Chapter 6: Essay-writing course for students of history – contextual analysis

6.1 Introduction and rationale

Chapter 5 proposed an instructional framework for designing academic writing courses, and outlined a presyllabus for the academic essay. It was indicated that the presyllabus may serve as the basis for designing both narrow-angled and wide-angled interventions. This chapter deals with a narrow-angled approach, more specifically the exploration of the discourse of a particular academic subject-field, which will serve to inform the design of a subject-specific writing intervention.

The present inquiry is merited through increasing evidence from corpus, discourse and genre analysis that there is significant variation between disciplines in the way that they structure their discourses, in particular their written genres (Dudley-Evans 2001; Hyland 2001; 2006; Biber 1988; 2006; Hewings & Hewings 2001). Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995:1) argue that genres are not merely formally linked to disciplines; they are also intimately linked to a discipline's methodology, and they package information in ways that conform to a discipline's norms, values and ideology.

A number of studies conducted by genre analysts have emphasized the systematic relationship between disciplinary purposes, genre and register (compare Bhatia 2004; Hyland 2000; Jones 2004; Hewings 2004; Hyland & Bondi 2007). However, few studies have thus far given a systematic account of form function relationships in specific disciplines, have used such information as input for course design and have evaluated the effect of subject and/or genre-specific teaching interventions.

For the present research history was chosen as the field of focus, first because academic essays were found to be the most prolific genre in study materials of the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies (in comparison with other departments in the Faculty of Humanities); and second, because history as a subject-field exists primarily by virtue of language, as confirmed by Schleppegrell, Achugar and Oteiza (2004:88):

> History provides a particularly good example of discipline-specific literacy because it is constructed through texts that cannot easily be experienced hands-on.

The next section describes the procedure and findings of the contextual research that informed the design of a subject-specific writing intervention for students of history.

6.2 Procedure

Following the advice of Bhatia (1993; 2004) on where and how to start conducting contextual research for genre-based pedagogy, four recently published manuals on writing about history (cf. Marius & Page 2005; Rael 2004; Rampolla; 2004; and Storey 2004) were studied. On the basis of the researcher's understanding of the purposes of historical writing and how they tie in with writing conventions, an overview document was compiled and subjected to member-checking.

Involving practising members of the disciplinary culture is one of the most effective ways of bringing an insider perspective to the analysis of a genre (Hyland 2000:143). Although experts may be unaware of the effects of their practices, their understandings are important, because these may confirm the researcher's findings, validate his/her insights and add psychological reality to analyses that are done. Four senior staff members from the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies were approached to perform the first expert review on a summary the researcher had made of the epistemology and writing conventions of history as a subject-field: one lecturer with ten years' experience, one associate professor and two full professors. The experts' responses, included as comments on the electronic copy of the summary, as well as additional suggestions included in e-mailed responses, pointed out a number of weaknesses and gaps in the researcher's overview. Most prominent was the fact that the researcher had relied too heavily on style guides and writing manuals. The experts pointed out that this genre (writing manuals) tends to present the conventions of the discourse community in a rather simplistic and often prescriptive way. One of the experts included a list of scholarly sources on historical writing to assist the researcher in gaining a more balanced perspective of historical writing. The recommended sources included scholarly overviews of trends in historical writing from different ideological perspectives and historical periods (Burke 2001a; Evans 1997; Marwick 2001; Shafer 1980; Sharpe 2001; Tosh 2006), as well as overviews of historical writing on South

African history (Smith 1988; Saunders 1988). This review led to a thorough revision of the researcher's initial understandings, which in turn served as the basis for the first draft of the syllabus.

The next section comprises an overview of the purposes of historical writing, as understood by the researcher after the expert review.

6.2.1 The purposes of historical writing

Similar to most other scientific disciplines, historians have delimited their field of practice and scholarly inquiry in vastly different ways throughout the ages. Not only have the awareness about history and the purported "uses" of history undergone major changes since the early 19th century, but different theoretical and thematic emphases have also occurred in different parts of the world. Next, a brief overview is given of the major trends in historical writing.

The 19th century

In the early 19th century history became professionalized. Almost all leading historians were professionals (Burke 2001a:5-6). During this time European history was primarily associated with Romanticism (Burke 2001a:1-2), which was the dominant paradigm in European thought and art around 1800. Romanticists believed that the past had to be valued for its own sake, and should be detached from present-day concerns. The intellectual movement that advocated this view is known as **historicism**, and historicism represented the academic wing of the Romantic obsession with the past (Tosh 2005:6-8). The leading figure was Leopold von Ranke, a professor at Berlin University from 1824 to 1872 (Tosh 2006:7). Rankean historians thought of history as essentially a narrative of events (Burke 2001a:4; 19; 2001b:283). The thematic emphasis was national and international, rather than local; particularly the politics of the nation state as viewed through the deeds of "great men" (Burke 2001a:5; 31). Therefore, the sources had to be official records, emanating from governments and preserved in archives. This thematic focus is referred to in the historical literature as "a view from above".

The New History

The 1950s and 1960s saw the upcoming of the so-called New History (*nouvelle histoire*), which originated in France (Burke 2001a:2). Much of the New History has been written in deliberate reaction against the traditional paradigm, particularly in reaction to the belief that there is only one truth, which has to be uncovered by the historian. New historians have deliberately moved away from "the voice of history" to heteroglossia or varied and constructed opposing voices (Shafer 1980:18), and to cultural relativism (the belief that humans perceive the world through a grid of conventions, schemata and stereotypes) (Burke 2001a:5-6). In line with a more relativistic approach, New Historians advocate the examination of a greater variety of evidence, such as oral, visual, and statistical. In addition, they no longer focus only on the grand narratives of the past (Burke 2001a:4; 15; 20), but begin to look toward other new branches of historical enquiry as well, such as economic history, social history, and cultural history (Evans 1997:21). Hence the slogan "total history". This concern with the whole range of human activity has encouraged interdisciplinary collaboration with social anthropologists, economists, literary critics, psychologists, and sociologists. However, the rapprochement with the social sciences introduced a passive, anonymous written style in the work of New Historians (Evans 1997:38), which may have reinforced the trend in style guides for writing about history to prohibit all reference to the author as an individual, particularly the word "I" (compare Rael 2004:18). "Social science history" reached its most extreme form in the US during the late 1960s and 1970s. The influence of the social sciences is particularly pronounced in the area of methodology (Shafer 1980:34): the search for regularities and generalizations in order to predict (and even prescribe) goals for conduct, and the tendency to be concerned more with analysis than narrative (Shafer 1980:11; Burke 2001b:282). During the 1970s and 1980s a number of the New Historians started concerning themselves with "history from below", which reflects a determination to take ordinary people's views and their experience of social change more seriously (Burke 2001a:3). This trend was furthered in the Marxist and Postmodern traditions.

Marxism

Marxism is underpinned by the belief that the driving force of history is the struggle by human societies to meet their material needs, which is why the Marxist theory is known

as "historical materialism". The highest form was believed to be industrial capitalism, which was destined to give way to socialism, at which point human need would be satisfied. However, after the fall of international Communism, belief in historical materialism has sharply declined. Because it is a schematic interpretation of the course of human development – a progression from lower to higher forms of production – Marxist history is widely regarded as metahistory (Tosh 2005: 29).

From the perspective of its rhetorical emphasis, Marxism is structural or analytic history, as opposed to narrative history. One of the important contributions of Marxist history is its focus on questions of cause and consequence, and its explanation of the origins of the economic and political transformations of the day (Tosh 2005:149).

Postmodernism

Despite the changes that took place in historians' outlook, the foundational way that historians "know" the past – *viz.* that in essence empiricism and rational analysis (inference) determine the content and the form of the historian's narrative – had seemingly remained largely unchanged until Postmodernism, or the "narrative-linguistic turn" during the 1970s (compare Munslow 2001). One of the main characteristics of postmodernism is the emphasis on language (Munslow 2001). In the postmodern view, identity is constructed by language, which is fractured and unstable, and therefore all knowledge of the past becomes part of discursive constructions (Tosh 2005:194). According to postmodernists there are no grounds to be found in historical records themselves for preferring one way of construing its meaning rather than another. Therefore, they argue, the past cannot be uncovered, it can only be invented (Tosh 2005:202-203). Postmodernists are particularly concerned with narrative. However, for them the function of story-telling is to make sense of one's own experiences, and not to reconstruct an objective past. They are generally sceptical about the "grand narratives" or "metanarratives" of traditional historians, contending that the past can merely be arranged into a multiplicity of stories that are open to a vast number of interpretations, which are all equally valid (or invalid) (Tosh 2005:198).

Postmodernists have experimented with narrative in various ways. Burke (2001b:290-297) describes a number of these. One option for the historian is to tell his/her story

from more than one point of view. Another strategy is to relate a series of events, and at the same time to analyze these events from the position of a later, better-informed observer. Yet another possibility is described as "micronarrative", and stands in opposition to "grand narrative." A micronarrative is a kind of microhistory, which is the telling of a story about ordinary people in their local setting (in other words social history), but at the same time using narrative to illuminate structures. An example of this kind of history is the social history of the South African historian Charles van Onselen, who uses illustrative stories, like the story about the 18th century sharecropper Kas Maine, to convey how the social structures, life cycles, and political and economic conditions were experienced by actual people (Tosh 2005:157). Table 6.1 summarizes the most important traditions in historical writing in terms of their conceptual and rhetorical foci.

Table 6.1 Overview of the most important Western traditions in historical writing

Paradigm	Conceptual foci	Rhetorical foci
Rankean history (19th century)	• Political history (history from above) • Truth-centred • Official records the only "legitimate" evidence	• Narration – as retelling • Chronology
New history (mid 20th century)	• Social history (history from below) • Interdisciplinary influences • More rigorous research methodologies • Variety of evidence-types	• Analysis • Cause and effect
Marxist history (1960-)	• Historical materialism (interprets and evaluates human development in various forms of development) • Class-centred	• Analysis • Cause and effect • Explanation
Postmodern history (1970-)	• Anti-positivist • Language is central in the formation of historical knowledge • Socially reflective • Recognition of a "multiplicity of voices"	• Narration - as (re)construction • Critical reflection

When considering these foci, three prominent notions or concepts emerge: time, which is an essential element of narratives; causality, which is part and parcel of analysis; and evaluation, which is integral to critical analysis. These notions are captured in the following explications of the purposes of historical writing from writing manuals:

- To tell the story in the present of something that happened in the past (Munslow 2001);

- To explain why certain things in the past happened as they did (Rampolla 2004:1);
- To become aware of, appreciate and judge perspectives other than one's own, both through historical data, and through interpretation of what other historians have said (Marius & Page 2005:1-4).

