electronic format, comprising 76 writing prompts of which 62 call for *essays*: 25 long, 23 short, one comparative, two descriptive, five explanatory, and six argumentative. Other assignments include two *book reviews*; two *critical analyses*; 75 *essays*: one *itinerary*, one *oral presentation*, two *portfolios*, and six *reports* on museum visits. The subdiscipline of History is dominated by essays, whereas Cultural History and Heritage and Cultural Tourism make use of a larger variety of genres, including *essays*, *reports on museum visits*, *book reviews*, an *itinerary*, *portfolios* and an *oral presentation*. The variation in these subdisciplines is comparable to practice-oriented disciplines, such as Social Work, and Biokinetics Sport and Leisure Sciences.

According to sources on writing about history, such as Marius and Page (2005:52-74), historical writing is characterized by four main rhetorical modes, *viz. narration*, *description*, *argumentation* and *exposition* (for which *analysis* is often used as a

synonym). In the field of history *exposition* and *analysis* invariably require *explanation*, which in turn require identifying possible *causes* for particular effects.

All four modes were found to enjoy prominence in the Historical and Heritage Studies subcorpus, albeit not explicitly. *Analysis/exposition* is represented by the verb *explain*, which occurs 25 times out of a total of 51. The high frequency of the verb *explain* in the History corpus is in line with one of the core objectives of this subject field, *viz.* "to make sense of a historical event by providing reasons for it having occurred" (Department of Historical and Heritage Studies 2006:8). *Describe* occurs 13 out of a total of 51, and fulfils more than one rhetorical function: it denotes both *narration* ("relating a series of events in a chronological order") and *description*, in the sense of "recording a particular sensory experience". Initially *argumentation* seemed to be underrepresented in the subcorpus, given the emphasis it receives in the departmental study manual. However, after close scrutiny of the various concordances it became apparent that *discuss**, which occurs 25 times out of a total of 107, invariably implies argumentation. Compare the definition given for *discuss* in the study manual (p. 8): "to examine critically through argument". Supporting evidence for the importance of argumentation in the field of Historical and Heritage Studies is also found in the prominence of the noun *opinion*, which occurs five times out of a total of ten in the combined corpus.

Department of Philosophy

The five study guides that were provided include eight *essay* assignments. Four of these are overtly argumentative, as suggested by expressions such as *argue, discuss, take a definite stand on, develop your own point of view*, and four belong to other essay types. One assignment, a service module offered to Commerce students, is a *journal*.

Argumentation is clearly the most salient rhetorical mode, despite the relatively few occurrences of its lexical instantiations in the subcorpus: four out of 31. The relatively low frequency in the essay prompts may be partially due to the size of the subcorpus, and owing to the elaborate explanation of this mode in general departmental literature. Compare, for instance, the following description of the mode in the organizational component of the introductory first year module:

> Start with the assumption that your reader knows nothing about the subject that you are writing about, or if your reader knows something about the subject, that s/he does not share your point of view. Your readers will only share your view if you could convince them. Consequently you have to provide convincing reasons in support of your point of view.

Department of Political Sciences

Twelve study guides, which include 14 writing prompts, were received electronically. Eight of these are *essays*, ranging from 1400 to 3000 words per essay. Longer essays have to be accompanied by a *synopsis*. The rest of the corpus consists of a *research report*, two comprehension tests requiring relatively short answers, two more difficult comprehension exercises, and a *critical group discussion* of a scientific article, followed by a *report* by the group leader. The comprehension tests and the *critical group discussion* were categorized as *critical analyses.*

The rhetorical modes featuring prominently in this subcorpus are *discuss*, *argue*, *summarize* and *explain*. *Argumentation* assumes a central position: The verb *argue* and other morphological variants occur 12 times out of a total of 31 instances; and the word *discuss* and its variants occur 29 times out of the total of 107. An interesting finding was the prominence of *summarizing*: The word *summarize* occurs three times out of a total of ten, and the word *synopsis* occurs ten times, which represents the total number of occurrences in the entire corpus. Possible reasons for the emphasis on summarizing are improving reading skills, assessing comprehension, and facilitating preparation for professional activities that require condensing a bulk of literature. Similar to Historical and Heritage Studies, Political Sciences focus strongly on issues of cause and effect, albeit focused more on the present and the future than on the past. It is thus not surprising that the word *explain* and other morphological variants comprise a fifth of the total of 51 occurrences.

Department of Social Work and Criminology

The Department of Social Work and Criminology contributed ten study guides, of which only two came from the criminology subdepartment. It was decided not to include the criminology materials, since the data would not be sufficient to allow generalization.

The Social Work materials include 20 assignments, dominated by *reports* on social interventions with individuals, groups and communities. Included are: a *report on voluntary work*, a *community profile* (based on a *situation analysis*); a *report on observation at an NGO*, a *report on social work intervention with individuals* (interview), and a *report on projects addressing specialized fields.* One *research report* was required. In three cases the report comprises a genre set, *i.e.* it is made up of two or more genres that contribute towards a common purpose. Two genres are associated with the activity "intervention with communities", *viz.* a *preparatory report*, and a *final report*. Another genre set, which is associated with "intervention with groups" comprises a *group work proposal*, a *report on the course of a session* (also called a *process report*), and a *comprehensive group work report*. For each type of report a template prescribing the discourse structure is provided in the study guide for Social Work Practice. In the theoretical component of Social Work the following genres are required: an *analysis of a scientific article*, two *literature reviews*, a *research report*, one individual and one group *essay* on professional values and processes (and their practical applications), a *critical analysis of a case study*, and a *critical evaluation* of a previous assignment.

The three text types/rhetorical modes with the strongest representation in the Social Work subcorpus, are *evaluation* (31 out of a total of 51), *description* (28 out of a total of 51, *analysis* (11 out of a total of 61), and discussion (22 out of a total of 107). The high frequencies of *evaluation* and *description* can be explained with reference to the main purpose and the discourse structure of reports in this subject field: Reports mainly comprise a descriptive component and an evaluative component. Processes, actions, events, outcomes and institutions are typically described after close observation (compare phrases such as "~ the target group", "~ the organization", "~ the experience you gained", "~ the knowledge you gained", "~ your impression of […]", "~ the roles you played", "~ the value of […]", and "~ your own perception"), and then evaluated or reflected upon. An analysis of the concordance materials revealed that *discuss* and *discussion* are used as synonyms for *describe* and *description* in 50% of the instances (11 out of 22 in the concordance of 107 occurrences). In the other half of the cases *discuss* primarily requires the student to consider a problem or an issue from more than one point of view (the primary rhetorical meaning of the term). In a few instances a

recount, *procedure* or *narrative* is required, as in "Discuss the course of the intervention", "Provide a discussion of how you plan to assess", "Discuss the aim and objectives", and "Discuss your introduction to the client".

Department of Sociology

Three essay prompts occur in the 4 study guides received from the Department of Sociology, two of which are *research reports*, and the third is an *argumentative essay*. All essay prompts are underpinned by a comprehensive set of guidelines provided in the *Departmental Guide*. The pivotal rhetorical mode seems to be *argumentation*. The verb *argue* and the nominal forms *argument* and *argumentation* occur seven times in the subcorpus – almost a quarter of the total number of occurrences in the corpus.

