Facultat d'Educació

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Tesi doctoral inscrita dins el programa de Didàctica de la Llengua i la Literatura

First-Year Students' Construction of an Academic Persona In The Academic Activity System

Àngels Oliva Girbau

Supervised by Marta Milian Gubern

September 2012

Agraïments

En primer lloc, vull agraïr l'ajuda imprescindible, clarificadora i desinteressada de la meva tutora, la Dra. Marta Milian Gubern, que m'ha ajudat a explorar terrenys desconeguts i ha posat ordre al caos del meu cap, dividit entre recerca i docència. Li agraeixo immensament la cura i la paciència amb què ha llegit les moltes versions prèvies del text, i la seva disponibilitat i ànims quan les circunstàncies em feien dubtar de tot plegat.

Aquest ha estat un projecte coral, que no hagués arribat a bon port sense els meus companys de feina a la Universitat Pompeu Fabra; sense el suport incondicional de la degana, la Mireia Trenchs, i l'ex-degà, en Miquel Berga, que van confiar en una professora de secundària i la van acollir al departament d'anglès. També vull agraïr la feina d'equip als meus altres companys, que van desenvolupar els materials de l'assignatura amb mi, i que van tenir la paciència i la voluntat d'ajudar-me a tirar endavant la tesi: l'Adriana Patiño, l'Anna Asian, l'Antonieta Oliver, en James McCullough, la Marta Puxan i en Pere Gifra.

També vull fer referència a la comunitat acadèmica que m'ha guiat i acompanyat a través dels seus escrits, i que han escoltat fragments del meu treball a congressos a casa i fora, tot ajudant-me a reconduïr-lo amb consells i idees – els també professors Otto Kruse, David Block, David Russell, l'equip de Blanquerna, i molts altres.

Vull agraïr-li al Jaume (i de fa poquet també a l'Helena) la seva paciència, ànims i ajuda en tot moment malgrat haver omplert casa nostra de papers, llibres, notes i esquemes de tota mena. I finalment, gràcies als amics i familiars que sempre sou allà i que em recolzeu en tots els projectes.

Abstract

This paper studies the construction of an academic identity through writing in English as a foreign language, using a theoretical approach based on socio-constructivism, genre theory, systemic-functional linguistics and cultural-historical activity theory. More specifically, we study the relationship between academic genres and identity in first-year Humanities students, and to what extent a reflective social approach to writing instruction can foster students' successful initiation into university by providing spaces to analyse and discuss the nature of the academic activity system, based on our experience designing and teaching a course on academic English for first-year Humanities students from *Universitat Pompeu Fabra* who generally spoke Catalan or Spanish as their L1 and came straight from secondary education. The data for the case study was gathered using course activities, based on the ethnographic approach – using an emic perspective as a teacher/researcher. Through the analysis of students' participation in a series of reflective activities such as questionnaire or online forums, we construct a picture of students' relationship to the components of the academic activity system as mediated by Anglo-American academic genres. The results showed a close relationship between students' problems with the acquisition of academic genres in English and conflicts between their newly constructed identities and other elements of the academic activity system, particularly their relation to the other members of the academic activity system, its ideational content and hence students' insecurity to make a relevant contribution due to their problems using academic genres in a foreign language.

Keywords: Academic identity, CHAT, ACLITS, WAC/WID, activity system, academic genres, discourse communities.

Resum

Aquesta tesi estudia la construcció de la identitat acadèmica a través de l'aprenentatge de l'escriptura acadèmica en anglès com a llengua estrangera, en base a un marc teòric que recull aportacions del socio-constructivisme, la teoria de gèneres, la lingüística sistèmica-funcional i la teoria de l'activitat històrico-cultural. Més específicament, s'estudia la relació entre l'adquisició de gèneres acadèmics i desenvolupament de la pròpia identitat en alumnes de primer any d'Humanitats, i fins a quin punt un enfocament basat en les teories que informen el marc teòric, de caire social i reflexiu, pot contribuir a facilitar el procès d'iniciació dels alumnes nous dins la universitat, tot proporcionant-los espais on analitzar i discutir la naturalesa del sistema d'activitat acadèmic. L'estudi presenta una experiència de disseny i impartició d'un curs sobre anglès acadèmic per a alumnes de primer d'Humanitats a la Universitat Pompeu Fabra, majorment parlants nadius de català o castellà i provinents de l'educació secundària. Les dades per l'estudi es van recollir a partir dels propis materials del curs, dissenyats seguint criteris etnogràfics – tot adoptant una perspectiva èmica com a docent/investigador. A partir de l'anàlisi de les participacions dels alumnes a una sèrie d'activitats reflexives (com un qüestionari, fòrums en línia, etc) es construeix una representació de la relació dels estudiants amb els components del sistema d'activitat acadèmic, influenciada pels gèneres Anglo-Americans. Els resultats ens mostren una clara relació entre els problemes dels aprenents amb l'adquisició dels gèneres acadèmics en anglès amb els conflictes entre les seves identitats en procès de construcció i la resta d'elements del sistema d'activitat acadèmic, particularment en referència a la relació que els estudiants estabiliren amb els altres membres del sistema d'activitat acadèmic, els seus components ideacionals i la pròpia inseguretat dels estudiants de primer respecte a la seva capacitat de fer una contribució valuosa al sistema, donats els seus problemes fent servir gèneres acadèmics en una llengua estrangera.

Mots clau: Identitat acadèmica, teoria de l'activitat històrica-cultural, ACLITS, WAC/WID, sistema d'activitat, gèneres acadèmics, comunitats discursives.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

During the past decades, Catalan university has become increasingly multilingual, heterogeneous, specialised and necessarily inclusive. These changes were brought about by political and social changes that caused the entrance of hitherto excluded students into higher education, a whole new range of students with very diverse initiation needs. For these students, being able to understand and produce the genres of the discipline they want to join determines their permanence in university and their professional options after graduation. In the context of the European Space for Higher Education, this requirement entails mastering academic genres according to the specific features of a discipline in a variety of languages. Therefore, students are increasingly more pressed to transfer their newly acquired and often vague knowledge on academic genres in their native language into English, regardless of their discipline.

All over Europe, universities are trying out different solutions to meet this challenge – such as writing centres, language courses, in-faculty courses, tutoring, writing labs, etc. – while simultaneously dealing with internal conflicts due to the nature of modern university. The decisions each institution makes regarding the conflicts between access and inclusion, local and international goals, and power relations and identity issues deeply colour the way they decide to approach the initiation of first-year students. The traditional remedial approach to writing instruction only assesses students' writing from a textual perspective, and consequently pathologises their productions; therefore, to maximise the number of students who are successfully initiated into HE, writing instruction cannot remain on the fringes of academia, but it needs to become one of its main objectives.

In order to implement a durable system of writing instruction to initiate first-year students into university, we have developed and studied a course that scaffolds students' construction of an academic persona in relation to the goals, tools and to other members of the academic activity system, based on 1) two trends in writing instruction, Writing Across the Curriculum and Academic Literacies; and 2) current trends in writing research, including notions from genre theory and genre acquisition; systems of genres; and activity systems under the framework of Cultural Historical Activity Theory and Systemic Functional Linguistics. This theoretical approach envisions higher education as an activity system,

shifting the focus of instruction away from students' language deficiencies and onto the essential aspects defining academic communication and hence students' identity as members of the academic community: the goals of the discipline, their role and status, the cultural-specific features of academic genres and their functions, and how these relate to the way they picture themselves as part of the academic system. Students are thus given the opportunity to reflect on and discuss the nature of the academic activity system they are becoming part of and the internal and external conflicts derived from this process while they participate in it.