Thus, despite the various emphases in the historical writing of different periods, three concepts stand out, and are pivotal to understanding why historians write as they write or prefer to write. Eggins, Wignell and Martin (1993:75) have captured the centrality of these concepts in their summary of what students of history should learn:

> a sense of time, a sense of cause-effect relationship, an understanding of the interaction of past and present, and an understanding that history is a dynamic relationship of people, place, and time in which some events can be judged to be more significant than others.

A number of scholars working in the tradition of Systemic Functional Grammar have attempted to explicate the systematic relationships between historical purposes, the main concepts related to them, and the preferred genres and modes of writing (Coffin 2003; 2006; Martin, 2003; Martin & White 2005; Schleppegrell & Achugar 2003; Schleppegrell *et al.* 2004). Table 6.2 summarizes the essence of the complex relationships described by these authors:

Table 6.2 Relationships between the concepts of history and writing conventions of historians

Purpose	**Concepts**	**Genres**	**Salient rhetorical modes**
(Re)tell a story	Time	Autobiography Biography Historical recount Historical account	*Record* Narrate Describe
Understand and explain why things happened as they did	Cause and effect	Explanation (factorial or consequential)	*Explain* Cause and effect Compare and contrast
Appreciate and judge events, structures, other historians	Judgement and evaluation	Exposition Discussion Challenge	*Argue* Reflect Discuss Critically analyze

If time, cause/effect and judgement are the central conceptual dimensions of historical discourse (although judgement differs from the other two, in that it belongs to the interpersonal rather than the conceptual or ideational dimension of discourse), and if these concepts are systematically encoded in historical text and language, salient patternings should be explored for pedagogical application. The next section explores these notions within the framework of Systemic Functional Grammar, and offers some suggestions on how they can be taught and learned in an academic writing course for second-year students of history.

6.2.2 Exploration of time, causality and judgement in historical writing

6.2.2.1 Time

Time is particularly relevant to writing autobiographies, biographies, historical recounts and historical accounts, where the specific purpose of the writing is to (re)tell in the present a story about the past. In such cases the historian or the student of history primarily assumes the role of a "recorder" of past events. Therefore the modes of writing or text types that feature prominently are narration and description.

According to Lomas (1993:20), "without chronology there can be no real understanding of change, development, continuity, progression and regression". Coffin (2006:97) considers linear and cyclical time, and their interconnection with historical notions of continuity and change as overarching concepts. **Linear time** can be described as "an abstract, spatial quantity that is divisible into single units; as a two dimensional linear, directional flow or succession of equal rate that extends from the past to the future or vice versa" (Adams 1995:33). It is further characterized by irreversibility and inevitability, increasing complexity, and often implies progress and "a grand plan" (Carr 1986:29). Linear time ties in with chronology, calendar time, and narratives or recounts, since calendar time makes it possible to develop time lines and chronologies, which in turn makes it possible to tease out primary sources in the form of historical narratives, and build in causal links. **Cyclical time**, on the other hand, is based on the metaphor of natural processes such as being born, to live and to die. The emphasis is on sameness and repetition (Adams 1995:33), as found in cycles of war and peace; economic boom, recession and depression; the rise and fall of civilizations and empires, etc. The

vocabulary of natural life-cycles – birth, growth, death – is often used to describe historical cycles.

Systemic Functional Grammar offers a number of lexical and grammatical resources for construing time, such as temporal circumstances (*in the 1930s*); processes (*preceded by*), systems of tense (*past, present*), temporal conjunction + dependent clauses (*when the Romans came*), conjunctive adjuncts (ordinatives) (*first, second*), mood adjuncts (*still, yet*). However, Coffin (2006:101-102) favours a set of semantic categories that cuts across grammatical classifications:

- **Sequencing time**, using temporal conjunctions, such as *when, after, before*
- **Setting in time**, using prepositional phrases, such as *at the beginning of the 20th century*
- **Duration in time**, using a prepositional phrase starting with *for*, as in *for nearly half a century*
- **Phasing time**, using different constructions to indicate beginning, duration and end, such as *at the onset of the Smallpox Epidemic; towards the end of the Great Trek.*
- **Segmenting time**, using nominalizations that have become part of the special lexis of the subject-field, such as *the apartheid era*, *The First British Occupation, The Great Depression*, etc.
- **Organizing through time**, as in the temporal organization of textual items; for example, *The first reason was opposition to the war.*

As in most other subjects, the learning of time-related concepts proceeds from the concrete and literal to the abstract and metaphorical. Sequencing in time is probably one of the first temporal devices mastered by learners, followed by setting in time, duration in time, segmenting time and organizing through time. Segmenting time and organizing through time are important resources for construing causality. Segmenting time is referred to by Martin (2003:27) as "packaging time". This entails that activities and periods are construed as things, which are often related to one another in a causal relationship (Martin 2003:28-29). Examples are nominal expressions such as *The Transvaal Location Commission (1881-1899), the Anglo-Transvaal War (1880-81),* and *the period of British administration (1877-1881)*, etc.

A dimension of time that is not dealt with by Coffin or Martin is tense; presumably because tense does not fit in neatly with either calendar-related linear time or cyclical time. However, for second language speakers in particular, tense is an important issue, and is dealt with by the majority of style guides on writing about history. Two out of the four writing manuals consulted, Rael (2004:69) and Storey (2004:88), advise that the past tense should always be used in historical writing. The other two, Rampolla (2004:66-67) and Marius and Page (2005:152), state that it is only necessary to use the past tense when writing about events that took place in the past. These authors maintain that the present tense should be used when describing a document, referring to a document or something an author of a published source has said, because these documents or sources are assumed to be always present to the person who reads or observes them (Rampolla 2004:66-67; Marius & Page 2005:152).

For the purpose of creating in students an awareness of the resources available for construing time a hybrid classification scheme seemed to have the greatest practical value. The scheme would contain categories from SFL as well as semantic categories, *viz.* **sequencing time**, **setting in time** (which includes **segmenting time**), **temporal process** (phasing in time), (text internal) **temporal organization**, **temporal modality**, **temporal duration** and **tense**. It was argued that these categories need not be applied rigidly by students, yet simple guidelines on issues such as tense could be helpful, for example: Use past tense to retell or refer to events that took place in the past, and use present tense or present perfect tense to refer to existing sources (primary or secondary).

6.2.2.2 Causality

Cause and effect, which is the primary concept in understanding and explaining why things happened as they did, is pivotal to explanatory essays which give an account of the factors or causes that have contributed to a particular state of affairs or the consequences that occurred as a result of a certain event or series of events. In explanatory essays the writer assumes the role of an "interpreter" of events.

Similar to mastering time, learning causality seems to progress from the more concrete to the more abstract. Three ways of construing cause and effect are manifest in historical writing:

(a) Indicating sequential causal relations between external events

In its simplest form, the notion of cause is realised through conjunctions and process verbs that represent the connections between events in a relatively straightforward way, since they link events as they unfold in time. This is sometimes referred to as the "billiard ball model" (compare Coffin 2006:116), using conjunctions such as *because*, *therefore* and *thus*, as in

> The state hoped to win more support for these policies from the country's black population *because* Luthuli was highly respected in these communities (Sithole & Mkhize 2000).

(b) Indicating simultaneous causes or effects

Tawney (1978:54) points out that sometimes it is necessary for the historian to indicate significance by mentioning a number of causes and effects simultaneously. In such cases causality is packaged as nouns that occur in sentence- and clause-initial positions, as in *there are a number of factors …; the main reason…; a second reason …*

The causal relationship becomes more abstract because a single cause and its effect are no longer linked together by a relational element. Compare the following examples:

> The Great Trek had *the following consequences*: The first ….
>
> There are *several reasons* why the development of the history of women in South Africa might well be expected to follow a different pattern from that of the rest of the continent (Hetherington 1993).

One motivation for packaging cause nominally in this way is to manage information flow: cause, nominalised as a thing, can act as a departure point or Theme. In explanation genres, in particular, such nouns are frequently placed in Theme position, which then foregrounds and emphasises the analytical nature of the genre. It enables the writer to stage the explanation and lend cohesion and texture to the text. It also enables the writer to enumerate cause and effect.

(c) Linking a proposition and evidence

At an even higher level of abstractness, cause and effect conjunctions are used to argue historical significance, using conjunctions such as *because, therefore,* and *thus*; and process verbs such as *prove, show, explain, illustrate, indicate, suggest, attest, be explained by,* and *confirm*. Attributing significance to historical events or "internal reasoning" is particularly important in explaining and arguing genres. Compare the following examples from scholarly articles:

> Unlike the American legislation which excluded mainly Chinese labourers, the Cape act went all out and dealt with 'all classes' of Chinese and was *therefore* made applicable from the outset to the 'whole of the Chinese race' (Harris 2006).

> As such, official tallies of gross population mortality are undoubtedly incomplete, which *explains* why Jordan's initial compilations, which were based on these official numbers, are widely considered inaccurate today (Heaton & Falola 2006).

Successful (first language) students learn to control these uses of cause and effect as they progress. They learn that while the recording genres are largely concerned with people and events, explaining genres are concerned with more abstract trends and structures, and arguing genres with judging and negotiating their explanatory power.

However, second language learners may benefit from explicit instruction on how causality is construed. For them it might be helpful to make a dichotomous distinction between sequential and simultaneous causes and effects, and the most frequently used lexicogrammatical resources for expressing these relationships. It is argued that teaching students the linking devices that characterize certain rhetorical modes, such as *explanation* (cause and effect) should assist them in making their writing more logical and cohesive.

6.2.2.3 Judgement and evaluation

At more advanced levels the student of history is expected to exercise judgement and evaluation with regard to past events, social and political structures, and also the writings of other historians. The *Study Manual* of the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies at the University of Pretoria explicitly sets the following requirements for written material at third-year level:

- Critical analysis and evaluation of facts
- Identification and explanation of different viewpoints

Research studies such as Lee and Ashby (2000), and Perfetti *et al.* (1994) have highlighted students' difficulty in identifying sub-texts and hidden agendas in the sources they have to read. Reading historical texts uncritically may be partially ascribed to the way in which school history textbooks and older scholarly works have been written and handled in pre-university instructional settings. In, addition, in many secondary sources the authorial voice is completely backgrounded, and events are construed as objective truths, creating the impression that history writes itself (Barthes, 1970:148). Students' writing shows a similar lack of evaluative skills. They are hesitant to express their own judgement of historical figures and historical events overtly, and to explicitly endorse or differ from the views of others. This claim is supported by the researcher's analysis of 12 examination essays by third-year University of Pretoria students in June 2008 on the topic of *How Lenin and his Bolshevik government managed to remain in power from 1917 to 1924 despite numerous setbacks*.