4.3.3 Summary and interpretation of data

The quantitative findings concerning genres and text types are summarized in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1: Summary of salient genres and text types/rhetorical modes in the humanities

Department	No. of study guides (no. of prompts)	Genres and no. of occurrences	Salient genres	Salient modes and no. of occurrences as a fraction of the total
Biokinetics, Sport and Leisure Sciences	21 (23)	Presentation 12 Essay 7 Portfolio 3 Plan/proposal 1	Presentation Essay (group)	Illustrate 15/18 Reflect 6/15
English	7 (31)	Critical analysis 17 Essay 14	Critical analysis	Comment 27/33 Analyze 24/61 Discuss 20/107
Historical and Heritage Studies	21 (76)	Essay 62 Report 6 Book review 2 Critical analysis 2 Portfolio 2 Plan/proposal 1 Presentation 1	Essay	Explain 25/51 Discuss 25/107 Describe 13/51
Philosophy	5 (9)	Essay 8 Freewriting 1	Essay	Argue 4/31
Visual Arts	11 (10)	Essay 5 Critical analysis 4 Report 1	Essay Critical analysis	Argue 8/31 Analyze 8/61
Political Sciences	12 (14)	Essay 8 Critical analysis 5 Report 1	Essay	Argue 12/31 Summarize 3/10 Discuss (10/10) Explain 29/107 10/51
Sociology	4(3)	Report 2 Essay 1	Report	Argue 7/31
Social Work	8 (20)	Report 9 Plan/proposal 2 Critical analysis 2 Essay 5 Presentation 2	Report Essay	Evaluate 31/51 Describe 28/51 Analyze 11/61 Discuss 22/107

To the extent that these figures are representative, the findings regarding genres largely coincide with the categorization of Coffin *et al.* (2003), *viz.* that the humanities have a preference for *essays* and *critical analyses*, and the social sciences prefer *project reports* and *essays*. Table 4.2 gives a breakdown of the preferred assignment genres per academic department:

Table 4.2 Ratio of salient assignment genres to total number of assignments per department

Department	No. of assignments in salient categories (with ratio in brackets)			Total no. of assignments per dept.
	Essays	Reports	Critical analyses	
Social Work	5 (20%)	9 (45%)	0 (0%)	20
Sociology	1 (33%)	2 (66%)	0 (0%)	3
Biokinetics, Sport and Leisure	7 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23
Historical and Heritage Studies	62 (82%)	6 (8%)	2 (3%)	76
Philosophy	8 (89%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9
Political Sciences	8 (57%)	1 (7%)	5 (36%)	14
Visual Arts	5 (50%)	1(10%)	4 (40%)	10
English	14 (45%)	0 (0%)	17 (55%)	31

These figures may be used as a rationale for concentrating on the academic essay in writing courses aimed at students in the humanities and research-oriented social sciences. For the students in service-oriented social science departments, such as Social Work, a course on report-writing may be useful.

As far as rhetorical modes are concerned, the data indicates that *discussion* is the most prolific (107 occurrences in the combined database), followed by *analysis* (61 occurrences), *description* (51 occurrences), *explanation* (51 occurrences) and *argument* + (give your) *opinion* (41 occurrences). Although these figures shed some light on the salience of rhetorical modes in the humanities they still do not tell us whether certain genres favour specific modes. To explore possible affinities separate databases were built for each of the terms denoting the most salient genres, *viz. essay*, *report* and *critical analysis*. Table 3 summarizes the findings with regard to the modes highlighted above.

Table 4.3 Relationships between salient genres and preferred rhetorical modes

Genre (Word count per genre category in brackets)	Rhetorical mode	No. of occurrences of the rhetorical mode in the genre subcorpus
Essay (4201 words)	discuss	48
	explain	27
	argue (+ give your opinion)	12 (+ 8) = 20
	describe	13
	analyze	8
	evaluate	0
Report (2219 words)	evaluate	27
	describe	23
	discuss	18
	explain	3
	analyze	0
	argue	0
Critical analysis (489 words)	analyze	16
	argue	8
	discuss	4
	describe	0
	explain	0
	evaluate	0

According to the table *discussion*, *explanation* and *argumentation* are the rhetorical modes favoured by essays, *evaluation*, *description* and *discussion* by reports, and *analysis*, *argumentation* and *discussion* by critical analyses.

Given the fact that verbs such as *analyze*, *discuss*, and *explain* usually presuppose argumentation, and given the emphasis on the skill of arguing a case in departmental manuals, it is a far more important mode than reflected by the concordances. In general, the findings should be interpreted with circumspection, because of the ambiguity of certain lexical items: *Discuss*, for instance, is used in three distinct senses: (1) "to consider a problem or an issue from more than one point of view in the light of some kind of frame or position"; (2) "to provide a detailed account of a particular sensory

experience", and (3) "to provide an account of an event in the order that things happened or should happen". In other words it is also used to denote *description*, *narrative*, *recount* and *process*. With regard to the report genre, the term is mostly used in sense (1), and occasionally in sense (3), whereas the *essay* genre mostly activates sense (2). Conventions of the subject-field also play a role in this regard: In the Social Work corpus sense (1) dominates, whereas sense (2) dominates in Historical and Heritage Studies and Political Sciences. *Describe* is also ambiguous in terms of senses (2) and (3) above, which it shares with *discuss*.

In other words, although certain generalizations can be made on the basis of frequency counts, it is important, in addition, to analyze data qualitatively in order to take note of the idiosyncratic conventions of different discourse communities.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the types of writing valued by institutions of higher learning. Although various empirical studies have been conducted in the English-speaking world, which have indicated that particular clusters of disciplines favour particular genres, course design should be guided by local research if the designer is committed to a truly target- and needs-driven curriculum.

The research reported on in section 4.3 of this chapter has shown that the *academic essay* is the written genre most frequently required by lecturers in the humanities and research oriented social sciences at the tertiary institution under scrutiny. Practice-oriented social sciences, such as Social Work, seem to favour informative *reports*. It has also been established that students are expected to master various modes of writing. In essay-writing *argumentation* (for which the synonym *exposition* is often used in scholarly literature on writing) is a critically important mode.

In terms of specificity narrow-angled and wide-angled approaches seem to be supported by the outcomes of the research. Narrow-angled courses (which are termed "field-rich" by Drury 2006:235) require a close fit between the purposes and conventions of disciplinary communities on the one hand, and the writing conventions that are taught. Such courses should ideally be mapped on the syllabus of the subject-field in question,

and close collaboration between writing teachers and academic lecturers is desirable. The remaining option would be semi-generic (or "context-rich") courses. Such courses may focus on generally required genres such as the *academic essay* or the *report*, and target students within a cluster of disciplines with limited variation, such the humanities. Chapter 6 deals with the process of in-depth contextual research that would facilitate the design of a curriculum for writing academic essays within a subject-specific context, while chapter 8 deals with the design of a semi-generic course for students who are enrolled for qualifications in the Faculty of Humanities. However, course design cannot take place in a vacuum. Such a venture should depart from a principled pedagogical approach that is based on the applied linguist's beliefs about what language is and how students learn to write. The issue of a model for teaching writing is dealt with in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Instructional model

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 has outlined theoretical knowledge from linguistics, applied linguistics, psychology, and learning theory, which provide insight into the nature of genre in language, while chapter 3 has indicated how language professionals in North America and Australia have combined theoretical knowledge, empirical evidence and experience of L2 teaching and learning to design genre-based syllabi for university-level academic literacy courses. From the exposition in Chapter 3 it is clear that the three genre schools have gradually moved closer to one another in terms of pedagogy. ESP has relinquished its rigid moves and steps model, and the Sydney School has adopted a much more critical approach since its beginnings in the 1980s. In general, genre approaches have moved from applying genre as a "teaching method" to broader socio-functional approaches that focus systematically and visibly on addressing the needs and purposes of discourse communities. Chapter 4 has, in terms of this study, instantiated the first step in the course design and evaluation research process, by reporting on a survey of the writing demands made on undergraduate university students at the University of Pretoria.

This chapter proposes a framework for addressing learner needs and the demands of the target situation. Along with postmodern language pedagogues it is believed that the course designer should depart from a principled, yet flexible, instructional framework. First, the notions of "method" and "postmethod" are juxtaposed below in order to highlight differences between traditional and postmodern perspectives to course design. This is followed by a discussion of a set of pedagogical principles that appear to be shared by most post-process approaches to language teaching, and a model is proposed to account for the centrality of these principles in the context of higher education. Finally, a "presyllabus" is proposed for teaching and learning the genre that has been identified as pivotal to becoming initiated into the practices of the humanities, *viz.* the academic essay.

5.2 Method versus postmethod

5.2.1 The notion of "method"

The concept of "method" refers to established designs conceptualized and constructed by experts in language teaching. Kumaravadivelu (2003) classifies them into three broad categories, *viz.* language-centred, learner-centred and learning-centred. **Language-centred** methods are based on the assumption that linguistic systems are simple enough to formulate explicit rules of thumb, and explain them in such a way that the learner can understand and assimilate them. **Learner-centred** methods are principally concerned with language use and learner needs. These methods seek to provide opportunities for learners to practice preselected, presequenced grammatical structures, as well as communicative functions. The assumption is that a focus on form and function will ultimately lead to target language mastery. In other words, language development is considered intentional rather than incidental. **Learning-centred** methods assume that language development is nonlinear, and therefore does not require preselected systematic language input. These methods seek to provide opportunities for learners to participate in open-ended meaningful interaction through communicative activities or problem-solving tasks in class. They draw insights from the findings of Second Language Acquisition research (Kumaravadivelu 2003:26-27).