This project consists of four chapters. In the second one, we provide a definition of what constitutes an academic identity, and the elements that contribute to shape it, based on the socio-cultural framework. We apply notions from our theoretical framework to the analysis of two trends in writing instruction in the US and in the UK in order to gain some insights into the methods and approaches currently used in countries with long traditions in writing instruction. The third chapter covers the application of our framework to the design of a course, in which we discuss the development of our research tools according to the ethnographic approach, and how we used these research tools as part of a course in order to help students construct their academic identity. In the second part, we describe the data thus obtained, and assess the results of this case study. Chapter four contains the conclusions to our research project organised in categories.

The ultimate goal of this project is to provide some evidence that the implementation of our theoretical framework into the design of an EAP course for first-year Humanities students can first, establish connections between identity development and inclusion issues in the context of present-day university; secondly, foster students' participation in the ongoing negotiation of the traits that define the academic activity system they are attempting to join through the study of its components and by acting as full members of it; and, thirdly, integrate first-year students into the academic activity system by making them aware of the genres they need to participate in the academic community of their discipline in L1 and L2, and the steps needed to learn to use them.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In this first chapter, we construct a definition of what constitutes academic identity, its social construction within an academic context, and the contextual elements that contribute to shape it, based on the socio-constructivist approach. To complement the description of the process of identity construction, we contextualise it in relation to the notions of discourse genres and discourse communities, discussing the specific features of academic genres and their role in the contexts that provide the setting for their acquisition. We describe the specificities of these genres within the general features of discourse genres, in an overview of the issues that make them an essential component of learning and communication in higher education, with a section devoted to the acquisition of genres by non-native speakers.

The notion of academic identity is then connected to research trends and the changing views on genres and their learning, firstly discussing them within the framework of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) and secondly within the framework of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). These two trends inform the analysis of previous trends in writing instruction, and ultimately the design of the academic writing course for first-year students. SFL analyses genres using texts as the minimal unit of study, whereas CHAT takes on a more contextual approach to genre study that takes the activity system as their unit of analysis. We describe the framework of these two trends, and how they influenced our conceptualisation of writing and writing instruction in the academia, directing our course design so that it included work on all the elements of the academic activity system in order to scaffold students' entrance into the system. Rather than focusing only on aspects concerning academic genres, we focused on the relationship between identity awareness and literacies, and how this relationship could contribute to facilitate students' access to university.

In the second section of our theoretical framework, we apply these ideas on academic literacies to the analysis of two major trends in writing instruction in order to gain some insights into the best methods and approaches from countries with long traditions in this field. We contextualise writing instruction in university, and provide some additional discussion on the two trends that we have used as models for the development of writing instruction: *Writing Across the Curriculum* (WAC) and *Academic Literacies*

(ACLITS). We summarise the origins, aims, and the challenges both trends encountered and how they stood up to them, in connection to the present-day context of writing instruction. These two trends furnish the core guidelines to approach the teaching of academic genres as a process of identity construction within the academic community.

As closure to our theoretical framework, we recount the principles guiding the implementation of writing instruction we have obtained so far, and which we have applied to the design of a course on written academic genres in English for Humanities students. These principles revolve around a) the conceptualisation of higher education as a network of interacting academic activity systems; 2) the need to deal with the conflicts caused by the multiplicity of voices, goals and identities within every academic activity system; and 3) the role of identity and self-awareness in the acquisition of the genres, goals and knowledge of every academic activity system on the part of novice members, particularly for non-native speakers and basic writers.

2.1. Defining academic identity

A person's identity consists of the range of personae that are constructed socially by one's choices of action within the available set of interactions. Socialising requires people to adopt a multiplicity of roles in order to adapt to the different contexts in which they interact. These multiple identities are defined by the outcomes of interactions in a variety of culturally-defined contexts, with a variety of people and purposes (Hyland, 2002a; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). An individual's identities do not coexist smoothly, but cause internal and external conflicts during their process of creation and adaptation. Identities are not static either, but in permanent reconstruction in relation to one another and in relation to other people's identities within different communities.

We have chosen to study students' written discourse to analyse their construction of identity because as a social action, "written text is deliberate, potentially permanent and used as evidence for many social purposes" (Ivanic, 1998, p.32)[1]. As we adopt the discourse forms that prove successful in social situations, we internalise as well the practices and structures of the community we are entering, and its

[1] Many authors regard identity as an intrinsic part of discourse, in connection to the ideas of Bakhtin, Vygotsky and Leontev – among others, Ivanic, Halliday, Fairclough, or Hyland.

values. The collective values do not replace the individual ones, but rather blend with them and with the other sets of collective values each individual has gathered. The process of negotiation between individual and collective values in social situations is not a process of total acculturation, but rather one of mutual influence, a process of "positioning" (Davies & Harré, 1990; Fairclough, 1995) that can sometimes prove problematic when we enter radically different spheres of action:

> Each of us is constantly influenced by a multitude of discourses which are situated in the groups in which we participate and which mediate our involvement in any one of them. Most importantly, much of our sense of who we are originates in our home cultures. The fact that we bring this sense of self to our acts of writing in the university can create an acute sense of dislocation and uncertainty (Hyland, 2002, p.1094).

Similarly, an academic identity is built out of interactions with other members of the academic community. By employing the tools of the community they want to join, new members are expected to acquire as well its collective goals and knowledge, and prove their contribution – and consequently their value – as valid members of this community.

> Academic writing, like all forms of communication, is an act of identity: it not only conveys disciplinary 'content' but also carries a representation of the writer (…) our discoursal choices align us with certain values and beliefs that support particular identities (Hyland, 2002, p.1092).

Academic socialisation, students' construction of an academic identity, requires first-year students to dramatically redefine their pragmatic competence in an altogether new form of literacy which is often associated to forms of discourse and values that feel alien to them. This process entails a variety of problems for first-year students, regardless of their mother tongue:

> Students (...) They must speak with authority, and to do this they must use another's voice and another's code, weakening their affiliations to their home culture and

> discourses to adopt the values and language of their disciplinary ones (Johns, 1997, p.64). As a result, students often find their own experiences to be devalued and their literacy practices to be marginalized and regarded as failed attempts to approximate these dominant forms" (Hyland, 2002, p.1094).

For non-native English speakers, academic literacy involves the extra challenge of having to undergo this process at least twice – as part of their regular initiation into the academic activity system and as they try to transfer genres across different languages and settings. Apart from the language-related issues they may find, they are hindered by their own rhetorical identities, which "may be shaped by very different traditions of literacy" (Hyland, 2002, p.1091-1092) determined by often implicit cultural-specific issues[2]. The post-structuralist research approach to the conflicts of second-language acquisition and identity focuses on four issues that study the relationship between language, cognition and identity. Even though these issues initially describe second-language acquisition, they can also be applied to the context of higher education, thus regarding students' acquisition of academic genres as the challenging acquisition of an altogether different form of communication:

> (i) the crisis of representation and associated instability of meaning; (ii) the absence of secure foundations for knowledge; (iii) the analytic centrality of language, discourses and texts; and (iv) the inappropriateness of the Enlightenment assumption of the rational autonomous subject and a counter, contrasting concentration on the ways in which individuals are constituted as subjects. (Smart, 1999, p. 38)

Identity is therefore not "something fixed for life, but as fragmented and contested in nature" (Block, 2007, p.864), particularly when individuals "move across geographical and psychological borders, immersing themselves in new sociocultural environments" (Block, 2007, p.864). In the new academic context, the borders to cross are presently psychological, with the potential of becoming geographical too. These changes upset the established make-up of one's identity. This does not mean, however, that the new replaces the old entirely, but that there is a "negotiation of difference" (Papastergiadis, 2000), which

[2] Block provides a list of papers based on the interrelationship between identity and second language learning: Bayley and Schechter, 2003; Block, 2006; Day, 2002; Kanno, 2003; Kramsch, 2003, 2007; Miller, 2003; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller and Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001.

means that past and present experiences modify one another, causing internal conflicts within the individual's identity. This process results in what Block terms ambivalence, "the uncertainty of feeling a part and feeling apart (...) the simultaneous affirmation and negation of such feelings" (2007, p.864). For Davies and Harré (1999), identity is realised as the permanent negotiation and positioning of interacting individuals. Block (2007) uses the terms identity, subject positions and positioning as synonyms, thus reinforcing the idea of identity as a process rather than something stationary.