There may be more than one reason for the lack of overt appraisal in students' work. They may perceive the instructions they receive from their lecturers as mixed messages: They are required to convey their personal opinions in genres such as the academic essay, yet objectivity is often an absolute norm (Mitchell & Andrews 1994:92). Certain style guides on writing about history still preach this false objectivity as gospel. Rael (2004:18), for instance, prohibits all reference to the author as an individual, particularly the word "I". It is then almost ironical that essays by students who make more use of strategies to explicate authorial stance are typically rated higher than those who use less (Coffin 2006:149-150). The objectivist bias may also hark back to the Social Science Turn in historical writing during the 1950s and 1960s (Evans 1997:37), which induced a

"passive, anonymous written style" (Evans 1997:38). Another reason may be students' lack of command of the formal systems of Judgement and Engagement.

Twentieth century research on the construal of objectivity was largely focused on the omission of the authorial "I", and ignored the array of linguistic techniques that communicate values, instil bias and persuade the reader of the truth of the message. Only recently has a new development in Systemic Functional Linguistics started to address the ways in which language gives value to historical phenomena and to propositions made by the author. This new development is known as Appraisal, which refers to the subjective presence of writers (or speakers) in texts "as they adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate" (Martin & White 2005:1). It relates to the interpersonal metafunction in SFL, which is concerned with the exchange of attitudes. In particular, it is concerned with how writers construe for themselves particular authorial identities, how they align themselves with actual or potential respondents, and how they construct a real or an intended audience.

Appraisal theory was introduced in SFL at a time when historians themselves, particularly under the influence of postmodernism, had started realizing that objectivity in historical writing is a myth. Warren (1998:27) asserts that historical writing is subject to "evasions, biases, silences, relationships of power and the type of knowledge legitimized by authority". Historians, for instance, make use of linguistic resources to naturalize points of view, resist alternative readings and agree or disagree from others' viewpoints in relative measures. The following examples illustrate these evaluative devices:

- Naturalize points of view:

  > Chief Mangosutho Buthelezi, for instance, also skilfully exploited the subtleties of apartheid to increase his own power, wealth, and social standing (Waddy 2003-2004).

- Resist alternative readings:

  > *We all know* that the usual "script" for South African history, and *indeed* for all of African history is (*quite understandably*) the oppression of blacks by whites (Sithole & Mkhize 2000).

- Agree or disagree from others' viewpoints in relative rather than absolute measures:

> Much can be read into Leue's choice of metaphors, much that *might not be substantiated* (Kriel 2007).

The Appraisal framework in applied linguistics is divided along three main axes, *viz.* Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation (Coffin & Hewings 2004:159-166). Attitude subsumes three main sets of resources: Affect, Judgement and Appreciation**.** Affect is appraising experience in affectual or emotive terms. Terms of affect are likely to be used in autobiographies and other types of recount. Coffin (2006:141) offers the following example:

> These people looked like gods with white skin and clothes in different colours [...]. *I was scared very scared.*

However, in academic writing overt affect is not encouraged. Like Affect, Judgement also appraises past behaviour of human beings, but does so with reference to a set of institutionalized norms or an ethical framework about how people should and should not behave (Coffin 2006:141), as in the following example:

> Unintentionally, it seems, historians have absolved [the reverend] Colin Rae of all the *scandal* and reservations that have *shrouded* his career (Kriel 2002).

The judgement subcategory is further divided into Social esteem*,* and Social sanction, with further sub-classifications. Appreciation (particularly the subcategory Social valuation), comprises a set of norms for valuing processes and products rather than behaviour (Coffin 2006:141-142). In history both judgement of past behaviours and evaluation of processes and institutions are important. It is therefore suggested that writing tasks that invite students to use appropriate terms of judgement and appreciation be designed. Table 6.3 gives an indication of the available options in each of these subsystems.

Table 6.3: Examples of Judgement and Appreciation (compiled from Coffin, 2003; 2006; Martin 2003; Martin & White, 2005)

Main systems	Primary categories	Examples	
		Positive	**Negative**
Judgement (attitudes to people and the way they behave)	**Competence** (capacity)	able, astute, charismatic, effective, enterprising, intelligent, powerful, pragmatic, shrewd, skilled, strong, successful, tactical, talented	failure, foolish, flawed, incompetent, lacking judgement, short-sighted, weak
	Strength (tenacity)	committed, courageous, daring, dedicated, determined, disciplined, fearless, formidable, hard working, heroic, passionate, risk taking, self-reliant, tenacious, vigorous, willing	arrogant, badly organised, cowardly, despondent, inflexible, low morale, rigid, stubborn
	Truthfulness (veracity)	credible, genuine, honest, truthful	complicit, deceitful, deceptive, dishonest, hypocritical
	Ethics (propriety)	fair, just, respectable, responsible, self-sacrificing	abusive, brutal, corrupt, cruel, heartless, immoral, oppressive, ruthless, unfair, unjust
Appreciation (evaluations of objects, institutions and structures)		appealing, appropriate, authentic, balanced, consistent, detailed, effective, efficient, elegant, exceptional, harmonious, helpful, innovative, intricate, logical, long awaited, lucid, original, precise, profound, unified, unique, valuable, welcome, worthwhile	amorphous, common, contradictory, conventional, dated, discordant, distorted, everyday, fake, flawed, grotesque, ineffective, insignificant, monolithic, prosaic, reductive, simplistic, unclear, unbalanced

Graduation comprises a set of resources for grading evaluations. These may increase or decrease Force or Focus. For increasing force, intensifiers are often used, such as *very, really, slightly, somewhat*. Focus may be sharpened by using words such as *typical*, and blurred by using phrases such as *some sort of*. Although students occasionally use hedges like these, it would do no harm to focus their attention on the strategies used in language to narrow and broaden categories, and the linguistic choices available for doing this.

Engagement comprises resources for engaging with and negotiating the alternative positions activated by an utterance. In the Appraisal framework "bare assertions" that appear to express uncontested truths, are termed Monogloss, for example

> In the first four decades after the permanent settlement of white emigrants from the Cape Colony north of the Vaal River, little progress was made with the allocation of land to African communities (Bergh 2005a).

Heterogloss, on the other hand, refers to the various ways an author construes for the text a backdrop of prior utterances, alternative viewpoints and anticipated responses (Martin & White 2005:97), using hedges such as *probably*, *seemingly*, *it is likely that*; reporting verbs such as *claim, assert, contend, argue,* etc.; and terms that indicate disagreement or difference, such as *I disagree with X /reject X's claim,* etc.

As alluded to above, mastering the tools of engagement is one of the most important skills the student of history has to learn. However, the Engagement system comprises a complex network of categories that are often difficult to keep apart, even for the versed genre analyst. In order to determine how engagement is lexicalized in historical discourse, a corpus analysis of restricted scope was undertaken. Twenty scholarly articles on aspects of African history, published in accredited journals, were scanned and converted to text, using optical character recognition. The entire corpus, comprising 60 000 words of running text, was tagged using the UAM Corpus Tool, a computerized corpus analysis program, designed for appraisal analysis. With a view to the pedagogical focus of the project of which the analysis forms part, I decided not to use the program's default engagement framework, but a simplified version of a framework proposed by Martin and White (2005:97-98). The result is a typology comprising the following four main categories:

1. **Disclaim**: The authorial voice positions itself as at odds or rejecting some contrary position
2. **Attribute**: The authorial voice invites other voices to speak
3. **Entertain/Probabilize**: The authorial voice does not fully endorse a position expressed by him-/herself or by another voice invoked in the text
4. **Proclaim**: The authorial voice represents its position as plausible or generally agreed, thereby suppressing or ruling out alternative positions

After tagging the corpus, search queries were done on all four categories, which in turn became the input for generating word frequency lists and concordances in Wordsmith

Tools. The word frequency lists were searched for frequently occurring lexical items; and the concordances were studied to verify that the search term was indeed used to express Engagement, and not some other rhetorical value. In the Probabilize subcorpus concordances were built for *seem, appear, apparent, perhaps, may, might, could probably, possibly/possible*; in the Attribute corpus for *argue, claim, say/said, according to, explain, state, note, write, see, reveal, describe, refer,* and *conclude*; and in the Proclaim corpus the search terms included *clear, indeed, (in) fact, important, significant, obvious(ly), of course, certain, natural, must, surely, likely, should* and *remember*. The Disclaim corpus was found to be rather small. It does not contain any of the terms that are typically used to signal the speech act of disagreeing. For instance, the words *disagree*, *reject*, *refute*, and *contest* do not even occur once in the entire subcorpus. The only relevant items with a frequency of three and more, are *not, speculative, neither, rather* and *hardly*. Upon scrutiny of the UAM search query for Disclaim, it transpired that authors are reluctant to confront other positions head-on. When differing from alternative positions a range of more subtle expressions are used, such as *We doubt that; X has underestimated the importance of; It is more likely/correct that; X's claims are exaggerated.* Rhetorical questions are also sporadically used in a disclaiming function, for instance: *But are labels like these really justified?* (implying that they are not). Table 6.4 summarizes the results of the corpus analysis.

Table 6.4 Summary of engagement markers in the corpus of history articles

Proclaim		**Disclaim**		**Attribute**		**Probabilize**	
certain/certainly	44	Overt negation (no, not, etc.)	14	say	92	seem	97
indeed	43	hardly justified	6	argue	86	might	61
it is a fact that/in fact	29	More likely/correct	4	claim	58	appear	52
of course	24	X's claims are speculative	2	according to	55	apparent(ly)	49
undoubtedly/no doubt	16			state	52	perhaps	49
it is/becomes clear	14			write	40	probably	30
it must be remembered/ understood/noted	12			explain	37	possible/ possibly	13
it is/seems likely	9			note	29		
obviously	8			see/saw as	25		
it should be seen/ remembered/noted	4			describe as	23		
				refer	19		
				conclude	15		

It is important that second-year students should be made aware of the ways in which judgement about historical figures, processes and institutions is expressed in historical discourse, and of the resources that are available for engaging with other authors. One way of creating such awareness is to include critical language awareness exercises during the exploration phase of the curriculum, when historical texts are deconstructed (compare Study Unit 1 of the syllabus expounded in Table 6.5 below).

It should be noted that designing classroom activities to cultivate critical language awareness is not new. Ten years ago Luckett and Chick (1998) reported on the success of a research-based curriculum development project of this nature in a history department at another South African university.

In addition to deconstruction exercises the lexicogrammatical choices available to historians could be explicitly taught later on in the course, when students jointly and independently construct history essays (compare Study Unit 4 of the syllabus in Table 6.5 below).