In terms of the above characterization genre approaches seem to fall somewhere between learner- and learning-centred approaches. The following representation attempts to plot the three genre schools in terms of this tripartite distinction:

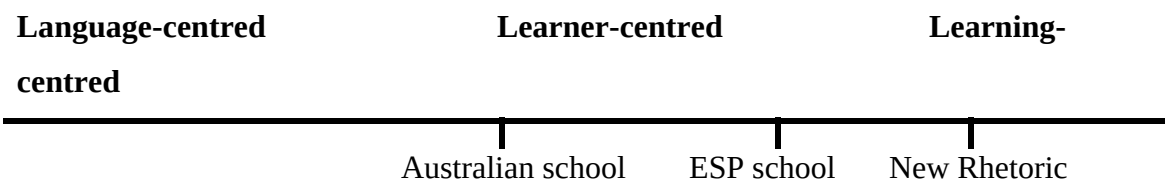

Figure 5.1 Alignment between the three genre schools and the three main methodological categories

Richards and Rogers (1982) have proposed a three-tier framework for understanding the notion of "method": approach, design and procedure. According to Paltridge (2001:40) **approach** refers to the theory of language and language learning that underlies a

particular method as well as syllabi developed on the basis of the method; **design** entails the objectives, organization and content of a particular syllabus type, the kinds of teaching and learning activities, teacher and learner roles, and the role of instructional materials, and **procedure** describes the actual classroom techniques and practices that might be employed within the particular method or approach. This tripartite framework is hierarchical, in that approach informs method, and method informs procedure.

Kumaravadivelu (2006:87) criticizes this three-tier framework by contending that approach is treated as a theorist/researcher activity, design as a syllabus designer/materials producer activity, and procedure as a classroom teacher/learner activity. He is of the opinion that the second tier – method or design – should be part of the first component "because we can, by all means, think of principles of syllabus design, principles of materials production, principles of evaluation, and so forth" (Kumaravadivelu 2006:89). On the other hand he agrees with Richards and Rogers on the delimitation of the third tier, and consequently proposes a two-tier descriptive framework for teaching methods or teaching syllabi, comprising only **principles** and **procedures**. This simplification allows the applied linguist to focus on design principles, and to leave the development of appropriate procedures in the hands of the classroom teacher.

5.2.2 The postmethod condition

Principles should not be confused with methods. The term **method** has come under critical scrutiny in recent times. Methods may be based on idealized concepts geared toward idealized contexts (Kumaravadivelu 2003:28), and scholars such as Allwright (1991), Pennycook (1989), Prabhu (1990) and Stern (1992) have cautioned language teaching professionals against the uncritical acceptance of untested methods. They have gone even further, counseling pedagogues against the very concept of method itself, arguing that the concept is surrounded by a number of myths (Kumaravadivelu 2006:163-168), or even worse, that it is "dead". Nunan (1991:1) believes that the pendulum effect of devising method upon method that does not work, often recycling the elements of older methods, can be overcome by deriving appropriate classroom practices from empirical evidence on the nature of language learning and use. In this way the teacher can form insights into what makes learners tick. Alistair Pennycook

(1989:600), in turn, criticizes the sociocultural and political agenda of methods. He explains how the concept of method introduces and legitimizes "interested knowledge" that plays an important role in preserving and promoting inequities between the participants in the learning, teaching and teacher education processes.

Benesch (1999:313-314) links the critical approach to genre-analysis by criticizing the traditional approach to needs analysis, in which students' needs are described in terms of the genres and skills they will need for their target courses, and which have served as a justification of many EAP courses. Benesch regards the EAP enterprise as too "accommodationist" and "overly "pragmatic". Such an approach merely reinforces the dominant ideology of the university and aims to "assimilate … students uncritically into academic life" and society (Benesch 1993:714).

Out of the awareness of the failures of "method" and criticisms accommodationist approaches, has emerged the "postmethod condition". The postmethod condition will be discussed in terms of three important **attributes** that distinguish it from method, the interrelated **parameters** on which it pivots, and a set of **macrostrategies** that are based on theoretical, empirical and experiential knowledge.

Attributes

The postmethod condition signifies three interrelated attributes. First, it signifies an **alternative to method** (not an alternative method), which is in essence a product of bottom-up processes. The postmethod condition enables practitioners to generate location-specific, classroom-oriented innovative strategies. Second, it signifies **teacher autonomy**. According to Freeman (1991:35) the concept of method "overlooks the fund of experience and tacit knowledge about teaching which the teachers already have by virtue of their lives as students". The postmethod condition recognizes teachers' potential to know how to teach and act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula and textbooks, and also how to develop a critical approach to their own teaching practice (Kumaravadivelu 2003:33). The third alternative is **principled pragmatism**. As opposed to eclecticism, which is putting together practices from established methods, principled pragmatism is based on the pragmatics of pedagogy where the relationship between theory and

practice is realized only within the domain of application. Teachers follow this principle by developing what Prabhu (1990:162) calls "a sense of plausibility", which is their subjective understanding of the teaching they do. This sense of plausibility is shaped by self-observation, self-analysis, and self-evaluation.

In addition to flexibility in terms of syllabus, principled pragmatism has a critical dimension, which is referred to as **critical pragmatism** by Pennycook (1997). Critical pragmatism attempts to deconstruct not only methods, but also the "discourses of neutrality", which was found by Pennycook (1997:257-263) in much of EAP, as embodied by claims for the universality of academic discourses and genres. In reaction, critical pragmatism recognizes that "language, knowledge and culture form a complex tangle that cannot be avoided" (Pennycook 1997:257).

Parameters

Kumaravadivelu (2003:34) visualizes a postmethod pedagogy as a three-dimensional system, consisting of the parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility. **Particularity** requires that

> any language pedagogy must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu (Kumaravadivelu 2003:34)

Practicality relates to the relationship between theory and practice, with a teacher generated theory of practice, which entails that

> [i]t recognizes that no theory of practice can be fully useful and usable unless it is generated through practice (Kumaravadivelu 2003:34).

Possibility is derived from the ideas of postmodern pedagogues such as Paulo Freire, who take the position that any pedagogy is implicated in relations of power and dominance (Kumaravadivelu 2003:36), which calls for recognition of learners' and teachers' subject-positions: class, race, gender, and ethnicity, and for sensitivity towards their impact on education.

In Kumaravadivelu's opinion the boundaries of these parameters are blurred, and each one is shaped by the other two. Furthermore, the result of the relationship is shaped by context, and depends on what the participants bring to the situation.

Macrostrategies or guiding principles

It is assumed that the three pedagogical parameters outlined above constitute the basis of a postmethod pedagogy. However, a coherent framework is needed for guiding teaching professionals to "translate" the features of the pedagogy to the classroom context. In other words the principles must have generative power. In line with this way of thinking, postmethodology theorists outline universal principles or strategies for learning an L2 (compare Bell 2003). For instance, Brown's (2002:12) **principled approach** lists 12 "relatively widely accepted theoretical assumptions", and Kumaravadivelu (2003; 2006) outlines a framework of 10 **macrostrategies**, *viz.*: Maximize learning opportunities; Facilitate negotiated interaction; Minimize perceptual mismatches; Activate intuitive heuristics; Foster language awareness; Contextualize linguistic input; Integrate language skills; Promote learner autonomy; Ensure social relevance; and Raise cultural awareness.

Macrostrategies are guiding principles derived from current theoretical, empirical and experiential knowledge of L2 learning and teaching (Kumaravadivelu 2006:208). They serve as broad guidelines on which teachers can generate their own location-specific, needs-based **microstrategies** or classroom procedures, and they have the potential to constitute the operating principles for a situation-specific postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu 2006:201).