> This discussion of negotiation of difference and resolving ambivalence raises the issue of the extent to which identity is, at least to some extent, a self-conscious, reflexive project of individual agency, created and maintained by individuals (p. 865).

Some authors challenged the notion that identity is an individual construct. According to Lave and Wenger (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), learning takes place as we participate in the practices of the communities we are part of, and our identities are built in relation to these practices and the nature of these communities.

> ...(A)n individual gains entry into a community of practice by means of *legitimate peripheral participation* (...) Participation must thus always begin peripherally, and if the individual is not deemed legitimate by others or if he or she chooses not to participate as a reflective form of resistance, then it might not begin at all (Block, 2007, p. 865)

Participation into the academic community requires students to a) accept the entry rules of the community, b) have their participations sanctioned by the expert members of the communities, and c) actively participate in the exchanges of the community so as to be eligible for acceptance and show adherence to the community. In light of this, students' dropping out of the instrumental subjects shows a passive form of resistance to the impositions of the academic community on their identities and subject positions as writers.

> Although identity is conditioned by social interaction and social structures, it conditions social interaction and social structures at the same time. It is, in short, constitutive of and constituted by the social environment (...) Thus, individuals do not carve out an identity from the inside out or from the outside in, as it were; rather, their environments impose constraints whilst they act on those environments, continuously altering and recreating them. (Block, 2007, p. 865-866)

By interacting within the community, students gain *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1991), *symbolic capital* and *social capital.* Cultural capital is "about having the right cultural resources and assets, which exist as behavioural patterns (...) in association with particular artifacts (...) and as a connection to certain institutions)" (Block, 2007, p.866). Social capital refers to the relationships established with other members of the community. The more powerful these others are, the more social capital they bestow upon the members they relate to. When these forms of capital are recognized by other members of the group as legitimate and prestigious, they endow individuals with symbolic capital, reputation or prestige (Block, 2007).

In the following pages, we outline the main features of the academic community and its key components – namely, its tools, users, community and goals. Guided by genre theory, we summarise the notions of discourse genres (tools) and discourse communities (users and community). We provide an overview of the notion of discourse communities and their associated genres founded on Bakhtin's work, including a revision of the term and its implications for the development of an academic identity. We then describe the particularities of academic genres as a subgroup of discourse genres focusing on the goals underlying their use, and the specificities of writing in academic English for non-native speakers. By studying the interactions between these components, we can articulate the ways in which academic identity is shaped, and therefore we can attempt to expose the issues that make it hard for first-year students to become part of the academic community and suggest some possible ways to help them.

a) Discourse and communities

The relationship between discourse and its users has been regarded from multiple points of view, and labelled accordingly, shifting the focus between a linguistic and a social approach to define this relationship[3]. Thus, discourse communities can be defined according to linguistic rules, cultural values and background, predictable discursive structures (discourse genres, according to genre theory), or for more integrationist authors, according to all these aspects. These changes in focus stem from the view researchers take on the role of discourse and community: does the community create its specific discourse forms or do these discourse patterns define the community?

Illustration 1: Discourse communities

We have chosen to take an integrationist approach to the relationship between discourse and communities, assuming that the nature of both discoursal forms and the community that employs them is a two-direction process. Thus, recurrent interaction binds together a group of users, who eventually become a discourse community, defined by its particular context of action and the tools they use to interact. Every community develops a different set of genres to suit its needs, hence establishing a mutually defining and ever-changing relationship between a community and its genres, so that its members bind their genres to a specific set of intentions, relations and circumstances, which at the same

[3] Other denominations with slightly different meanings for these perspectives are speech community (Braithwaite, 1984); communities of practice (Wenger, 1998); and interpretive communities (Fish, 1980).

time label their users as members of a specific community. Genres are therefore social tools that contribute to individuals employ to carry out social actions in specific contexts.

> Only by uncovering the pathways that guide our lives in certain directions can we begin to identify the possibilities for new turns and the consequences of taking those turns. When we are put on the spot, we must act, and in acting we must act generically if others are to understand our act and accept it as valid. Without a shared sense of genre others would not know what kind of thing we were doing. And life is mysterious enough already (Bazerman, 1995, p.100).

Swales (1987) listed six requirements for a group to be labelled discourse community, ranging from linguistic and social perspectives on the term, including goals, users, genres and interaction:

> The discourse community has a communality of interest (…) mechanisms for intercommunication between members (…) survives by providing information and feedback (…) has developed and continues to develop discoursal expectations (…) possesses an inbuilt dynamic towards an increasingly shared and specialized terminology (…) has a critical mass of members with a suitable degree of relevant discoursal and content expertise. (p. 5-6)

Even though individuals may belong to more than one community, or perceive similarities between the genres they use, genres cannot be successfully transferred across contexts because of their being so bound up to their specific context of use, to the extent that they signal an individual's belonging to a group:

> Over a period of time individuals perceive homologies in circumstances that encourage them to see these as occasions for similar kinds of utterances. These typified utterances, often developing standardized formal features, appear as ready solutions to similar appearing problems. Eventually the genres sediment into forms so expected that readers are surprised or even uncooperative if a standard perception of the situation is not met by an utterance of the expected form (Bazerman 1995,

p.82).

Genres enable communication by connecting form and function. They are verbal actions, "a text-type that does something rather than is something" (Devitt, 1996, p.606), characterised by their variety and dynamic nature, their uniting social and individual aspects of communication, and the way they facilitate social interaction. The function of genres is to provide speakers with models of suitable responses to situations they are likely to encounter in their usual sphere of action. Consequently, "knowing the genre means knowing, not only, or even most of all, how to conform to generic conventions but also how to respond appropriately to a given situation" (Devitt, 1993, p.577). Discourse and context are thus bound by a mutually defining relationship, as genres build and are built by recurrent situations (see *illustration 1),* facilitating the increasingly complex communication needs of the members of discourse communities by inserting discourse functions into predictable structures: “as our constructions of situations change and new situations begin to recur, genres change and new genres develop." (Devitt, 1993, p.578-9).