6.3 The (pre-)syllabus

The syllabus for the subject-specific intervention, which was designed on the basis of the contextual research reported on in this chapter, is expounded in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5 (Pre)syllabus for a module on essay-writing for students of history

Study unit theme	Syllabus themes
STUDY UNIT 1 Introduction to historical discourse	• Why study history and why write about it? • Different perspectives to writing history (critical exploration of texts from the main traditions: Rankean History, New History, Marxism, Postmodernism)
STUDY UNIT 2 Exploring preferred modes of writing in historical discourse	Identifying parts of texts with different functions: • Giving an overview/summarizing • Telling a story/describing an event • Describing an object or an experience • Comparing and contrasting • Indicating and describing causes and effects • Arguing a case

STUDY UNIT 3 Using rhetorical modes in historical writing	• Analyzing and interpreting writing prompts • Selecting appropriate modes for assignments • Writing short texts using a particular mode
STUDY UNIT 4 Getting acquainted with history essays	• The three-part structure of academic essays • (Optional) subsections • Three main essay genres in history, and their prototypical structures: recording, explaining, judging and interpreting • Important stylistic, lexical and grammatical dimensions: time, causality, evaluation, and abstractness
STUDY UNIT 5 Joint composition of history essays	• Jointly analyzing writing prompts in terms of required content, structure and language • Brainstorming and planning content • Jointly composing subsections of essays • Revising • Critiquing the essay and reflecting on the process
STUDY UNIT 6 Writing your own history essay	Independent composition of a first and second draft, with peer and teacher feedback as well as personal reflection.

In line with the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings outlined in the previous chapters the syllabus reflects (1) the belief that genres embody the purposes of the discourse communities they serve (Swales 1990); (2) the introduction and gradual removal of scaffolding, derived from the Vygotskyan notion of a Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky 1978); and (3) a Teaching and Learning Cycle (as proposed by the Australian genre school), starting with the exploration of texts (deconstruction), followed by joint construction of texts by the teacher and the class, independent construction of texts, and critical reflection on the basis of self-, peer and teacher evaluation (compare Cope & Kalantzis 1993; 2000).

6.4 Conclusion

The research that is reported in this chapter supports the assumption that disciplinary purposes shape texts in a discipline, and demonstrates that there is a clear relationship between the main purposes of a subject-field and its writing conventions. However, the designer of an academic literacy intervention for students of history should be constantly aware of the fact that the ideological paradigm within which the writing takes place will, to some extent, co-determine the choice of mode, lexis and grammar.

Generally important findings are that the three main purposes of historical writing are (re)telling a story, understanding and explaining why things happened as they did, and judging events, structures and the words of other historians. Thus, **time**, **causality** and **judgement/evaluation** are the central conceptual dimensions of historical discourse. These concepts are expounded in certain conventional genres: Time is the central notion in autobiographies, biographies, historical recounts and historical accounts; Causality constitutes the core concept of explanations; and Judgement/Evaluation is found in expositions, discussions and challenges. From a rhetorical point of view it can be said that in genres focusing on time the main purpose of the author is to *record*; if the focus is on causality the author wishes to *interpret*, and if the emphasis is on judgement the author finds him-/herself primarily in an *evaluative* or reflective mode.

In historical texts time, causality and judgement have been lexicalized and grammaticalized in systematic ways, and their institutionalization in lexis and grammar have been described in various ways. As far as **time** is concerned, Systemic Functional Grammar offers categories such as temporal circumstances; processes, systems of tense, temporal conjunction + dependent clauses, conjunctive adjuncts (ordinatives) and mood adjuncts. Other authors working within the domain of applied linguistics (language teaching) prefer semantic categories that cut across grammatical classifications. Coffin (2006:101-102), for instance, uses the categories sequencing time, setting in time, duration in time, phasing time, segmenting time and organizing through time. A hybrid scheme was proposed – not to use as a template, but to create awareness of the resources available to the student of history for construing time in ways that are acceptable to expert members of the discourse community of historians, and also manage temporal concepts.

Cause and effect is pivotal to explanatory essays which give an account of the factors or causes that contributed to a particular state of affairs or the consequences that occurred as a result of a certain event or series of events. The two most prominent ways of construing cause and effect in historical writing are (a) to indicate sequential (chronological) causal relations between external events, lexicalized in the format of temporal conjunctions and prepositions and (b) to indicate a number of causes and

effects simultaneously, typically by making use of nouns that occur in clause- and sentence-initial positions.

One of the important differences between school-level historical writing and tertiary-level historical writing is the demonstrated ability to **critically analyze** and **judge** or **evaluate** facts; and also to identify and explain different viewpoints. However, students are hesitant to express their own judgement of historical figures and historical events overtly, and to endorse explicitly or differ from the views of others – possibly due to the "objectivist bias" introduced by the Social Science Turn in historical writing during the 1950s and 1960s, but perhaps also because they have never been taught the formal systems of Appraisal in language, as described by the vast literature available within the framework of SFL. Since it is so important for historians to use the resources of stance and engagement appropriately, it is ideal that they should learn from meaningful exercises and authentic examples. For this purpose a corpus of scholarly articles on African history was compiled and analyzed.

Using the instructional framework and the presyllabus expounded in Chapter 5 as a foundation, and intermeshing into this framework the outcomes of the contextual exploration described in this chapter, a dedicated (pre)syllabus was compiled for a writing intervention aimed at students of history. The next chapter reports on the implementation of this (pre)syllabus, and the evaluation of its effectiveness.

Chapter 7: Evaluation of the subject-specific intervention

7.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a comprehensive description of the process that was followed to administer the essay-writing intervention for students of history, and discusses the results of the evaluation.

7.2 Quantitative evaluation of the effect

7.2.1 Method

After having been informed about the course in one of their history classes sixteen students with history as a major subject in their second year of study self-selected to register non-formally for the semester course on essay-writing described in chapter 6. Eventually 10 students completed the course: one mother tongue speaker of Afrikaans, one mother tongue speaker of English (of Indian descent) and eight speakers of African languages. The relatively high attrition rate might have been due to the course being non-credit bearing.

The 14 week intervention (two contact sessions per week) commenced in July 2008. A part-time lecturer in the Unit of Academic Literacy with both English as a major and a master's degree in History was recruited to teach the course. She was remunerated from the author's research account. Course materials consisted of a 50 page study guide based on the syllabus, a reader comprising a selection of scholarly articles and chapters from books on historical subjects, the *Study Manual* of the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies, and a number of model essays.

All students who took part in the project received the intervention along with a pretest and a posttest. The participants signed a letter of consent at the beginning of the course to allow the use their essays and their survey responses for research purposes. The pretest assumed the format of a 50 minute in-class essay during the second week of the module, on a topic related to the content of the second-year history curriculum, *viz.*

Discuss black reaction and resistance to the Natives Land Act of 1913. Students were required to study source materials from the reader during the preceding week, and were allowed to use the reader as an in-class resource. The conditions for the posttest were exactly the same as for the pretest, only the topic differed: *Discuss how segregation affected the social and economic situation of black South Africans*.

The assessment instrument was a scoring rubric comprising 15 items. The values were defined as percentage ranges to assist the assessors in conceptualizing each mark in terms of a benchmark that would resonate with generally conceived achievement levels:

7 = 85-100%	**6 = 75-84%**	**5 =65-74%**	**4 = 50-64%**	**3 = 36-49%**	**2 = 26-35%**	**1 = 0-25%**
Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Below average	Poor	Very poor

A "not applicable" (NA) option was included for items that might not be relevant for a particular assessment.

Seven-point scales were used for fourteen of the items, while the 15th had to be rated on a two-point scale. The rationale for rating Legibility and layout on a two-point scale was to obtain a cumulative score of 100. Items 16 and 17, the Total and the Overall percentage, were numbered only for statistical purposes. Items 1-15 were clustered into four dimensions: Use of source material, Structure and development, Academic writing style, and Editing. Three empirically based and internationally accredited analytic rating scales contributed input for the instrument: the *TOEFL writing scoring guide*; the *Scoring profile* of Jacobs *et al.* 1981 (cited by Weigle, 2002:113-115); and the *Masus rating sheet* of Bonanno and Jones (2007:2, 13). The scale was not intended to be overtly genre-based, because the purpose of the intervention was not to teach students a particular pedagogical approach, but to assist them in learning how to write academic essays. Table 7.1 is a reproduction of the scoring instrument.

Table 7.1 Analytic scoring rubric for the assessment of academic essays

	USE OF SOURCE MATERIAL								
1.	Relevance of source data	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
2.	Integration of source data with text	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
3.	Stance and engagement	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
	STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT								
4.	Thesis statement: clarity and focus	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
5.	Development of main argument	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
6.	Conclusion	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
7.	Paragraph development	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
	ACADEMIC WRITING STYLE								
8.	Syntax: phrase and clause structure, sentence length	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
9.	Concord and tense	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
10.	Linking devices	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
11.	Technical and subtechnical lexis	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
12.	Style (formality; rhetorical mode)	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
	EDITING								
13.	Spelling, capitalization and punctuation	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
14.	Referencing technique	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA
15.	Legibility and layout	good 2				poor 0			NA
16.	**Total**								
17.	**Overall percentage**								

Prior to the intervention the instrument was piloted on 12 essays on the topic of *How Lenin and his Bolshevik government managed to remain in power from 1917 to 1924 despite numerous setbacks*, which was one of the questions in the history semester test. Adjustments were made on the basis of the relative ease and/or difficulty of use of the rating instrument, and the general agreement between the results of the analytic scoring

and an impression mark. It was decided to use the "Not applicable" option for item 14 (Referencing technique), since referencing is normally not required for timed in-class essays, and also for item 15 (Legibility and layout), since design features cannot easily be adapted in a single draft, timed essay (as opposed to a multiple draft, homework essay).

After the pretest essays had been written they were scored independently by the course designer (Rater 1) and the class lecturer (Rater 2), using the adapted rubric. The same rubric was used for the posttest. However, fairly large discrepancies occurred between the scores of the two raters, regarding both the pretest and the posttest. On average the pretests were scored 7.1% lower by Rater 2 than by Rater 1. The converse was true for the posttests, which were on average scored 6.6% higher by Rater 2 than by Rater 1. Possible explanations for the discrepancies are that (1) the two raters focused on different aspects of essay quality: content in the case of Rater 2, and form in the case of Rater 1; (2) Rater 2 had ample experience in rating history essays, but less experience in assessing academic writing, whereas Rater 1 had 25 years of experience in the assessment of writing; and (3) Rater 2's scores might have subconsciously been influenced by a desire to prove the effectiveness of the intervention.

On the basis of the large discrepancy between the scores of the two raters and the results of the preliminary statistical analyses, it was jointly decided by the researcher and the statistician who supervised the quantitative process to use only Rater 1's scores.