5.2.3 Macrostrategies as generic pedagogical principles

Although I fully support the notion of design principles, I wish to argue that these principles are not unique to postmodern perspectives. The idea of identifying general principles for course design is also found in Butler's doctoral thesis (2007:42 ff.), which formulates method-neutral design principles for the facilitation of writing interventions in academic contexts. Although Butler's "key issues in the teaching and writing of academic writing" have a wider scope than Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies (they include pedagogical principles, institutional constraints as well as show significant

resemblances with principles that can be inferred from genre-based writing methodologies). The following table highlights similarities between Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies, Butler's key issues in the teaching and learning of academic writing, and principles underlying genre-based writing pedagogy:

Table 5.1 Kumaravadivelu's postmethod principles, Butler's key issues in the teaching and learning of academic writing, and foundational principles of genre-based pedagogy

Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies	Butler's key issues in the teaching and learning of writing	Core principles in genre-based pedagogy
K1 Maximize learning opportunities	B4 Consider learners' needs and wants as a central issue in academic writing	Identify learners' needs (Paltridge 2001:40ff)
K2 Facilitate negotiated interaction	B9 Acknowledge assessment and feedback as central to course design	Stretch learners' abilities through interaction with teachers and more knowledgeable peers (Vygotsky 1978)
K3 Minimize perceptual mismatches	B9 Acknowledge assessment and feedback as central to course design	Facilitate a "visible pedagogy" (Hyland 2004:88)
K4 Activate intuitive heuristics	B3 Engage students' prior knowledge and abilities in different literacies to connect with academic literacy in a productive way	Validate learners' prior knowledge and draw upon students' previous experiences (Paltridge 2001:40ff)
K5 Foster language awareness	B11 Include productive strategies that achieve a focus on language form	Provide sufficient information about text structure, grammar and lexis, so as to empower students to make informed choices (Hyland 2003:131; 2004:104-105)
K6 Contextualize linguistic input	B10 Provide relevant, contextualized opportunities for engaging in academic writing tasks	Contextualization of linguistic input is implicit in all genre-based designs, since all applications are related to authentic texts and real-world problems.
K7 Integrate language skills	B13 Focus on the interrelationship between different language abilities in the promotion of writing	Integrate reading and writing skills (Johns 2005:35; Hyland 2004:113)
K8 Promote learner autonomy	B5 Create a learning environment where students feel safe to explore and find their own voices in the academic context	Note: *Promoting learner autonomy is a feature that is only weakly represented in genre-based designs.*
K9 Ensure social relevance	B2 Include an accurate account of the understandings and requirements of lecturers/supervisors in specific departments or faculties regarding academic writing	Identify the kinds of writing that learners need to do in their target situations (Hyland 2003:93) Make learners aware of how disciplinary conventions reflect the purposes of discourse communities.
K10 Raise cultural consciousness	B3 Engage students' prior knowledge and abilities in different literacies to connect with academic literacy in a productive way	Validate and draw upon students' previous experiences (Paltridge 2001:40ff) (their content schemata in this case)

In the remainder of this section I will discuss in more detail how Kumaravadivelu's 10 macrostrategies for language teaching and learning can be reconciled with key issues in the teaching of writing (Butler 2007), and with foundational principles of traditional genre approaches.

Macrostrategy #1: Maximize learning opportunities

This macrostrategy is based on the belief that teaching is a process of creating learning opportunities, and maximizing learning opportunities entails a willingness on the teacher's part to modify lesson plans continuously on the basis of ongoing feedback, in order to meet specific learner needs, wants, and situations. This strategy also addresses a key issue in the teaching of writing, which is formulated as follows by Butler (2007:4): "Consider learners' needs (and wants) as a central issue in academic writing".

Both Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategy #1 and Butler's 4th key issue appear to be underpinned by the belief that learning to write is needs-oriented, which is also one of the central beliefs of traditional genre approaches (Hyland 2004:88). Genre scholars firmly believe that learners are more motivated when they are allowed to focus on the types of writing they have to do for their chosen academic disciplines or which are related to their future professions, than when the writing is only indirectly related to their immediate purposes. This does not necessarily imply a staged curriculum. In fact, most present-day genre scholars no longer adhere to a rigid curriculum. Hyland (2003:67), for instance, reiterates the importance of continuous validation of a course design to ensure social relevance when saying:

> Behind every successful writing course there is a continuous process of questioning and revision to check the original results, evaluate the effectiveness of the course, and revise objectives.

Furthermore, Hyland (2004) says in connection with the stages involved in designing a genre-based course: "[T]hese steps are often more simultaneous than sequential". He adds that the extent to which a teacher has the freedom to make such course decisions depends on the situation, and that teachers have the flexibility to select materials, tasks and contexts, or even start with "a broad process objective" (Hyland 2004:93).

Macrostrategy #2: Facilitate negotiated interaction

Negotiated interaction means that the learner should be actively involved in interaction "as a textual activity, interaction as an interpersonal activity and interaction as an ideational activity" (Kumaravadivelu 2006:202). It seems to be based on the belief that learning to write is a type of apprenticeship, during which the teacher facilitates learners' understanding and use of language as system, language as discourse between interlocutors, and language as representative of real-world concepts, including ideology. Kumaravadivelu (2006:202) invokes studies on interactional modifications as empirical evidence to demonstrate that what enables learners to move beyond their current receptive and expressive capacities are opportunities to modify and restructure their interaction with their interlocutors until mutual comprehension is reached.

Genre approaches are fully compatible with this strategy (Faigley 1986:535; Hyland 2003:88). Building on Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, genre pedagogues claim that learners' abilities are stretched through interaction with teachers or more knowledgeable peers. To facilitate optimal development within each individual, the proponents of genre approaches encourage collaborative classroom activities, which include joint exploration of texts, negotiated construction of texts, and even generation of content (compare Hall 2001:232; 238).

Butler's (2007:49) 9th key issue, "Acknowledge assessment and feedback as central to course design" is fully compatible with Macrostrategy #2, Facilitate negotiated interaction. Butler's principle involves continuing dialogue between lecturer and student on the implementation of feedback in a non-threatening environment (Butler 2007:51). In particular, he advises that there should be sufficient opportunities for peer feedback and negotiation of meaning with lecturers and peers, which includes the involvement of learners in the process of materials development and task design.

Macrostrategy #3: Minimize perceptual mismatches

A definition of communication as "a gradual reduction of uncertainty", seems to be underpinned by the belief that learning to write is optimized through transparency on

the part of the facilitator, which I believe is what underlies macrostrategy 3. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006:203) it is essential for teachers "to sensitize themselves to the potential sources of mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation", which may be of a cognitive, communicative, linguistic, pedagogic, strategic, cultural, evaluative, procedural, instructional or attitudinal nature. An example of minimizing perceptual mismatches is provided in Butler's (2007:51) discussion of Key issue 9, "Acknowledge assessment and feedback as central to course design," *viz.* ensuring the transparency of assessment criteria.

Genre pedagogy seems to be in tandem with this macrostrategy, since most genre scholars believe that learning to write requires explicit outcomes and expectations (Hyland 2004:88). Genre pedagogues from ESP and Australian persuasions suggest that teachers should be explicit about what is being studied, why it is being studied, and what will be expected of students at the end of the course. This is what Bernstein (1990:73) calls a "visible pedagogy." The difference between method and postmethod positions in this regard is that postmethodologists seek to iron out perceptual mismatches through negotiation of understandings rather than by top-down communication of understandings.

Classroom strategies that may be derived from this principle are to be explicit about what is being studied and why it is being studied, and by formulating clear outcomes for the various lesson units.

Macrostrategy #4: Activate intuitive heuristics

Chomsky (1970) has argued that one cannot learn the entire grammatical structure of a language through explanation and instruction beyond the rudimentary level, for the reason that no teacher/lecturer possesses enough explicit knowledge about language structure to provide adequate explanation and instruction. The teacher can at most assist learners' grammatical abilities by designing classroom activities in such a way as "to give free range to the creative principles that humans bring to the process of language learning … [and] create a rich linguistic environment for the intuitive heuristics that the normal human being automatically possesses" (Chomsky 1970:108). It is this perspective more than any other, that has confirmed, for most language teachers, the

underlying belief that learning is optimized if learners' existing cognitive schemata are utilized.

This strategy coincides with Butler's (2007:44) third key issue, *viz.* "Engage students' prior knowledge and abilities in different literacies to connect with academic literacy in a productive way". According to Kumaravadivelu (2006:204) one way of activating the intuitive heuristics of the learner is to provide enough textual examples so that the learner can infer certain underlying rules of form and function. This advice is based on empirical studies showing that self-discovery plays a crucial role in learner comprehension and retention, regardless of learners' language ability (Kumaravadivelu 2006:204). It is, of course, also in accord with the procedures and techniques of one of the more influential traditional methods of language teaching, the Direct Method (Weideman 2002:17).

Macrostrategy #4 features indirectly in genre pedagogy, in that it can be inferred from certain classroom procedures proposed by genre pedagogues. First, it is manifested in familiarization activities – drawing on students' prior knowledge of the genre(s) in question, the contexts in which they are written, or the discipline in question. In this way students' previous experiences are validated, and integrated into the curriculum (Johns 2005:26). Second, the strategy is manifested by procedures such as eliciting (specific) existing knowledge about text structure, language and context to predict or pre-empt what is needed in the target situation (Paltridge 2001:40ff). Genre scholars from ESP and the Australian tradition use model texts to elicit tacit linguistic knowledge, a practice for which there is empirical support (Charney & Carlson 1995:111-112). Charney and Carlson (1995) show that models influence, in particular, the content and organization of students' texts. The explanation is as follows: Seeing a related or an analogous concept in a model may increase the salience or activation level of associated concepts in the writer's memory.