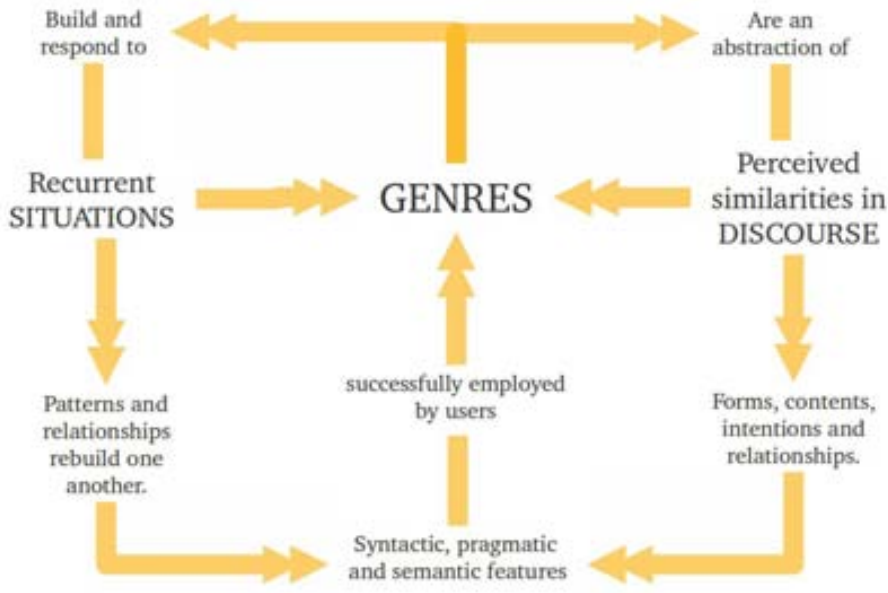


Illustration 2: Discourse genres

The typification of genre takes place "in reciprocal interaction between institutionalized practices and individual human actions" (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992, p.299), in what Bazerman (1995) described as macro and micro communication acts respectively. Out of these interactions, genres appear as the users'

abstractions of recurring types of discourse due to their successful occurrence in specific situations, constantly redefined by what users perceive to be their identifying features, not just in terms of language issues, but also regarding content and relationships (see illustration 1). Therefore, genres cannot exist isolated from their users and their sphere of action, because they would be unrecognisable:

> Genres rely on our being able to recognize them and to some degree understand the meanings they instantiate within the systems of which they are part. A textual form which is not recognized as being of a type, having a particular force, would have no status nor social value as a genre. A genre exists only in the recognitions and attributions of the users. (Bazerman, 1995, p.81).

Bakhtin (1986) linked human activity to language, since language performs social functions. As human activity is diverse in its purposes and forms, so are the ways in which language is realised. Just like human activities become increasingly complex and varied, the genres linked to them must necessarily become “changeable, flexible, and plastic" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.80-81) in order to facilitate communication. The number of genres is potentially infinite “because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible” (Devitt, 1996, p.60), and infinitely specific “because each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex" (Devitt, 1996, p.60).

b) Academic genres and their role in learning

Academic genres form a sub-group within discourse genres, with their own range of sub-genres, in a never-ending fractal process of adaptation to different fields and institutions. In this piece of research, we use the term academic to refer to texts written by students but which are aimed at reproducing the texts written for scientific research-bound purposes (Russell, in press). These genres are extremely dynamic (see *illustration 2*), they are not universal, but determined by the context of their usage, constantly updated depending on the results obtained in the specific situations in which they are put to use - the language in which they are used, the status of the users, the discipline, and such. Academic texts have a transitional nature, they are the bridges between existing and upcoming knowledge, inasmuch as they are

more co-operative and mutually dependant than texts belonging to other genres. The academic texts of a discipline are all intertwined, in the sense that the multiple voices of their writers construct the discipline's collective knowledge. Academic writers act as part of a discourse community (Braüer, 2003; Mullin & Wallace, 1994); their commitment to a discipline involves their partaking of its collective goals in their contribution to the field, so that each academic paper becomes a piece in a jigsaw of argumentation trying to solve a problem (Rienecker & Stray Jörgensen, 2003). Within a community of knowledge, authors read each other's works and respond to them unendingly, which results in the fact that all the academic texts of a field are interconnected into a knowledge network. Each text depends on the existence of many other texts, which themselves were written on the basis of former texts. Their recurrence and index of referentiality constitute marks of status and recognition in their relation to other members of the discipline, so that they both co-operate and compete simultaneously.

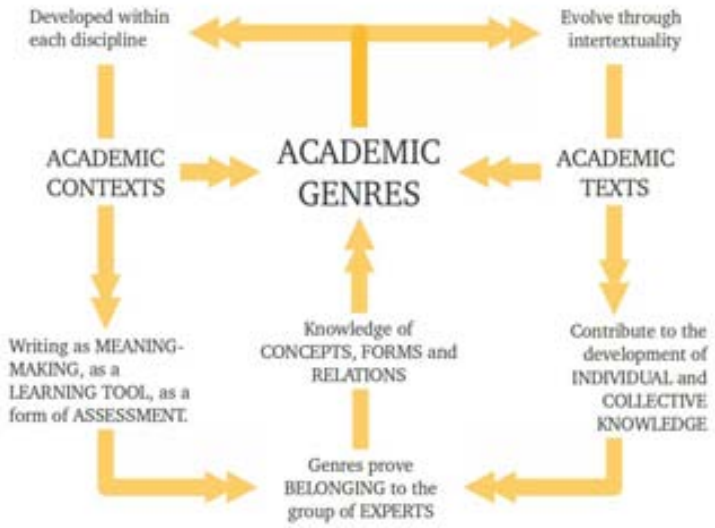


Illustration 3: Academic genres

To understand the writing of a specific community, one needs to observe the community itself, as "each discipline, each kind of institution, developed its own 'literacy', its own tacit expectations about how its members (and its students) should write" (Russell, 1991, p.5). The identity of academic writers is mutually dependant of the genres they employ and their impact. By displaying their knowledge of the forms, concepts and relations assigned to a certain genre, users reassert their identity as members of the group and contribute to its goals. This is a never-ending process of renegotiation of status, as "the rules of the game constantly change in response to a wide range of intellectual, material, and political forces

within and outside the community" (Russell, 1991, p.14). Within the same community of knowledge, users' status are sometimes unstable – particularly for new less established members – and may fluctuate between expert and novice, as new genres emerge or change through time (Carlino 2004).

Summing up, and before we move on to describe the functions and challenges derived from the use of academic genres within university education, these are the characteristics of academic genres that underpin our conceptualisation of discourse in the academic community:

- Academic genres are social tools used in connection to a specific set of purposes, contexts and relations;
- They are neither permanent nor unique, but shaped by different contexts, fields of knowledge and languages.
- Academic genres evolve together with the community in which they are employed.
- Academic genres are bound to the collective goals of the community and to the identity of its individuals.