7.2.2 Presentation and discussion of students' results

The total score for each of the 10 respondents was converted to a percentage for ease of interpretation (compare Figure 7.1):

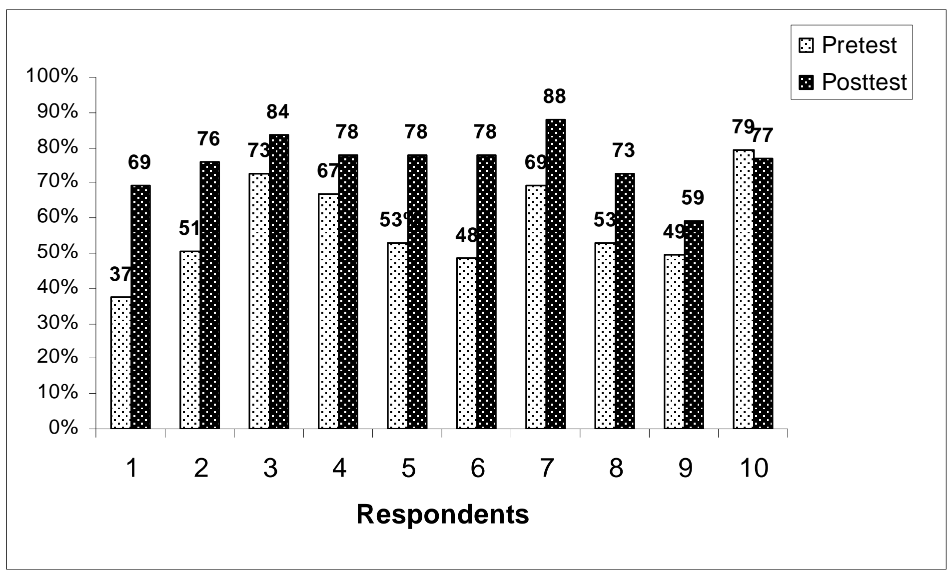

Figure 7.1 Comparison of pre- and posttest results from the subject-specific intervention per respondent

The average improvement of the 10 respondents was 19%. Nine respondents performed better on the posttest than on the pretest. The single student who performed worse on the posttest, did so by a mere 2 percent.

Figure 7.2 displays the average results per item after conversion to percentages:

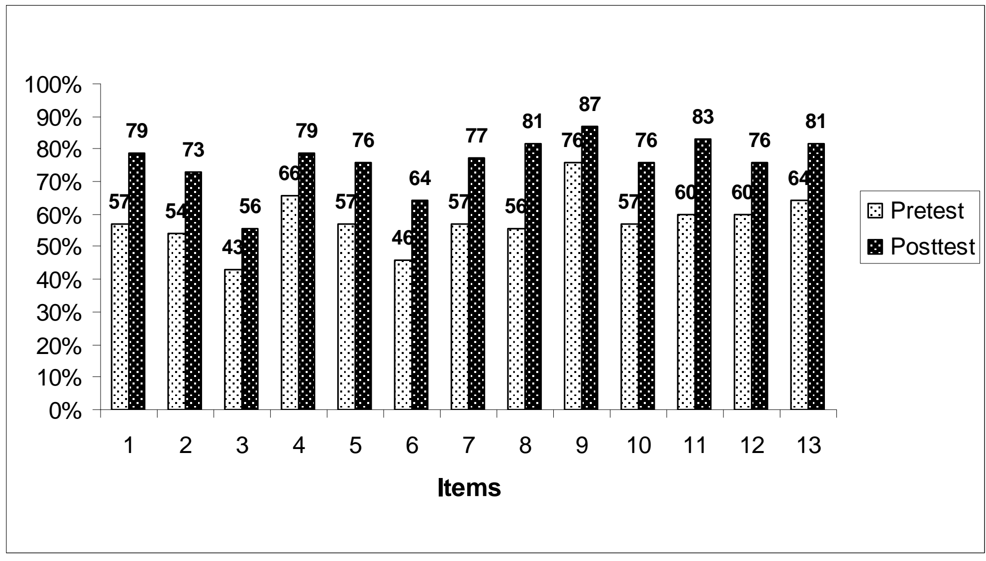

Figure 7.2 Comparison of pre- and posttest results from the subject-specific intervention per item

Per item, all the posttest ratings were higher than the pretest ratings: On four items the improvement was between 20% and 26% (items 1, 7, 8 and 11), on six items the improvement was between 15% and 19%, (items 2, 5, 6, 10, 12 and 13), and on the remaining 3 items the improvement was between 11% and 13%.

7.2.3 Statistical analysis

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test (SPSS version 17; Williams, Sweeney & Anderson, 2009: 764-770) was used to assess if the differences between the pre- and posttest ratings on each of the 13 questions comprising the instrument were significant. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test is a non-parametric test that is suitable for the analysis of small samples, as in the present case. The test indicates the probability of a significant difference between pre- and posttest ratings, and is appropriate for comparing data from the same participants – in this case the pre- and posttests written by each of the respondents who participated in the subject-specific intervention.

The improvement proves to be consistent across the three primary dimensions of the rating scale, *viz.* Use of source material, Structure and development, Academic writing style and Editing. Table 7.2 shows the subtotals for the four dimensions converted to percentages:

Table 7.2 Percentage improvement of the subject-specific group per dimension

Dimension	Mean: pretest	Mean: posttest	Improvement
1. Use of source material (Items 1-3)	51%	69%	18%
2. Structure and development (Items 4-7)	56%	74%	18%
3. Academic writing style (Items 8-12)	62%	81%	19%
4. Editing (Item 13)	64%	81%	17%

The results presented in Figure 7.2 should be interpreted against the probability values obtained from the Wilcoxon signed-rank test on the three dimensions. The hypothesis is that the intervention improved students' skills, resulting in higher ratings on their essays. A one-sided probability value (p-value) is therefore reported. P-values less than 0.05 indicate that there is a significant improvement from the pre- to the posttest ratings

awarded by Rater 1 at a 5% level of significance. Table 7.3 indicates the p-values for the four dimensions:

Table 7.3 One-sided p-values of the pre- and posttest ratings on the four dimensions of the subject-specific intervention

Dimension	P-value
Dimension 1: Use of source materials	0.004
Dimension 2: Structure and development	0.006
Dimension 3: Academic writing style	0.003
Dimension 4: Editing	0.008
Overall	**0.002**

According to Table 7.3 the improvement between the pre- and posttest ratings is significant at the 5% level for all four the main dimensions of the scoring instrument: Use of source materials, Structure and Development, and Academic writing style. In order to establish whether the p-values of all the individual items were significant, ratings from the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was obtained for them as well, as represented by Table 7.4 below.

Table 7.4 One-sided p-values of the pre- and posttest ratings on the 13 items in the subject-specific intervention, obtained from the Wilcoxon signed-rank test

Item	P-value
1	0.006
2	0.011
3	0.074
4	0.043
5	0.002
6	0.086
7	0.004
8	0.002
9	0.047
10	0.004
11	0.004
12	0.031
13	0.008

According to Table 7.4 the improvement between the pre- and posttest ratings is significant for all the items, with the exception of items 3 and 6, which are significant at

the 10% level. A larger sample might have resulted in significant improvement at the 5% level for these two questions as well.

Although the findings indicate that the intervention was successful in terms of the improvement of students' performance, the information still needs to be interpreted and converted to revision strategies for future interventions. For the purpose of curriculum review a more fine-grained diagnosis of students' performance is desirable. Text analysis is one of the instruments that may provide this type of information. However, the analysis of a corpus of full length essays with regard to all the lexicogrammatical and discourse-level features included in the analytic scoring rubric that was used is an extremely ambitious task. The question was on what basis to select features for in-depth analysis. Since there is no correct or immediately obvious answer it was decided to justify the selection theoretically. Systemic Functional Grammar was chosen, with particular focus on features that are representative of the three main functions of language: ideational, interpersonal and textual:

- Because of the "universality" or partially generic nature of logical relations among concepts, **Logical relationships** was chosen to represent the ideational function.
- **Appraisal** was selected to represent the interpersonal function on the basis of the importance of signaling relationships between discourse participants.
- In recognition of the crucial role that thematic development plays in essay-writing, **Theme** was selected to represent the textual function of language.

The following section describes the procedure and the outcomes of the text analysis aimed at determining how well the subject-specific intervention students mastered the skills related to these dimensions between the pretest and the posttest.

7.3 Textual analysis of the essays

7.3.1 Method

First, the pre- and posttest essays of all the students taking part in the intervention were tagged electronically for Logical ideation and Appraisal, using literature-based sets of categories and subcategories (compare tables 7.5 and 7.6 below). Concordance lists were compiled for both these dimensions and their subcategories, using

WordsmithTools version 4.0. For the analysis of thematic development it was decided to perform a Theme analysis on the pre- and posttest essays of only one respondent in order to determine whether a significant difference between pre- and posttest scores is supported by a comparable mastery of thematic development. This analysis procedure was chosen instead of tagging, because tagging is typically used for units below the sentence, and thematic development operates at higher levels, including clause level, paragraph level and whole-text level.

7.3.2 Presentation and discussion of findings

7.3.2.1 Ideational analysis

The ideational function of language does not only deal with construing participants, processes and circumstances that populate human experience, but also with construing experience as logically organized sequences of activities. This aspect of ideational meaning will be referred to as "logical ideation". Following Martin and Rose (2007: 122-153) logical ideation was explored with regard to the categories **Addition**, **Comparison**, **Causation** and **Time** as well as their subcategories. Along with Coffin (2006: 101-102) it is believed that logical relations are not only expressed by means of conjunctions, and thus the notion of logical ideation cuts across grammatical categories. Compare, for instance, the following resources for expressing cause and effect: *because* (conjunction); the *cause(s) of* X (prepositional phrase); *the result* was (noun phrase), X was *caused* by Y (verb), *hence*, *consequently* (adverbs). Table 7.5 gives an overview of the main categories of Logical Ideation, and mentions a number of prototypical examples:

Table 7.5 Categories of logical ideation

Categories	Subcategories	Examples
Addition	Additive	and; besides; in addition; not only ... but also; for example; such as; as well as; besides; further; namely
	Subtractive	neither ... nor
	Alternative	or; if not … then; alternatively
Comparison	Similar	like; as if; similarly; likewise; in the same way
	Contrast	but; yet; whereas; on the other hand; although; while; instead; even though; however; rather
Consequence	Result/consequence	therefore; thus; consequently; so; hence; resulted in; as a result of; the effect of; the consequence(s) of;

Categories	Subcategories	Examples
	Cause	because (of); since; as; due to; for; with; enable; cause; reasons for; causes of
	Means	by; by means of; through; with the help of
	Purpose	so as; in order to; lest; for fear of; toward, the aim of;
	Condition	if; provided that; unless
Time	Temporal setting and phasing	1913 (as a metonymy for an event that took place in 1913); in 1913; at the onset of the Smallpox Epidemic; towards the end of the Great Trek; at the same time; by 2008
	Temporal process	culminated; concluded; ended; started; at the beginning of
	Time sequence	then; after; subsequently; before; previously; again; as; while; meanwhile; the following; the previous
	Text-internal time	Firstly; secondly; first; second; the first reason …
	Temporal duration	for; continue (to) + V
	Temporal mood	still; yet
	Tense	

A complicating factor is that logical organization of activity sequences is not restricted to the ideational function of language. One side of the system of logical organization does indeed interact with the ideational function, but the other side interacts with the textual function: certain logical relationships are text-internal (having to do with the organization of information in the text itself). A subcategory that serves only a text-internal function is Text-internal time. Many conjunctions and adverbs have internal (textual) functions in addition to their external (experiential) functions, for example *later*, *earlier*, *meanwhile*, *subsequently*, *towards*, *further*, etc. In some of the SFL literature the text-internal uses are often referred to as "grammatical metaphor" (compare Martin & Rose 2007). Others classify text-internal logic as "metadiscourse" (compare Hyland 2005; 2009). This dual functionality of logical markers seems to support Bruce (2008:20-21) in his scepticism about the appropriateness of the SFL distinction between field, tenor and mode for "extended, written, monologic" texts, such as academic essays.