Macrostrategy #5: Foster language awareness

In the context of L2 learning and teaching language awareness refers to the deliberate attempt to draw learners' attention to the formal properties of their L2 in order to

increase the degree of explicitness required to promote L2 learning. Kumaravadivelu (2006:205) explains this strategy as follows:

> Language awareness is based on strategies that emphasize understanding, general principles, and operational experience. Strategies based on language awareness have intellectual appeal and instructional applicability needed to speed up the rate of learning. They also help learners sensitize themselves to aspects of the L2 that would otherwise pass unnoticed, and unlearn initial incorrect analyses by supplying negative evidence.

Underlying this principle must be the belief that learning to write is enhanced by explicit knowledge of language structure and disciplinary culture.

Butler's 11th key issue, *viz.* "Include productive strategies that achieve a focus on language form" (Butler 2007:54), may be brought to bear on this principle. He cautions against a focus on form in the traditional structural sense, but supports timely, selective attention to specific classes of linguistic items through the use of pedagogic tasks that draw students' attention to "aspects of the target language code" (Butler 2007:55). Particular emphasis is placed on language structures that "dominate academic discourse".

There seems to be a good measure of consensus between postmodernist and genre approaches in this regard. Genre scholars adhere to the belief that when learning to communicate effectively, students learn that they have to make choices from grammar and vocabulary that relate to their particular purposes and contexts. Therefore the teacher should provide sufficient information about text structure, grammar and lexis, so as to empower students to make informed choices.

Classroom activities following from this principle or strategy include using relevant texts as catalysts to elicit sociocultural understandings about the context and discourse community in which the text is situated (Johns 1995; 2005); identifying the rhetorical modes that feature prominently in the discipline and the genre under scrutiny; and identifying cohesive elements, tense, the preferred way of self-reference, politeness markers, formality markers and hedges (compare Hyland 2003:131; 2004:104-105).

Macrostrategy #6: Contextualize linguistic input

Syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of language cannot be understood as isolated linguistic components with a unidirectional information flow. They are acquired together in authentic contexts. It is therefore essential to bring to the learner's attention the integrated nature of language. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006:205) the responsibility for contextualizing linguistic input lies more with the classroom teacher than with the syllabus designer or the textbook writer.

Butler's 10th key issue (2007:53), "Provide relevant, contextualized opportunities for engaging in academic writing tasks that students feel contribute towards their development as academic writers in the tertiary context", partially overlaps with this macrostrategy. However, he emphasizes the broader disciplinary context, rather than the specific situational context, and develops a strong argument in favour of discipline-specific writing courses.

Genre approaches are by nature integrated and contextualized, in the sense that their main focus is social action (meaning-making) in a particular context within a particular discourse community. Therefore, genre pedagogues prefer to depart from authentic writing tasks and prototypical examples of target domain texts. This aligns them, historically, with what Weideman (2002:29f.) calls the first important interpretation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Macrostrategy #7: Integrate language skills

Language-centred movements in TESOL have taught the so-called "language skills" (listening, speaking, reading and writing) separately (Kumaravadivelu 2006:206). However, there is very little empirical or theoretical justification for such a pedagogy. In fact, the available empirical, theoretical, and pedagogical information points to the need to integrate language skills for effective teaching because the nature of L2 learning involves parallel integration of language. The current, widely held belief that L2 learners do not acquire language skills separately is thus backed up by a sufficient body of evidence.

Butler's (2007:55) 13th key strategy, "focus on the interrelationship between different language abilities in the promotion of writing", coincides with this macrostrategy. Butler (2007) refers explicitly to an integration of reading and writing.

Although genre approaches are primarily aimed at improving writing, skills integration is emphasized by genre scholars such as Johns (2005) and Hyland (2004). Johns (2005:35) contends that "any course that ostensibly teaches writing also must integrate the other traditional skills, especially the careful, analytical reading of texts". Hyland (2004) applies this principle in a genre-based marketing communication syllabus that is structured according to the ways genres are sequenced and used in actual language events. Some of the genres are spoken and others are written. He claims that a syllabus which reflects a real-world use of genres "reaps the benefits of closely integrating reading, speaking and writing activities in the classroom" (Hyland 2004:113).

Genre knowledge is best acquired if students discover for themselves how they work. This can be facilitated by requiring students to read given examples in various ways (skimming, scanning, search-reading and comprehension reading) to elicit salient characteristics, and generalize on the basis of these.

Macrostrategy #8: Promote learner autonomy

Kumaravadivelu (2006:206) believes language learning to be an essentially autonomous activity. He urges language teachers to help learners learn how to learn, and to equip them with the metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective strategies necessary to self-direct their own learning. In this way the consciousness of good language learners are raised about the learning strategies they seem to possess intuitively, and the strategies are made explicit and systematic so that they are available to improve the language learning abilities of other learners as well. Butler's (2007:45) fifth key issue, "Create a learning environment where students feel safe to explore and find their own voices in the academic context", clearly ties in with this macrostrategy.

In contrast to the previously mentioned strategies, promoting learner autonomy is not one of the key features of genre-based approaches. Although the process of assisted learning includes a gradual reduction in teacher assistance and reliance on models,

traditional genre-based syllabi leave little scope for self-directed learning. More time should be spent, not only at the end of a course, to encourage students to figure out on their own how new genres work. Students should also have the freedom to challenge genre boundaries and genre conventions throughout the course, and not merely after they have "mastered" one or more genres. The critical edge that postmodernism has added to our understanding of language practices and their teaching and learning requires that we should be critical also of the shape of the lingual units we deal with, lest we (and our students) become victims of ossified structures and practices, rather than creative users of them.

Macrostrategy #9: Ensure social relevance

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006:207) any serious attempt to understand L2 education entails an understanding of social and political contexts in which language use is embedded. A large majority of post-process pedagogues believe that learning to write is a purpose-driven activity. Therefore, determining learning purpose is one of the language teacher's most important tasks.

Genre approaches are built on the premise that effective teaching entails identifying the kinds of writing that learners will need to do in their target situations, and incorporating the findings in the curriculum as well as in the materials selected and designed (Hutchison & Waters 1987:60; Hyland 2003:93). This macrostrategy may be seen as pivotal in teaching discipline-specific writing courses, particularly if the teacher departs from authentic writing prompts in disciplinary study materials.

Butler's 2nd key issue (2007), "Include an accurate account of the understandings and requirements of lecturers/supervisors in specific departments or faculties regarding academic writing", may be subsumed under the notion of social relevance, because in actual fact this issue has a bearing on the target situation of academic writing interventions (Butler 2007:43), *viz.* the disciplinary context. This context includes both surface features and the rhetorical characteristics of the discourse community.

The classroom teacher can implement this principle by departing from authentic disciplinary writing tasks, and making these kinds of writing the focus of classroom activities and teaching materials.

Macrostrategy #10: Raise cultural consciousness

Traditionally, one of the goals of culture teaching was to help the learner gain an understanding of first language speakers from a cognitive, affective and behavioural perspective (Stern 1992). Recent explorations by L2 educationists seek to expand the horizon of culture learning and teaching to include the development of sociocultural knowledge through additional language learners of English. In other words the L2 learner is treated as a cultural informant (Kumaravadivelu 2003:268-270). Raising cultural consciousness then implies a belief that language-learning is enhanced if the teacher takes cognisance of how L2 learners construct meaning in cross-cultural encounters, and are encouraged to share their own experiences and perspectives with the teacher and peers.

This principle ties in with Kumaravadivelu's (2006) strategy #5, "Foster language awareness," which deals with a heightened consciousness of and reflection on certain practices in society. In addition, both can be related to an overt aim of genre-based disciplinary writing, *viz.* to build on learners' content schemata (Hyland 2004:55-56).

Strategies associated with this principle are to elicit content and subject-field knowledge from students, and making them aware of how knowledge they already possess ties in with writing conventions. An article or a chapter from a book may also be selected in co-operation with a subject-field teacher, which may sensitize them to important epistemological considerations in the field.