As for the role of academic genres at university, in the context of higher education writing constitutes 1) the prevailing form of assessment in the context of higher education; 2) proof of belonging to a discipline; and 3) a tool of learning, writing-to-learn activities (Kapp & Bangeni, 2005) whose success is measured according to their generic suitability; i.e. to what extent they employ the vocabulary, style and compositional patterns typical of their field of knowledge, the ones used by and expected by the discursive community they belong to (Swales, 1996). For first-year students, being able to learn academic writing and the genres that represent it in the specific context of each discipline, department and subject determines their results at university and their professional options after their graduation. Academic genres are students' key to their permanence at university and for their long-term learning throughout the degree, post-graduate studies and further into their professional life. In order to become part of the expert community, novice writers need to prove their acquisition of the knowledge shared by the community and employ the specific genres of this field. Throughout the process of acquiring academic genres, students are actually acquiring not only essential knowledge or expertise in their field, but also the means to

becoming members of the expert community. As we mentioned previously, this process of initiation can be problematic for all students, regardless of their linguistic background, as academic ways can sometimes contradict discourse practices that identify them as part of their home community, and therefore challenge their values and identity.

c) Foreign language issues

For non-native speakers, the acquisition of academic discourse in English feels doubly foreign[4]. Students contribution to collective knowledge, and hence their value within the academic community, is undermined by their image as poor producers of academic discourse in the language of prestige (Matsuda, 2003; Modiano, 1999*)*. Büker (2003) classifies into four categories students' conflicts while writing academic papers in a foreign language, based on her study of international students' writing in German. She lists the content-specific level, the domain-specific procedural level, the level of cultural coinage, and the foreign language proficiency level. These levels are not clear-cut, but rather overlap one another and affect different functions, as shown in illustration 3. The first level concerns subject knowledge, as first-year students feel extremely inexperienced regarding the knowledge of their discipline. Field-specific procedural knowledge covers the generic conventions that characterise academic writing – the right subject matter, register, etc. It refers to students' need to employ the procedures typical of the field, even if they have not had any specific instruction on them. These two problems concern students' acquisition of the background knowledge shared by the interpretive community (Fish, 1980), the readers and writers of any specific field of knowledge. In order to be recognised as part of this interpretive community, the authors and writers of academic texts are expected to write according to field-specific substantive and procedural features, thus signalling that their text belongs in their field.

The next two levels of conflict, the level of cultural coinage, and the foreign language proficiency level, are specific to non-native speakers of English. Regarding the problems derived from cultural coinage, the conventions of particular academic communities are strongly influenced by their different traditions. Anglo-American style essays are quite different from essays written according to the

[4] See the discussion on Block's work in the previous section.

Continental style of academic writing[5], and within these two groups there are large differences according to the languages spoken in each country or discourse patterns in different fields of knowledge that globalisation has not quite managed to erode. Such cultural differences affect both the focus and the form of the academic genres their members write in, and do not solely depend on the language they are written in. As for the problem of foreign language proficiency, Kruse argued that the school-to-university transition already "limits their language capacity almost as if they were forced to think in a foreign language" (2003, p.25). On top of that, they are actually writing in a foreign language, and even if they had an acceptable command of it, they would still be writing in an altogether alien register and tradition. Krings's model (1992) pointed out the comparatively high complexity of writing in L2 by adding a sub process defined as problem-solving of L2 deficits to the already existing processes of planning, linguistic realisation and revision, as we see in illustration 4.

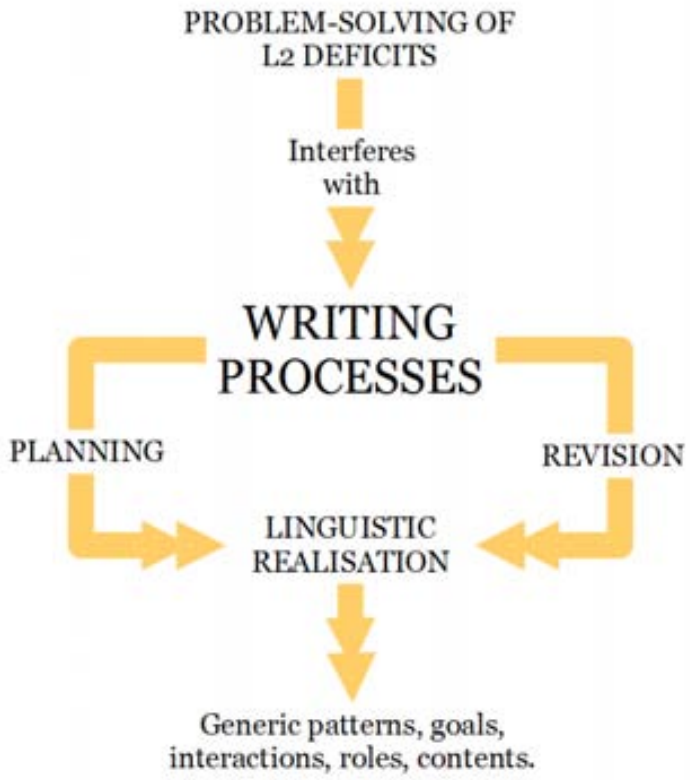


Illustration 4: Writing processes

[5] See Rienecker & Stray Jörgensen, 2003.

When writing essays, students need to cope with planning, revising and putting down in words their ideas according to a topic and a set of formal rules they are new to. Simultaneously, they need to deal with their deficits in foreign language competence, even if they choose to do part of the task in their mother tongue to avoid this problem. The main issue regarding foreign language proficiency is that the students' linguistic knowledge interferes with students' success because it masks their difficulties at other levels. Students writing in L2 tend to see their lack of competence in L2 as the only source of their problems in writing, disregarding the cultural, discipline-specific and procedural problems they may have.

d) Textual and contextual perspectives

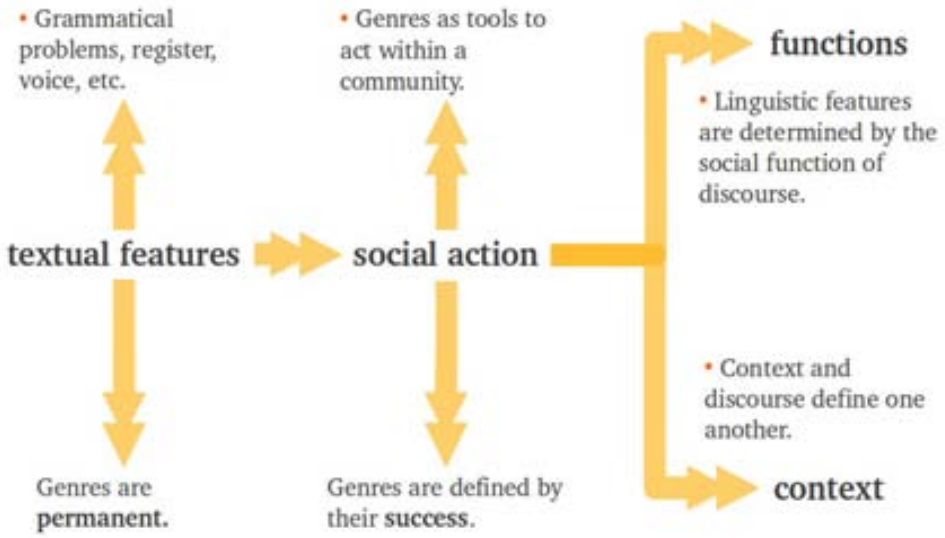


Illustration 5: Changing perceptions of discourse in writing research and instruction

Throughout the 20th century, writing research[6] has explored the nature of written discourse and its relation to learning and status (see illustration 5). Before the appearance of socio-constructivist theories in the Western world around the 1960s, genres were considered to be permanent and universal, defined

[6] Russell has built up a very complete account of the history of writing in the American tradition through various works, providing essential insights into the changing nature of higher education and its members, and the effects of this revolution on writing instruction: *Writing in the Academic Disciplines, 1870-1990: A Curricular History* (2nd edition published in 2002); *Romantics on Rhetoric: Liberal Culture and the Abolition of Composition Courses* (1988); *Institutionalizing English: Rhetoric on the Boundaries* (2002); *Composition's History* (2006) and *Writing Across the Curriculum in Historical Perspective: Toward a Social Interpretation* (1990). As for the European tradition, Kruse (2006) describes the origins of writing in the disciplines in Germany in connection to the essay genre, its ideological grounds, and its role in the social construction of knowledge.

purely by their textual features. Students' writing was problematised because of grammatical errors and incapacity to make sense. The work of Bakhtin, Vygotsky, Leontev and the subsequent development of genre theory connected genres to social action, interpreting texts not only in purely linguistic terms. This view of texts as social action evolved, in the field of applied linguistics, into the Systemic-Functional approach – Halliday's elaboration of Austin's notion of speech acts. SFL studied genres through the linguistic functions that connect discourse to specific social actions. The authors from the New Rhetoric movement (Bazerman, Miller, Shaughnessy, Flower and Hayes, and many others) took on a more context-based view of genres, in which genres and context mutually defined each other. CHAT further explored this relationship, using the concept of activity system to analyse the components of context, so that genres are viewed as tools that the members of a given community deploy to achieve some common goals.