In the text analysis, no distinction was made between text-external and text-internal uses. This was a conscious decision, because in the field of history the relationships between real-world events and entities is just as important as those between different elements of the text.

Figure 7.3 shows the difference in how the students handled logical relationships in their essays before and after the intervention. For each subcategory (Addition, Comparison, Causation and Time/tense) both the number of correct usages and the number of incorrect usages are indicated. This was deemed necessary because the researcher was not only interested in how many times students used a particular resource, but also in how many times the use was appropriate.

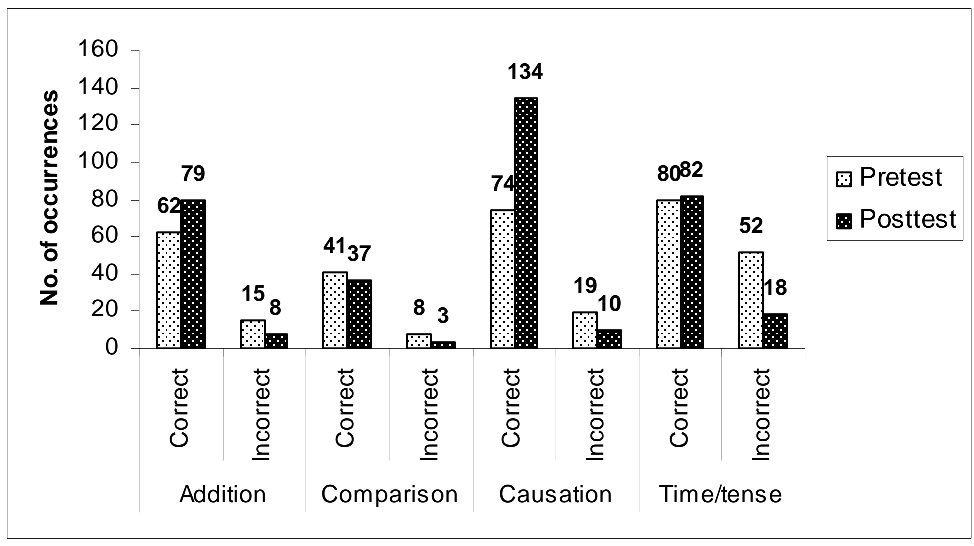

Figure 7.3 Logical ideation: comparison of pre- and posttest results in the subject-specific intervention

According to Figure 7.3 the most significant increase in the number of appropriately used markers of logical relationships occurred in the Causation category, which includes the subcategories Consequence/result, Cause, Means, Purpose and Condition. A reason for the dramatic increase (from 74 to 134 = 81% for the category) could be the emphasis that the intervention had placed on explanation of historical events in terms of chains of cause and effect in historical essays. Also, cause and effect is lexicalized in many different ways in English, using various parts of speech and differing degrees of abstractness, ranging from conjunctions to adverbs, verbs and nouns.

It is not surprising that the relation of Addition was handled well in both the pretest and the posttest, because coordination is one of the types of conjunction to be mastered first

by children. Regarding the representation of the subcategories Addition remained fairly constant across the pretest and the posttest (60 and 67 instances, respectively), whereas markers of Subtraction increased from 0 in the pretest to 2 in the posttest; and Alternation from 2 in the pretest to 10 in the posttest.

Since none of the essay topics overtly called for comparison, it is not surprising that Contrast and Similarity markers occur in relatively low frequencies in both the pretest and the posttest. Contrast features more prominently than Similarity (38 in the pretest and 32 in the posttest, as opposed to 3 in the pretest and 6 in the posttest). A possible explanation is that the history of segregation in South Africa, which constituted the overarching topic for both the pre- and the posttest essays, emphasizes differences rather than similarities.

The overall "correct" use of temporal markers remained fairly constant across the intervention period. The temporal subcategories Setting in time and Sequencing of time were well represented in both the pre- and the posttest: 43 markers of Setting in the pretest and 40 in the posttest; and 31 markers of Sequence in the pretest and 37 in the posttest. The relatively consistent mastery of these resources could perhaps be explained by the importance of chronology and the positioning of events in historical time in historical writing. Perhaps the most disappointing finding is that text-internal time (temporal organization of textual parts) was so sparsely used as a structuring mechanism. Only 3 instances occurred in the pretest corpus, and 5 instances in the posttest corpus.

While the number of temporal markers remained constant, the number of local ideation errors decreased between 47% and 65% in each of the four subcategories. According to the relevant concordance list the number of Tense errors alone (thus excluding other incorrectly used markers of temporal relationships) decreased from 43 to12. A possible explanation for this decrease may be that before the intervention the history students had never been explicitly taught that when referring to past events past tense should normally be used, and when referring to published sources present tense should typically be used.

7.3.2.2 Interpersonal analysis

The interpersonal function of language is addressed by the Appraisal framework in SFL. The subcategories listed in Table 7.6 were condensed from Martin and White (2005) for the analysis (compare section 6.2.2 for examples):

Table 7.6 Appraisal categories

Categories	Subcategories	Examples
Attitude	Affect/emotion (appraising experience in affectual terms)	(contributed to) discontent and anger; more of angered misery than rage; disappointing; (expressed their) bitterness; (it is) sad (to see); (fills the reader with) revulsion; gory image;
	Judgement (attitudes to people and the way they behave)	(X displayed) genuine sympathy; fearless traitor; corrupt officials
	Social valuation (evaluation of objects, institutions and structures)	repressive (laws); viewed as inferior; cruel world; degrading (conditions); victim of teenage pregnancy; riddled with corruption
Engagement	Attribute (attribute what is being/ has been said to another author)	According to; (Author X) supports; (Author X) argues; X has firmly stated; X implies that
	Proclaim (express the writer's own point of view)	This essay attempts; It is important to note; The truth of the matter is; In other words; Clearly, …; X can be regarded …;
Graduation	Force (intensifying/mitigating)	devastating threats; huge disparity; strikingly visible; a major role; extreme vulnerability; very rarely
	Focus (sharpening or blurring reference points)	… in particular; the root cause; more or less; just enough; around X%

Although agreeing or disagreeing with others or expressing one's own commitment toward a proposition in relative measures ("modalizing") constitutes an important dimension of Engagement, it was not included as a subcategory because of the regular integration with authorial stance (Proclaim) and reporting (Attribute), e.g. "one should agree", "this report suggests", and "[Author X] seems to argue". Similarly, Disclaiming was excluded as a subcategory of Engagement, since disagreement is also entangled with authorial stance. Furthermore, few second-year students have the confidence and assertiveness to disagree with expert sources, and no examples were found in the students' work.

Figure 7.4 shows the differences in the handling of Appraisal resources between the pretest and the posttest.

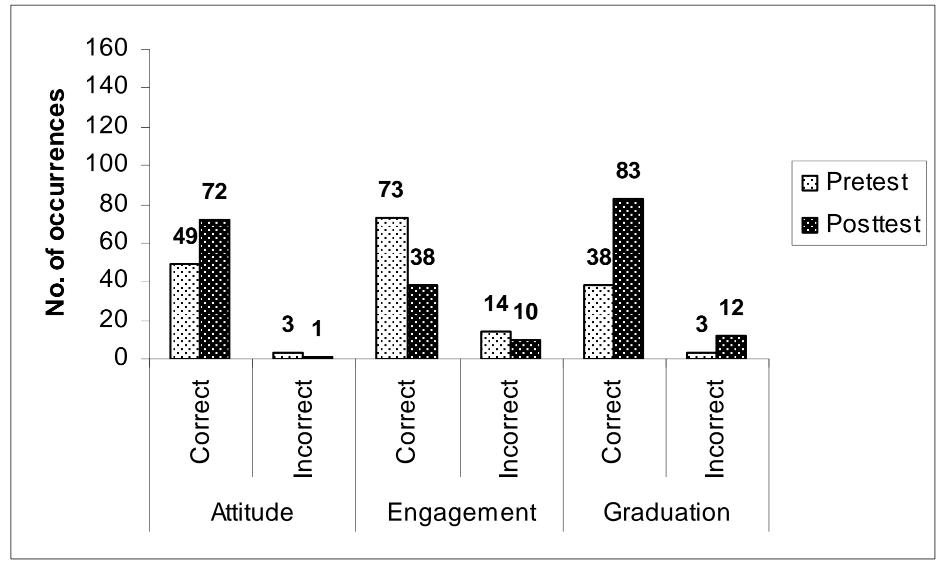

Figure 7.4 Appraisal: comparison of pre- and posttest results in the subject-specific intervention

As far as Appraisal is concerned, students' improvement was not consistent across the three main categories: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. There was a noticeable increase in the use of Attitude markers (47%). A possible explanation is that through interaction with sources and attending academic lectures students gained a substantial amount of content knowledge on the history of political and economic segregation in South Africa during the semester, and this may have contributed to enhanced confidence in stating what they know. On the other hand it could be partially ascribed to the topic of the posttest essay, *viz.* black people's reaction to the policy of segregation, which demands the valuation of social institutions and the judgment of people's behaviour.

The handling of Graduation (Force and Focus) also showed significant improvement: All 10 respondents used Graduation markers in the posttest, and there was an overall improvement of 118%. However, despite the improvement in the use of Attitude and Graduation resources students made more Graduation errors in the posttest than in the pretest.