5.3 A possible explanation for shared pedagogical foundations

The previous section has alluded to a possible explanation for the striking similarities between the sets of principles derived from Kumaravadivelu (2003; 2006), Butler (2007), and genre approaches to teaching writing: methodologists as well as postmethodologists seem to share certain core beliefs about how writing abilities are

acquired, and these beliefs translate into pedagogical principles that are consciously or unconsciously applied in course design and classroom teaching. However, methodologists usually depart from classroom experience; they distil from this experience a set of beliefs about how students learn, build a syllabus around these beliefs (without defining mediating principles), and map classroom activities directly on teaching methods. Postmethodologists, on the other hand, claim to depart from "empirical evidence", draw general principles from the evidence, and then allow classroom teachers the freedom to devise activities on the basis of these principles, without confining them to syllabi.

Despite this apparent irreconcilability of method and postmethod they seem to be underpinned by a single design process, of which certain phases are foregrounded and others are backgrounded, resulting in different trajectories within the larger process. Figure 1 below represents the purported underlying process, and indicates the trajectories mapped out by proponents of the two opposing paradigms:

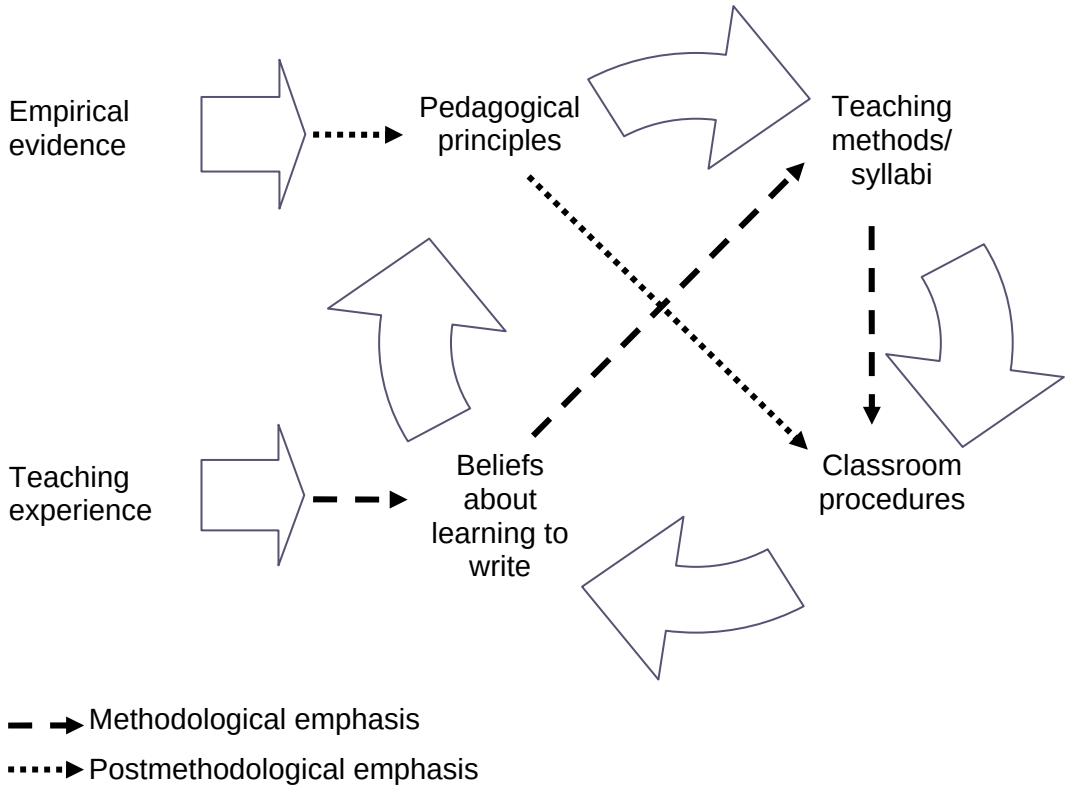

Figure 5.2 Pedagogical cycle underlying methodological and postmethodological approaches

The next section demonstrates how the notion of an underlying pedagogy can be integrated into a model for teaching genre-based disciplinary writing at tertiary institutions.

5.4 A method-neutral model for teaching genre-based writing at tertiary institutions

The foregoing explanation suggests that the difference between method and postmethod is a matter of focus, rather than a matter of mutual incompatibility. This line of thought resonates with Bell's (2003) preference for a position that mediates between top-down and bottom-up. Bell (2003) argues that "to believe in what we as teachers are doing inevitably requires us to have a set of prescriptions when we arrive in the classroom – a set of beliefs we are committed to". Even scholars of postmodern persuasions seem to be willing to concede that there is some kind of structure that mediates between a loose set of pedagogical principles and classroom practice. For instance, Kumaravadivelu (2006:101-102) provides space for a **presyllabus** – a syllabus that is continuously revised on the basis of learner feedback; and Prabhu (1990:175) acknowledges that methods have the "power to influence – to invoke, activate, interact with, alter in some way, and generally keep alive – differing teachers' differing senses of plausibility, thus helping to promote and enlarge the occurrence of 'real' teaching." However, unlike modernists, who tacitly adhere to a unidirectional (top-down) model, postmodernists posit a dialectic relationship between theory or principle, and classroom practice. The model represented by figure 5.3 below derives its basic design from Breen, Hird, Milton, Olivier, and Thwaite's representation of "Teacher conceptualizations and classroom practices" (Breen, Hird, Milton, Olivier & Thwaite 2001:473). However, it pivots on the postmodern notion of principled pragmatism, and is situated in the context of teaching and learning to write according to tertiary-level institutional and disciplinary norms.