- **Finding traces of academic identity in academic genres: the Systemic Functional Linguistic approach**

Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) started using textual evidence to trace the functions genres perform, and how to reproduce them from a semiotic perspective. SFL developed a comprehensive conception of context or situation in relation to genre development, which included the notions of field, tenor and mode. These terms defined the connections between textual features and content, between the speaker and the listeners and with the organisation of the text respectively (as cited in Gruber, 2004). These components of context determine the occurrence of concrete registers/genres. As Bakhtin, Halliday argued that genres are not defined by their formal qualities *per se*, but rather by the way such qualities relate to the contents and functions of discourse in the particular context where it commonly takes place. Register/genre is a semantic and a functional concept, defined as “the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type. It is the meaning potential that is accessible in a given social context” (Halliday, 1993, p.26). This potential is realised by means of three functional components (Halliday, 1970) through which a text operates – the textual, interpersonal and ideational components, as shown in illustration 6. The SFL model of analysis therefore connects sets of textual features to the relationships they contribute to build and the goals they seek to fulfil within the

communication process (see illustration 6), focusing on the linguistic resources used to carry out these functions.

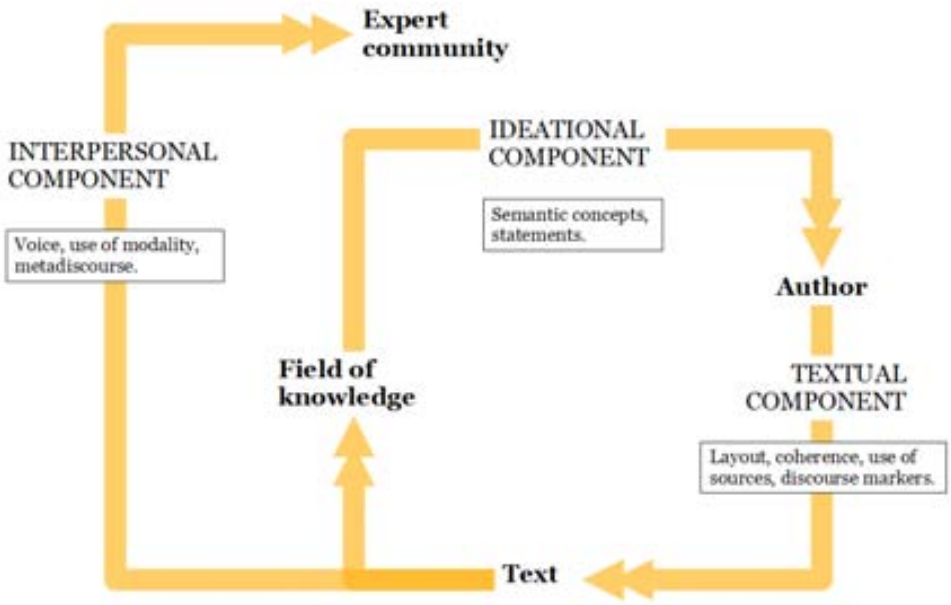


Illustration 6: Functional components of discourse

The interpersonal component deals with intertextuality and the relationship between the writer and the readers. This component describes the dialogical aspects of texts, how writers speak to the audience about the text and about their relationship to it and thus establish different degrees of closeness with the community of readers. By using modality and metadiscourse, writers can tell their readers how reliable a proposition is, or their inclination towards an idea or opinion (Gruber, 2004). Since academic writing deals with cognition and its limits, it is important for scholars-to-be to gain skills for engaging in remote discussions with other academic writers while clearly establishing their attitude towards their role, their readers and their statements. Modality determines the writer's relationship with the audience by taking out insurance on categorical statements, limiting such statements to conditions under which they can be regarded as objectively valid or acceptable in argument via the use of modal auxiliaries, adjectives, hedges, and such (Nash, 1990). Metadiscourse has a discourse framing function (Crismore & Farnsworth

1989, 1990; Hyland, 1998; Nash, 1990); it helps connect to absent readers. Hyland (2004) further divided metadiscourse into stance and engagement, which refer to writer-oriented (or textual) and reader-oriented (or interpersonal) dialogic features respectively.

The ideational component covers the semantic concepts of their field-knowledge and any use of non-standardised expressions. This component refers to the text's epistemological functions, how it contributes to consolidating field knowledge by mirroring the community's background knowledge. Technical terms are an essential part of academic discourse development (Teberosky, 2007) since they contribute "to activate rich schemas of knowledge they have acquired from reading and writing the discourse of their specialities" (Peck, 1990). McCleary (1985) described semantic concepts as the set of terminology students of different specialities need to become familiar with. Semantic concepts comprehend the definition of the concept itself, some examples that illustrate it, and the skills to be able to use it or identify its usage.

Finally, the textual component covers the compositional patterns of genres and any related formal features. This component shows how language structure binds together the ideational and interpersonal components (Freeman, 1981; Halliday, 1970). It designates linguistic issues – not in terms of grammatical accuracy, but rather in relation to the community's expectations on the form of a particular genre, the generic conventions and the necessary command of English to implement them – lexical items, syntactic structures and compositional patterns.

- **The contextual approach: New Rhetoric and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory**

CHAT studies the development of cultural groups using as evidence the patterns of interaction that the users of a community employ to achieve their goals, including discourse genres, context, and user identities. Genres are used by communities of users to develop relatively stable and predictable responses to their communication needs, which are internalised by users through routines (Russell & Yáñez, 2003, p.75). Using genres enables the members of a community to "organizar acciones continuas en periodos más largos en tiempo y espacio […] movilizando herramientas materiales de maneras mucho más regularizadas y poderosas" (p.69). These communities of speakers share long-term goals that reach

beyond their individual conversations. These goals are shared by the collective users of a community, in an effort to achieve something with and beyond discourse (Engeström, 1995; Russell & Yáñez, 2003). It is precisely this multiplicity of purposes, contexts and methods that makes it necessary to find a unit of study larger than genre to understand the mechanics of discourse communities. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) originated in the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Leontev (1978, 1981), and was further developed by Cole and Engeström (1993). CHAT reconceptualised the Bakhtinian notion of discourse as a process of dynamic negotiation between users, in which genres mediate interactions between speakers so that discourse and context become one (Russell & Yáñez, 2003). CHAT is grounded on the idea that genres are not simply texts that share a set of formal features that translate into functions, but the intervening steps between a community and its long-term goals, and a way for users to identify themselves and others.