The sharp decrease in correct uses in the Engagement category (73 in the pretest and 38 in the posttest, which marks a 92% decline) was disappointing, since students' ability to make their own voices heard and to engage with other voices is one of the most

important characteristics of tertiary-level academic discourse. One could only guess at the reasons for this tendency. Perhaps the same reason for the increase in Attitude markers – the increased amount of content knowledge – made them less dependent on sources during the posttest. This hypothesis could be supported by the fact that although the students were allowed to consult their history readers for reference purposes during the essay exam, many did not make use of this opportunity. If there is any substance to this claim, it could also explain why there is a more significant decrease in Attribute markers (from 44 to 13), which signify references to other authors, than Proclaim markers (from 29 to 25), which signify the "intrusion" of the authorial voice.

The interim conclusion that can be drawn on the basis of these findings is that during the intervention not enough emphasis was placed on strategies for entering into a debate with authors of scholarly works. Although the course designer had compiled an empirically based set of notes on how experts in the field of history deal with Appraisals, no dedicated classroom exercises were designed for practising these skills, and students were thus either not sufficiently alerted to the importance of using Appraisal devices, or the knowledge was not internalized through practice.

7.3.2.3 Textual analysis

To keep readers informed about where they are and where they are going, the writer needs to organize experiential and interpersonal meanings into a linear and coherent whole (Butt *et al.* 2000: 134). This is known as the textual function of language. One of the most important instantiations of the textual function is information flow (compare Butt *et al.* 2000: 137-147), or "periodicity" (Martin & Rose, 2007: 187 – following Pike 1982). Martin and Rose conflate the traditional dichotomies of Theme and Rheme, which is a speaker-centred distinction, and Given and New, which is a hearer-centred distinction, (compare Weideman, 1988: 27-29) into one dichotomy, *viz* **Theme** and **New**. Martin and Rose (2007: 188) developed a hierarchy of periodicity, starting with the clause level (Theme and New), moving on to the paragraph (hyperTheme and hyperNew), and finally to the whole text (macroTheme and macroNew). I shall start my brief overview with the clause level: Theme and New.

Theme and New

The Theme is the signpost for a speaker or writer's point of departure in each clause, and New is the part of the message that the writer considers interesting or important. In a typical clause the Theme includes everything up to and including the participant that functions as the Subject of the clause. At the other end of the clause is the New, which includes the information the writer is expanding upon as the text unfolds. Compare the following example (the theme is underlined):

> Segregation affected the social and economic situation of black South Africans in multiple ways, ranging from underdevelopment to social cohesion.

There are, of course, many clauses with atypical or "marked" themes, where the clause would begin with circumstantial elements such as places or times, or even participants that are not the Subject of the clause, e.g.

> Under the Union government the land Parliament passed the Natives land Act.

In order to assist the reader in following the development of the text, the writer uses two mechanisms:

- Elements from the New of one clause are placed into the Theme of the next.
- Meanings from the Theme of one clause are repeated in the Theme of the next clause.

Compare the following examples:

(a) The Native Land Act of 1913 had dire consequences for the African community.

Africans were forced to become farm labourers.

(b) The Native Land Act of 1913 set aside 75% of the land as reserves.

It prevented Africans from competing with white farmers for land.

The closer the thematic links are between clauses, the easier it is for readers to follow the development of the argument.

HyperTheme and hyperNew

HyperThemes predict what each paragraph of discourse will be about. In traditional composition teaching the hyperTheme was called the "topic sentence", which is then "developed" in the rest of the paragraph (Martin & Rose, 2007:195). If the New information is condensed in a concluding sentence (at the end of the paragraph), it is called a hyperNew. Compare the following example from one of the posttest essays:

> Life on the reserves was unbearable; blacks found themselves being faced with many ills [hyperTheme]. These included landlessness, overcrowding of the reserves, hunger and the migration of blacks to the cities, with all the problems of urban life encountered there. As men went into the urbanised cities to look for jobs, women were left behind in the reserves with the duties typically conducted by men. The women had to find means to support their families while their husbands were away on the mines. This had a negative impact on the family structure of black households [hyperNew].

MacroTheme and macroNew

MacroThemes are higher level themes that predict hyperThemes. In academic essays the thesis statement typically functions as the macroTheme. The part of the concluding paragraph that embodies the final conclusion reached by the writer on the basis of the exposition following the thesis statement is the macroNew. The following introductory and concluding paragraphs from one of the posttest essays exemplify these notions:

> Segregation (1934-1948) had a very negative effect on black South Africans. Through a series of laws and regulations it resulted in black urbanization, squatting, and so forth, which are only a few examples of the consequences of segregation on the blacks [macroTheme].
>
> […]
>
> Through these paragraphs we can clearly see that black people were negatively affected by segregation: socially and economically. Socially because they couldn't live in better, bigger houses in better neighbourhoods and couldn't do high-class jobs. Economically because of the work reservations. Black people could only do hard labour and "low-class" jobs which didn't pay well. […] Also, as a result of oppressing laws black people were always going to be regarded inferior to whites [macroNew].

The focus was set on waves of known and new information at the clause level (Theme and New), since none of the items included in the analytic scoring rubric dealt with this level of development in particular. Because of the labour intensiveness of such analyses, and because of the generally consistent improvement of almost 20% between the pretests and the posttests, it was decided to analyze only the pre- and posttest essays of Respondent 1 (compare Appendix F on the CD). The procedure described by Butt *et al.* (2000: 143ff) was followed for the analyses: First, each essay was divided into clauses. Thematic progression was then traced by indicating the transitions according to the type of bond and its relative strength. Table 7.7 below shows the types of bonds that were distinguished:

Table 7.7 Types of thematic bonds

Strong bonds to directly preceding Theme	Strong bonds to directly preceding New	Strong bonds to earlier Theme (s)	Strong bonds to earlier New(s)	Weak bonds to directly preceding Theme	Weak bonds to earlier Theme	Weak bonds to directly preceding New	Weak bonds to earlier New(s)	Absent (no) bonds
								Ø

* Curly brackets { are used for indicating a bond with more than one earlier Theme/New.

Tables 7.8 and 7.9 are excerpts from Respondent 1's pretest and posttest.

Table 7.8 Thematic bonds in par. 3 and 4 of Pretest 1 in the subject-specific intervention

3	11	However the introduction of the idea of land as a commodity ↑	had arosed in the Transvaal *
	12	which	could be brough and sold.
	13	And a black South African ↑	had the right to register land
	14	and therefore X	made its own.
	15	Therefore Africans from the Transvaal	had purchased 286 farms
	16	and later on more farms Ø	were purchased.
4	17	Under the Union government and land Parliament	had passed the Natives land Act in June 1913.
	18	And restrictions of Africans buying or owning a peace of land	got tighter and tigher.
	19	This Act however	which included the reserves, locations and many farms owned by the Africans at that time
	20	↑ which	prohibited Africans from buying land in freehold outside of designated "scheduled areas".
	21	Ø In this case one	might conclude that
	22	this	had gave the Native men to be angry
	23	and therefore X	resist any commi--- to come from the passed land Act of June.

Table 7.9 Thematic bonds in par. 4 of Posttest 1 in the subject-specific intervention

4	27	The gold price	left the mining industry, for example, with little room to manoeuvre.
	28	Ø In the overall costs analysis cheap labour	was an essential component.
	29	Recruiting for the mines	was not a simple and straightforward task.
	30	Without the reserve system, which,	was an integral part of segregation
	31	it	would have been much more difficult.
	32	But segregation ↑	not only appealed to the mining industry.
	33	It	also protected white workers from cheaper black labourers,
	34	↑ and in rural areas it	gave white farmers additional leverage over their labourers and tenants.
	35	The umbrella nature of segregationist ideology	even extended to those Africans in the reserves,

The quantified results of the Theme analysis are represented in Tables 7.10 and 7.11 below. Each type of bond is calculated as a percentage relative to the total number of clauses in the essay.

Table 7.10 Pretest 1: Subject-specific intervention (overall score: 58%)

No. of words: 680
No. of paragraphs: 10
No. of clauses: 68

Strong bonds to directly preceding Theme	Strong bonds to earlier Theme(s)	Strong bonds to directly preceding New	Strong bonds to earlier New(s)	Weak bonds to directly preceding Theme	Weak bonds to earlier Theme	Weak bonds to directly precedin g New	Weak bonds to earlier New(s)	Absent (no) bonds
7	7	6	6	11	5	7	1	18
10%	10%	9%	9%	16%	7%	10%	1%	26%

Strong bonds: 26 (38%)
Weak and absent bonds: 42 (62%)

Table 7.11 Posttest 1: Subject-specific intervention (overall score 79%)

No. of words: 645
No. of paragraphs: 8
No. of clauses: 62

Strong bonds to directly preceding Theme	Strong bonds to earlier Theme (s)	Strong bonds to directly preceding New	Strong bonds to earlier New(s)	Weak bonds to directly preceding Theme	Weak bonds to earlier Theme	Weak bonds to directly preceding New	Weak bonds to earlier New(s)	Absent (no) bonds
18	10	12	7	2	0	4	2	6
29%	16%	19%	11%	3%	0%	06%	3%	10%

Strong bonds: 47 (76%)
Weak and absent bonds: 14 (23%)

Respondent 1's pretest and posttest essays were of roughly equal length (680 words versus 645 words; and 68 clauses versus 62 clauses). However, the results show that the number of strong bonds increased from 26 (38%) in the pretest to 47 (76%) in the posttest, and the number of weak and absent bonds decreased from 42 (62%) to 14 (23%). Thus, the student's overall improvement of 21% according to the analytic scoring seems to be more than justified in the light of her increased ability to handle thematic development at the clause level.

We now turn to an aspect of the evaluation which is not concerned with performance but is equally important to measure effectiveness, *viz.* a survey of student's opinions regarding the intervention.

7.4 Opinion survey

7.4.1 Conceptual framework

An opinion survey was conducted to measure students' attitudes regarding the various dimensions of a critical, genre-based, subject-specific writing intervention. At the conclusion of the module all ten students who followed through from the pretest to the posttest filled in a questionnaire comprising 29 statements. These statements operationalized typical features of critical genre-based syllabi, *viz.* Scaffolding, Social apprenticeship, Needs-driven and Critical orientation, with the exception of Target-centredness. The decision to exclude target-centredness was motivated by the author's conviction that second-year students are not yet equipped to judge the fulfilment of disciplinary requirements. Instead, Skills transfer was added to prove/disprove the most important criticism against genre-based approaches: that these approaches revert back to the Scientific Approach to language teaching, foster transmission pedagogy and cultivate passive learners (compare Prior, 1995). Table 7.12 explicates the construct that was operationalized in the questionnaire:

Table 7.12 Explication of the five dimensions of the construct underlying the opinion survey

Dimensions	Description
1. Staged and scaffolded teaching and learning model	• Explicit pedagogical framework (visible pedagogy) • Modeling (using exemplars as model texts) • Gradual progress from maximal teacher- and peer-assistance to complete independence • Explicit teaching of discourse structure • Explicit teaching of lexicogrammar

Dimensions	Description
2. Purposeful social apprenticeship	• Aimed at attaining goals that are important to expert members of the discourse community into which the student wishes to be assimilated • Learning through actively engaging with authentic subject matter, while being supervised by the master/lecturer, and assisted by peers
3. Needs-driven syllabus	Content and pedagogy are attuned to the wants, needs and skills level of the learner.
4. Critical orientation	• Explicit knowledge of the conventions of valued academic genres empowers students and heightens metacognitive awareness to facilitate self-evaluation • Critical analysis of texts enables students to unveil ideology and hidden agendas • Students are encouraged to challenge prescriptive genre conventions
5. Skills transfer	The principles of structure and language that are taught can be transferred to other contexts and genres. Therefore it cannot be asserted that this approach stifles creativity or cultivates passive learners.