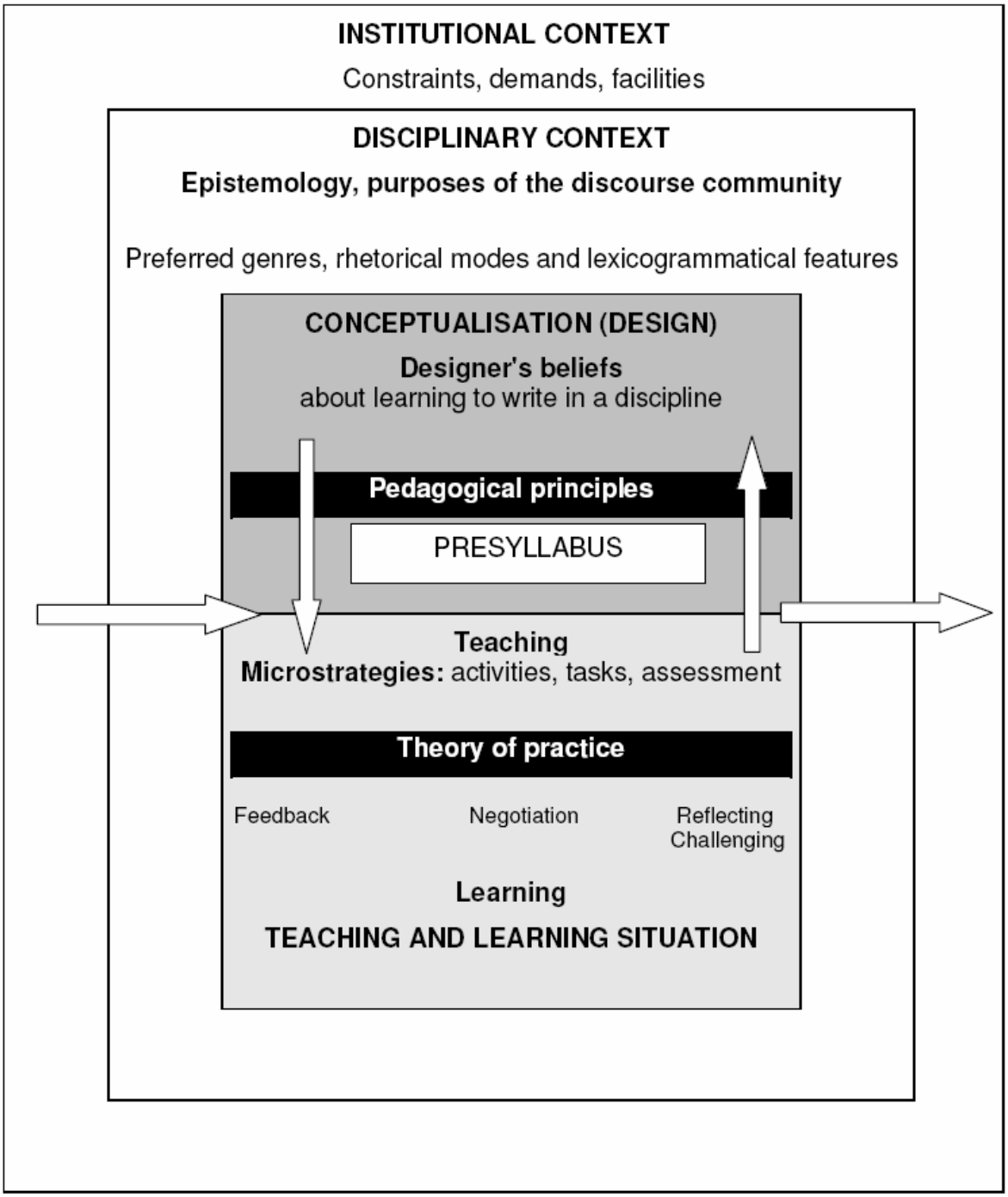

Figure 5.3 A teaching and learning model for tertiary-level disciplinary writing

The model can be explained in the following way: Pedagogical principles (macrostrategies) and their related beliefs constitute the core of this applied linguistic design. However, these principles and the procedures generated from them form part of a network of dynamic relationships. Both the design component and the practical component (teaching and learning) are embedded in an institution imbued with specific

ideologies, practices, demands and constraints, and both components are surrounded by academic disciplines, whose interests have to be served by courses aimed at improving students' academic literacies. A dialectic relationship exists between disciplinary communities and the language professionals who are responsible for course design and presentation. The teacher of disciplinary writing classes is presumed to have the ability, the responsibility and the freedom to adapt and transform design principles according to learner needs. The teacher, in turn, is transformed by his or her experience in the teaching-learning situation. Over time, language teachers evolve a coherent pedagogic framework which will eventually lead them to construct their own theory or theories of practice.

Justification of the model is derived from Weideman's (2008) characterization of applied linguistic designs, as expounded and schematically interpreted in the introductory section of Chapter 2. Similar to Weideman's conceptualization, the model proposed in Figure 2 presupposes a problem or a need arising from the institutional and disciplinary context. Combining the designer's beliefs about learning to write and sound pedagogical principles, the designer proposes an instructional design or presyllabus, which is modified and fine-tuned through evidence generated from application in the teaching and learning situation. The remainder of this chapter focuses on a presyllabus for an essay-writing module.

5.5 The academic essay

5.5.1 Students' problems with writing academic essays

The academic essay, also known as the 2000- or 3000-word assignment, is often the undergraduate student's first acquaintance with comprehensive independent academic writing. The academic essay is also the most commonly written undergraduate genre in the humanities and research oriented social sciences, as empirically noted by various researchers abroad, and as borne out by the results of the research conducted at the University of Pretoria.

The academic essay involves "the presentation of a written argument to defend or explain a position, typically drawing on library sources rather than research that the

student himself or herself has conducted" (Hyland 2009:130). This form of extended student writing is regarded by some scholars as a **curriculum genre** rather than an **expert genre** (compare Johns 1995; 1997; 2002). Hyland (2009:132) takes this point further by asserting that the essay is "a key acculturation practice" that encourages a critical and questioning attitude to the direction of the acculturation, however is nonetheless to encourage development through a curriculum genre to competence in an expert genre. It guides students in making connections between theory and practice, linking theories, evaluating research, arguing cases and providing evidence.

However, non-mother tongue English speaking students, in particular, seem to find essay-writing demands daunting. Hinkel (2002:74) found that non-mother tongue students experienced particular difficulty at the level of style. According to him their essays display many features of personal narratives, such as first person pronouns and a preponderance of the past tense, vague nouns, coordinating pronouns and predictive adjectives.

Many reasons have been proposed for students' difficulties in writing academic essays. Hounsell (1987:114) argues that it is difficult, if not impossible, for students to work out what their lecturers expect them to do in their essays, and exemplifies this claim by giving the following example of a student's (mis)understanding of argumentation: "Well, from the comments on the essay, I gathered the tutor wanted me to argue about something, but I mean, by presenting the material as the research had demonstrated, it was a mild form of argument. I wasn't going to get aggressive, in an essay" (Hounsell 1987:115). Through a number of examples of students' reflection on their own essay-writing experiences, Lillis (2001:60-72) demonstrates that essay-writing is a mystery for the majority of students, and that teacher feedback does not do much to improve the situation. When asked about what a successful response to an essay question was, Bridget, a first-year social work student, said the following with regard to an essay for which she obtained a higher mark than for her other essays:

> It was better in terms of marks. It was one of those essays I wrote and I didn't really know whether I was writing what she wanted. So I just sort of did it to the best of my ability. And it turned out she liked it.

Lillis' view ties in with Swales's (1996) notion of the academic essay as a member of the class of **occluded genres** practised in the academy. He characterizes occluded genres as "research-process genres" or "genres that operate to support and validate the manufacture of knowledge" (Swales 1996:46–47). Other examples are request letters, research proposals, recommendation letters, and grant proposal reviews. These genres are labeled "occluded" as it is difficult for students and novice professionals to obtain examples or models in order to distil the relevant criteria for writing in these genres. The counter-observation in this regard is that students are novice writers. Practices being learned are always by definition "occluded", not patent, to novices. The challenge for those teaching writing, as for those receiving such writing tasks, is to make the requirements patent.

With regard to essays in particular, Paltridge (2001:62) contends that even though a university department may have a collection of samples to look at, it is often difficult for students to know which of these are "best examples". As such this does not make them occluded, but very often assessment criteria are not readily available. He adds that the requirements for essays vary extensively between disciplines and departments, both in terms of structure and language.

5.5.2 Approaches to teaching academic essays

Dudley-Evans (2002:227) distinguishes between general approaches and more scholarly approaches to teaching the academic essay. General approaches are said to emphasize certain skills required in writing academic essays, such as (1) planning, writing drafts, revising; (2) summarizing, paraphrasing and synthesizing; (3) continuous writing in an academic style organized appropriately; (4) using quotations, footnotes, bibliography; and (5) finding and analyzing evidence, and using data appropriately. Some of the general works, including style guides and textbooks, focus strongly on process, e.g. Oshima and Hogue (1999), while others emphasize rhetorical-functional purposes such as *narration*, *explanation* (primarily through discussing cause and effect), *exposition*, *similarity* and *contrast*, etc. (compare, for instance, Leki, 1989; Savage & Mayer 2005; Redman 2001). Certain manuals suggest that rhetorical mode should be used as the guiding principle to structure the essay as a whole, resulting in templates for writing *narrative/chronological, descriptive, argumentative, cause and effect,* and *comparison*

and contrast essays (compare, for example, Savage & Mayer 2005; Oshima & Hogue 1997). Others, for example Turley (2000), use the three-part structure of the essay (introduction, body and close) as the main organizing principle, interwoven with threads on grammar, punctuation and referencing.

In opposition to general, eclectic approaches is the attempt by Hyland (1990) to account for the structure of the academic essay, the argumentative essay in particular, using Swalesean genre analysis as a point of departure. He suggests that the argumentative essay type has three stages: a thesis, an argument and a conclusion, each comprising a number of optional "moves". The **thesis** could potentially comprise a gambit (a controversial or dramatic statement), information (background material), a proposition (which states the writer's position and delimits the topic), an evaluation (brief support for the proposition) and a marker (which introduces the rest of the essay by providing a list of the main parts); the **argument** could be staged into a marker (which signals the claim and relates it to the text), a restatement (a rephrasing or repetition of the proposition), a claim (which provides a reason for acceptance of the proposition), and support (grounds that underpin the claim); and the **conclusion** could include a marker (which signals the conclusion boundary, a consolidation (relating the argument to the proposition), an affirmation (which restates the proposition) and a closing statement (which widens the context or perspective of proposition).

Dudley-Evans (2002:228) has criticized Hyland's approaches with regard to the optionality of moves, the generic nature of the template, and its apparent rigidity. In view of their optionality, he does not regard them to be "moves" in the true sense of the word, or rather in the Swalesean idiom. To him they are what Young (1994:165) describes as "strands of discourse that recur discontinuously throughout a particular language event and, taken together, structure that event". These strands recur and are interspersed with others, resulting in an interweaving of threads as the discourse progresses. Thus he argues that Hyland's model is limited and seems to be based more on an idealized essay structure than a detailed analysis of an authentic corpus of essays (*i.e.* empirical evidence). Dudley-Evans's main point of criticism is that the model fails to account for the fact that there is considerable variation among the essays required by different disciplines or even within one discipline among different subject lecturers.