In 1991, Devitt used the term “genre set” to describe the full range of kinds of texts that a specific set of users are expected to produce in the course of their activity, reflecting the highly patterned connections among the genres used by a community. Bazerman suggested the use of “systems of genres”, which higher education defined as "systems of complex located activity constructed through typified actions” so that as participants in these systems “become more informed and involved with these typified literate actions, we come to share a more precise set of functional meanings and consequential relations through the kinds of texts” (1995, p.79). Using genres enables users to advance their interests and shape meanings in relation to complex social systems, granting value and consequence to the statements of others. These systems of interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings determine what limited range of genres may appropriately follow upon another in particular settings to meet the set of success conditions that are particular to that genre in that context of use. Bazerman's notion of system of genres comprehends “the set of social relations as it has been enacted (…) the full history of speech events as intertextual occurrences, but attending to the way that all the intertext is instantiated in generic form establishing the current act in relation to prior acts" (1995, p.99).

Along these lines, Russell and Yáñez (2003) suggested "una teoría dialéctica amplia que incluya los objetos y motivos de los colectivos y sus participantes, así como también sus interacciones recíprocas

entre las mentes y los textos en la interpretación de los lenguajes sociales" (p.70). The solution to the limitations of genre theory these authors suggest is based on the activity theory, which replaced the dialogical metaphor of context and discourse with a conceptualisation of context as a network of dynamic systems that are made up of human agents, tools and discourse, offering the Activity System as the new basic unit of analysis. Activity systems are made up by groups of people who need to carry out some specific actions in order to achieve a common goal. Faced with a problem to be solved, they pick some means of action, some tools to deploy. If their choice leads to success, they may use the same action in the future, until these tools become operationalised.

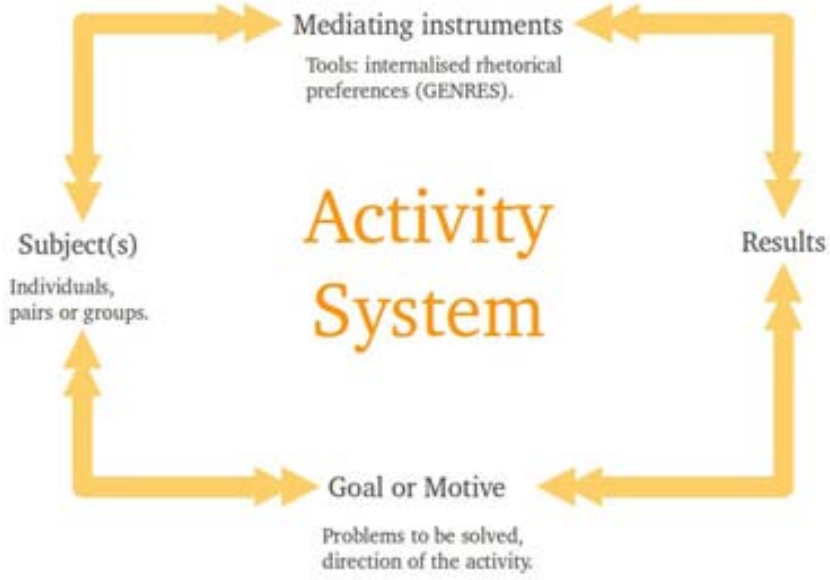


Illustration 7: Components of activity systems.

Using activity systems, we can analyse the way in which specific tools are implemented to mediate the goals and the object (focus or problem) of a community, and how they change over time in relation to the subjects, either individuals or groups who work towards some results, while their participation in different activity systems contributes to build their social identity (Russell & Yáñez, 2003). These objects or motives are not frozen, but change and adapt through time. The existence of the objects involves the existence of some general, shared goals, which are nonetheless constantly challenged at an individual level. Due to the plastic nature of their components, activity systems change historically: they are not static, but dynamic systems which are constantly re-created by micro-level interactions:

> Cada uno de los aspectos de un sistema de actividad cambia históricamente. La(s) identidad(es) de los sujetos, el foco y dirección (objeto/motivo) de sus acciones y sus herramientas en uso son históricamente (re)construídas en lapsos de segundos o siglos. Por esta razón, la teoría de la actividad se denomina teoría histórico cultural (Russell & Yáñez, 2003, p.73).

Genres facilitate the participation of the members of a system (e.g. a discipline), and are necessarily complex because the field in which they operate is complex. The initiation of new members into the activity system ensures their future participation, which will keep their field active:

> (...) the genres in which we participate are the levers which we must recognize, use and construct close to type (but with focused variation) in order to create consequential social action (...) The machine itself only stays working in-so-far as we participate in it and make our lives through its genres precisely because the genres allow us to create highly consequential meanings in highly articulated and developed systems (Bazerman, 1995, p.79).

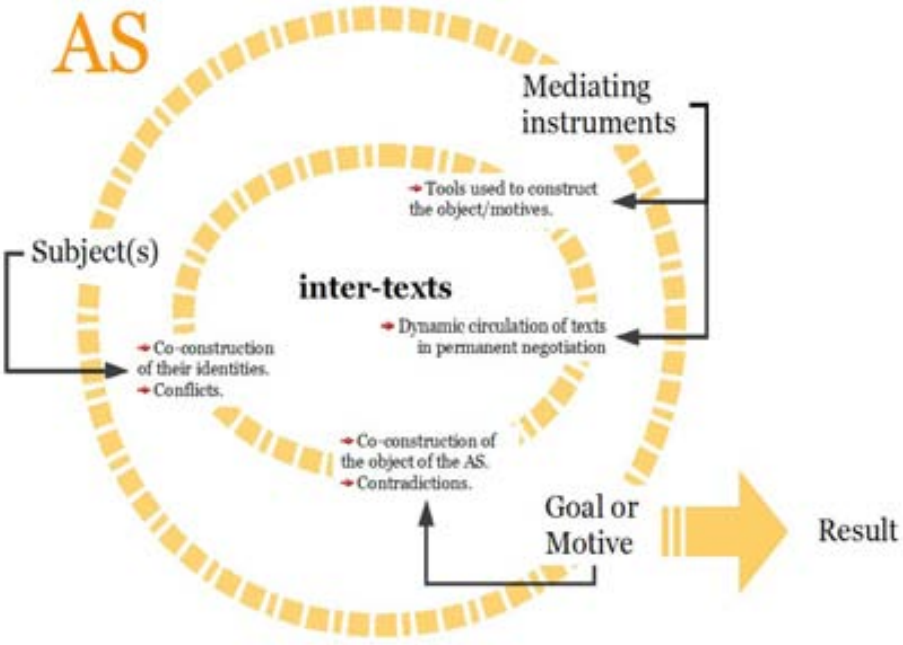


Illustration 8: Interactions among the components of activity systems

For the novice members of an activity system, these verbal actions are used at a conscious level; the more they participate in the exchanges of the system the more these tools become routinised (Russell and Yáñez, 2003). From a social perspective, acquisition entails one's engagement with the identity and goals of the system. Newcomers acquire genres by trial-and-error as they participate in the exchanges of their activity system. They imitate what they perceive to be tools and forms of use, and internalise them if they perceive that they are successful employing them. As new users acquire genres, they also internalise the object/motive of the activity and the identity of the group. Since the acquisition of genres occurs dialectically, there are tensions and conflicts between the different objects, goals tools and subjects of the multiple activity systems learners operate in when they attempt to transfer genres across different activity systems (Russell & Yáñez, 2003). For novice writers, academic identity is defined by their learner status and their perception of themselves within the activity systems of higher education. Their conceptualisation as academic writers depends on the relationship they perceive they have or may potentially have in the future to the goals, tools and users of the system. For learners initiated into multilingual contexts, the number of genres multiplies, and so do the conflicts between them. Because generic knowledge is not transferable across different contexts, we need to analyse the writing of each community individually in order for it to make sense, studying

> The issues it addresses, the purposes it serves, the concrete objects it manipulates, the questions it has excluded or already answered to the satisfaction of the community, the things that can be left unsaid because of the community's history and activity, or the things that might be said to accomplish its objectives. (Russell, 1991, p.13).