Students had to indicate their responses to the statements comprising the questionnaire (attached as Appendix E) on standard five-point Likert scales. The response options were *strongly agree*, *agree*, *uncertain*, *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. Thirteen of the 29 statements were phrased in a negative way, meaning that *strongly agree* and *agree* indicated a negative evaluation of the particular characteristic of the course, whereas *strongly disagree* and *disagree* indicated a positive evaluation. The scales for 13 of the statements (statements 1, 4, 5, 7, 13, 16, 19, 20 21, 23, 24, 25 and 27) had to be reversed to enable the correct interpretation of the responses. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data.

7.4.2 Presentation and discussion of students' opinions

The average rating was obtained for each student on each of the five dimensions of the construct. Figure 7.5 summarizes the results:

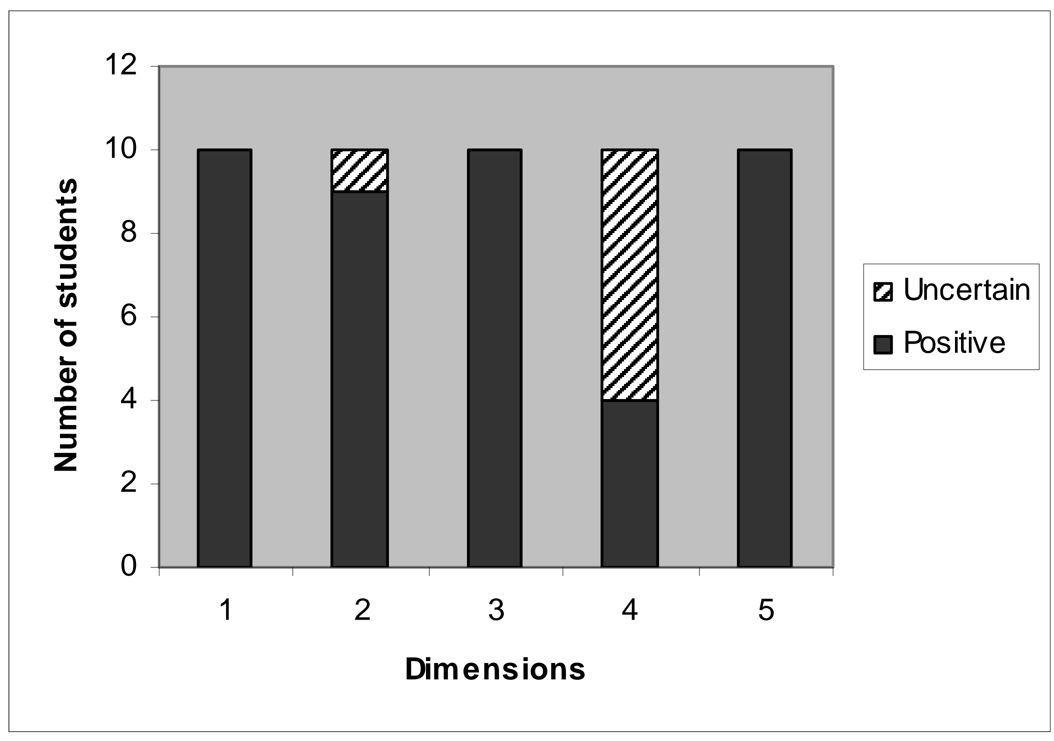

Figure 7.5 Students' opinions on the 5 dimensions of the construct: subject-specific intervention ("positive" means "favourably inclined towards the course regarding the concept in question")

Even though some students rated some of the individual statements negatively, on average the responses to the statements comprising each dimension were predominantly positive. It had been expected that students would appreciate the scaffolding (Dimension 1), working together with peers with similar academic and professional interests (Dimension 2), and the overt emphasis on student needs (Dimension 3). These expectations were largely fulfilled. Although approximately 5% of the students indicated that they were uncertain as to whether all their personal needs had been addressed (Dimension 2), 5% uncertainty was not regarded to be a reason for concern. The overwhelming positive response to the statements in Dimension 5 was a pleasant surprise because of the regular criticism that the genre approach fostered passive learning. The students clearly thought that the skills they had learned were transferable to other contexts.

Experience with course evaluations over 25 years had taught the author that students were hesitant to admit that any university courses had taught them critical skills. The generally negative response to the statements in Dimension 4 (60%) was therefore not a complete surprise. However, it still called for further investigation. The original (unreversed) responses to the statements comprising Dimension 4 – summarized in terms of agreement, disagreement and uncertainty – are displayed in Figure 7.6. (The scales for Statements 23-25 were reversed for the statistical analysis to bring their polarity in line with that of Statements 21 and 22.)

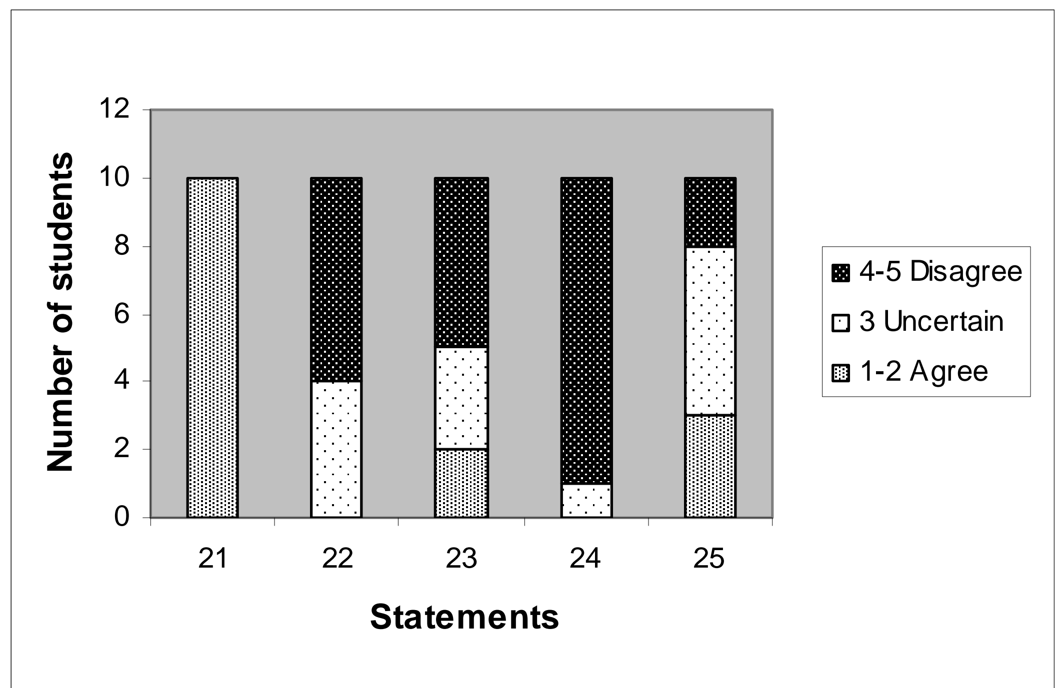

Figure 7.6 Responses to the concepts evaluated by statements 21-25 (= Dimension 4)

The results indicated on the graph can be interpreted and explained as follows:

Statement 21: *It is empowering to know how to write in the genres valued by academics*. The statement was phrased positively; thus the graph indicates100% positive evaluation of empowerment through genre knowledge.

Statement 22: *If one of my academic lecturers says that it is forbidden to refer to myself ("I") in academic writing, I will take issue with him/her*. The statement was phrased positively; thus 60% hesitated to challenge the authority of the lecturer. Possible explanations are that the students may have been

unfamiliar with the phrase "take issue with", or that second year students do not yet have the self-confidence to challenge the authority of a subject-field lecturer.

Statement 23: *One should accept the content of textbooks and academic articles as true*. The statement was phrased negatively; thus a third of the students believe that the authority of prescribed sources should not be questioned or challenged.

Statement 24: *It is impossible to criticize one's own work*. The scale has a negative polarity; thus 90% of the students believe that self-reflection comprises an essential part of successful academic writing.

Statement 25: *Empowerment in tertiary education means that students should be allowed to write as they speak*. The statement is phrased negatively; thus 80% of the respondents harbour a misconception regarding an important objective of the intervention. This misconception might have originated in erroneous interpretations of Communicative Language Teaching encountered at school level. Another possible explanation is that the learner-centredness and the rigorous scaffolding that underpinned the intervention might have created the impression of an accommodationist approach.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that a significant improvement occurred between the pre- and the posttest essays of students who underwent the fourteen week subject-specific essay-writing intervention, and it is highly probable that the intervention itself contributed to this improvement. The overall improvement was about equal on the three primary dimensions measured by the analytic pre- and posttest assessment: Handling of source materials (18%), Structure and development (18%) and Academic writing style (19%).

The qualitative analysis performed on both the pretests and the posttests suggests that dedicated exercises on interpreting and using appraisal resources should be included in future interventions. More attention should also be paid to the lexicogrammar of some

of the "neglected" categories of logical ideation, for instance Text-internal time, Means, Purpose, Condition and Similarity. Students should also be made aware of the important role of grammatical metaphor (internal logical relations) in academic writing.

The results of the opinion survey indicate that students were generally positive about the effect of the intervention on their academic writing abilities. They showed appreciation for all the "signature" features of a genre-based approach, and their responses seem to refute the criticism that genre approaches promote "transmission pedagogy". The responses also indicate that some erroneous beliefs are still held regarding formality and precision in academic writing. Lecturers should also encourage students to make their own voices heard, and to instil in students the self-confidence to challenge the authority of lecturers and lecturing materials, if merited.

In conclusion it should be noted that the outcomes of this evaluation do not necessarily disprove the possible effectiveness of more generic writing interventions. To facilitate comparison a similar intervention with a broader subject-field focus was designed, administered and evaluated, using the same evaluation instruments. The next chapter reports on the design and evaluation of a cross-disciplinary intervention.