With this criticism Dudley-Evans (2002:228-231) clearly reverts back to the more general rhetorical-technical approach, as demonstrated by the syllabus he proposes. His course design focuses on issues such as preference of formal to informal verbs, avoidance of colloquial expressions, avoidance of contracted forms, preference for nominalized verbs, avoidance of run on expressions, selective use of personal forms, and the use of hedging devices when making claims. In essence these features comprise a checklist that would be equally valid for other genres in academic writing.

Postmodern thinkers are opposed to seeking a solution in simply teaching the conventions of essayist literacy in a straightforward and explicit way. However, some of them agree that a measure of explicitness is necessary (compare Lillis 2001:56-57). In Lillis' view student writers need to become familiar with the writing conventions of the academy. Key terms should be clarified, such as what a claim is and what counts as supporting evidence in a particular subject field. However, she emphasizes a collaborative relationship between lecturer and learner and the need for more contact between student writers and "knowledgeable insiders" in order to negotiate the nature of specific tasks, including the conventions surrounding particular essay questions and the conventions that the student writers are expected to write within. "Writing for someone who, they feel, is working with them at meaning making" is extremely important for students at this stage of their participation in higher education" (Lillis 2001:76). Her views are clearly aligned with those of critical genre pedagogues, who have moved away completely from the supposedly prescriptive templates of the moves and steps era, although the notions of discourse community and shared purpose still play pivotal roles in their way of thinking.

5.6 A critical genre-based presyllabus for essay-writing interventions

For the purpose of the present research an approach of considered eclecticism was chosen to outline a presyllabus for teaching essay-writing to students of the humanities: I draw upon the postmodern idea of a principled (but non-prescriptive) programme, the Vygotskyan notion of scaffolding, as well as the neo-Vygotskyan ideas of cognitive and social apprenticeship as adopted by the New Rhetoricians, and the Teaching and Learning Cycle of the Australian genre school (anchored in Hallidayan Functional

Grammar). Figure 5.4 outlines a proposed presyllabus for subject-specific as well as generic contexts:

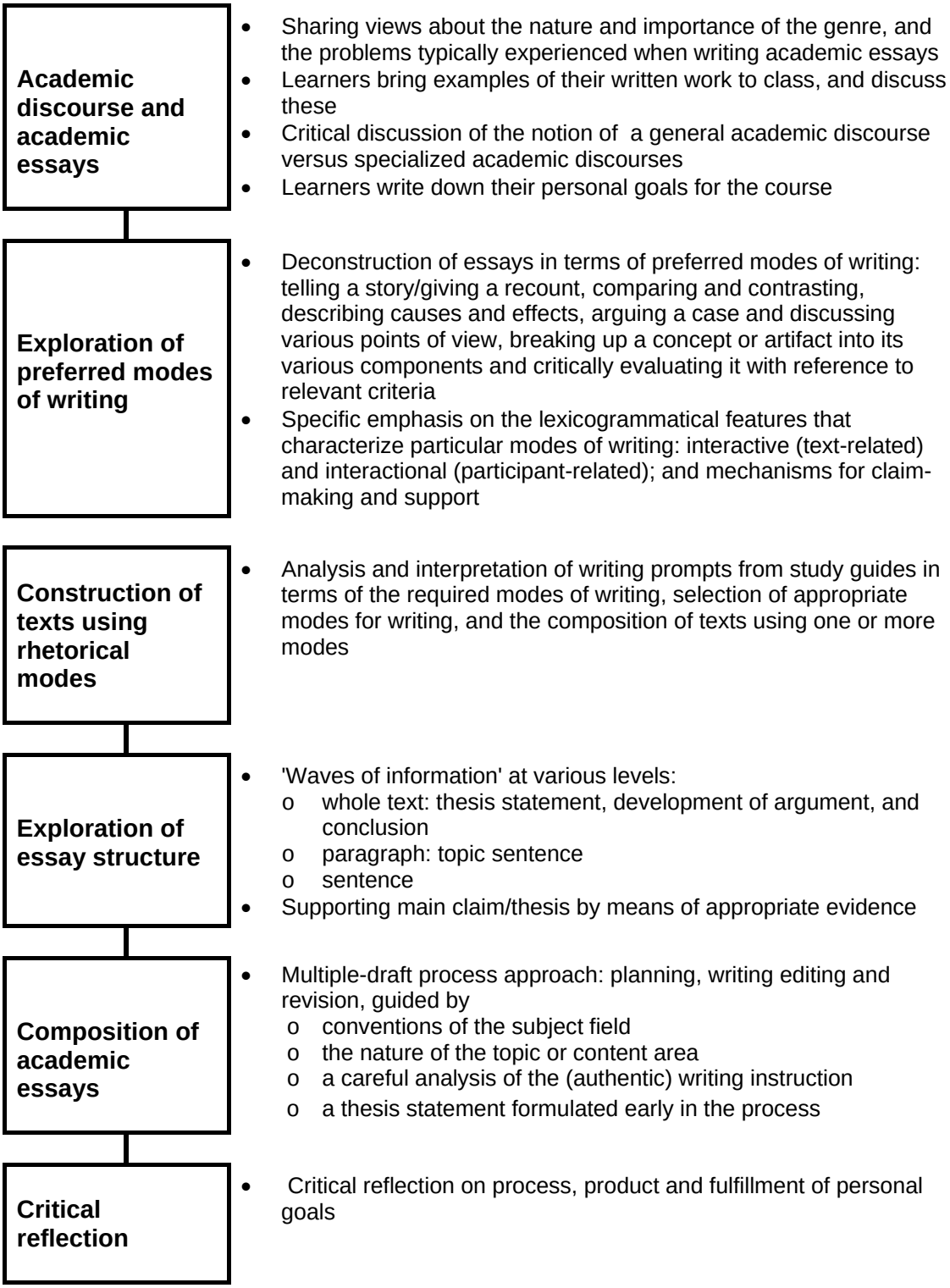

Figure 5.4 Presyllabus (Teaching Learning Model) for essay-writing interventions

Potential constraints in implementing this presyllabus are the following: In the case of narrow-angled (subject-specific) foci close co-operation between language experts and subject-field experts would be needed to reconcile target-domain needs and the aims of language pedagogy, and even in ideal circumstances it might be difficult for a language expert to learn enough from contextual analysis of the content discipline in question to really bring an "insider" perspective to the classroom. An institutional constraint would be the allocation of full-time or contract staff from an academic literacy unit or a writing centre to each and every discipline within the University.

Wide-angled approaches (generic or semi-generic), on the other hand, pose problems of generalizability, as the features of pedagogical genres can differ considerably across disciplines. Hyland (2009:129) cites Braine (1995), who for example, found with regard to *laboratory reports* that despite their common name, no two technical and engineering disciplines used the same generic structure. Prior's (1998) ethnographic studies confirm this diversity. My own study of eight humanities disciplines at the University of Pretoria reinforces this picture. Not only are instructional verbs that signify rhetorical modes used differently in different subject-fields; also the "moves" or elements included in introductions and the structure of arguments differ.

A question that arises out of this quandary, is which of the two approaches is more feasible and more effective than the other, and how should benefits be offset against disadvantages?

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that writing course design that is focused on preferred genres in institutional settings cannot simply be dismissed as prescriptivist. Approaches across the spectrum, stretching from post-process methods to different varieties of postmethod pedagogy, seem to share a common underlying structure. The components of the model are beliefs about language learning, principles or methods derived from them, a presyllabus, and teaching strategies or classroom procedures.

For the purpose of this thesis the presyllabus prototype has been extended by means of Vygotskyan-type scaffolding and the neo-Vygotskyan ideas of cognitive and social apprenticeship. It is dynamic and goal-oriented in that the syllabus moves from a sturdily scaffolded instructional base towards free-flowing creativity – broadly framed upon the Australian Teaching and Learning Cycle. Hallidayan Functional Grammar fills in the detail of the presyllabus and ensures purpose-driven choices from lexis and grammar.

The genre focus of the presyllabus is the academic essay, which has been empirically proven to be the most frequently required academic genre in the humanities but is nevertheless an extremely problematic genre for undergraduate students. This chapter has suggested that both sharp (subject-specific) and wide (generic) foci are merited for essay-writing interventions. Chapters 6 and 7 will describe the design and evaluation of a narrow-angled intervention, whereas chapter 8 deals with a wider-angled intervention.