And articulating this knowledge for new members in order to facilitate their entrance into the activity system. In the academic context, by making explicit to students the mechanics of the community they intend to join through the study of its specific discourse patterns and their own development as members of it, we turn writing instruction into a tool of inclusion that grants first-year students prompt access to their field of knowledge as learners and active participants**,** challenging the power hierarchy of the academic activity systems:

> By gaining a grasp of how entire discursive systems operate through generic turns, we can locate ourselves, our potential speech acts and the criteria our utterances should seek to meet; we can start to understand what we can achieve rhetorically at any moment, and what we cannot, and how. (Bazerman, 1995, p.99).

e) State of the art

A combination of New Rhetoric and SFL can provide teachers with the tools to understand academic genres and to make students aware of the underlying connections with the context in which they are used and their users. SFL's focus on functions helps students with lower language skills to concentrate on the immediate goals of their writing, developing their own resources to perform the functions expected, regardless of their limitations in the foreign language. CHAT contextualises the use of genres within activity systems, thus widening our description of the formal features of genres in order to include the goals, subjects and objects of the activity systems in which students participate by learning and using these genres in context, whereas SFL enhances students' ability to effectively produce academic genres. CHAT provides a powerful framework to analyse the conflicts novice writers experience when being socialised into the academic activity systems, as it takes into account students' development of their identity within the academic activity systems, and not just the genres.

Academic genres are so inextricably bound to their context of use and their users, that it is impossible to learn/teach them separately. In order for students to acquire and successfully employ academic genres, we need to move beyond a merely textual view on academic genres when designing writing instruction. By explicitly teaching students the relationship between genres and the key components of their context of use, we can help them become aware of how this relationship determines their own academic identity and their interactions with the other members of the community as they contribute to the goals of the discipline.

Ultimately, our goal is not to teach students to use a certain range of academic genres, but to use them to make meaningful contributions to the community, partake of its goals and interact with other members of it as legitimate participants of the community of knowledge. In combining genre theory with

activity theory, CHAT binds together genre and activity system, regarding written texts as tools that mediate the interaction of individuals with groups in order to build up temporarily stable structures of action and identity. In order for the activity system to survive, its users must use the system tools in certain predictable manners, even though this does not secure that exchanges are forever identical. The tensions during the development of the tools reflect the struggle for power within and between each activity system (Russell & Yáñez, 2003) and how this affects all the elements of the system, including its tools and users' identities. Combining genre theory, SFL and activity theory under New Rhetoric provides us with a more accurate view of academic identity because it places it in context, so that we do not only analyse the genres through which academic identity is realised, but also the ways in which these genres help construct and negotiate goals, users and the community itself.

As a summary, we outline below the main theoretical assumptions underlying our approach to writing instruction as the process of students' construction of their discoursal identities:

1. Discourse genres and communities are undergoing changes constantly, either through conflictive or co-operative forces.
2. Within the triangle discourse/community/user identity, each unit influences and is influenced by the other two.
3. An individual builds multiple identities out of discourse-mediated social interactions in a variety of contexts.

2.2. Review of previous trends in writing instruction

The acquisition of academic writing is an essential step in a student's academic life. On entering university, students are expected to master a variety of discipline and context-specific academic genres in their native language and in English. The implementation of the Bologna plan and the consequent homogenization of studies throughout Europe, intended to promote student and professor mobility across the continent, increasingly demand from students and professors alike fluency in English. Students' writing skills in L1 and EIL are a top priority in higher education, as "students' written texts continue to

constitute the main form of assessment and as such writing is a 'high stakes' activity in university education" (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p.9).

Disregarding the traditional complaints about students' poor preparation and defective writing skills[7], universities need to implement an effective system of writing instruction to provide access to the disciplines to an increasingly high number of students from a wide range of backgrounds. as a result of the apparent conflict between inclusion and excellence, some universities and departments have used writing instruction to restrict access to students who do not speak or write the language of a given academic discourse community. Excluded from learning in the disciplines they intended to join, students need to take remedial courses to fix their writing skills outside the field, with faculties assuming that students must learn the linguistic forms of a community before becoming a part of it, therefore discouraging them before or shortly after entering a degree program. Responsibility for writing instruction remains largely outside universities, drop-out rates are high, and traditional hierarchies and power relations remain unchallenged (Russell, 1990). However, the formation of proficient writers would provide universities with publications that contribute to their prestige and help them attract more students and funds in the long term. In modern university, success should no longer be measured by the percentage of students weeded out, but by the percentage retained, who can then contribute actively to their discipline.

> What I am suggesting is the need to embed the knowledge that we have gained from research in the field of academic literacies and student writing into mainstream course design, across the broad curriculum of higher education (...) Issues of negotiating meaning-making, language and identity, which were first identified in research with non-traditional undergraduate students, are implicated in the broader teaching and learning contexts of higher education. Lea (2004), p. 753.

Crossing the gap between research and practice can contribute to solve many of the conflicts present-day university students experience, and maybe improve students' chances of successfully entering the system. Writing research can "provide a foundation on which to construct meaningful generalizations

[7] Russell quotes a newspaper clip from 1842 with complaints about contemporary students' poor writing skills.

about how writing works - and how students learn to make it work" (Russell, 1991, p.14). By looking back at trends in writing instruction, we have the opportunity to reflect on the origins of reforms and the functions writing has had within the academic context, and thus revise the measures and directions that different nations and institutions have previously adopted.

> Without the powerful inspiration from the American writing movement, there would not have been models to point to when asking administrators for funding the first European initiatives just a few years ago, and it is doubtful whether any writing project in Europe would exist today without the long history for such facilities in the US (...) The development of the teaching of writing that has been under way in America for a century is strongly needed in Europe, but this development has here only a history of a couple of decades. (Björk, Braüer, Rienecker & Stray, 2003, p.9).

a) The context of writing instruction

The origins of research and pedagogical concerns in writing instruction in higher education can be traced back to the opening up of academia to democratization and social inclusion. Since the end of the 19th century, university has been gradually changing from a small series of elitist isolated deposits of knowledge into an inclusive varied network of research and educational centres. This transformation brought along dramatic changes in the nature of its subjects, faculty and students alike, and in their self-image as members of the academic community. It also started a widespread century-old negative perception of students' defective command of academic genres[8], and of English with academic purposes too, shared by both students and instructors alike (Haggis, 2003; Lea, 2005; Lillis & Scott, 2007; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Russell, 1990) in a reaction to "the other" type of students. Similarly, university's passage from exclusion to inclusion deeply affected teaching methods and the tools (genres) used by members of the academic systems of activity to learn, communicate knowledge, signal status, and such. In illustration

[8] Lillis and Scott (2007) trace back this phenomenon to "The increase in the numbers of students participating in higher education and the linguistic, social and cultural diversity that they bring to this domain has been accompanied by: a) public discourses on falling standards, with students' written language often being treated as emblematic of falling standards more generally; and b) minimal official attention to language in higher education pedagogy - in policy and curriculum documents, as well as in the research interest in teaching and learning" (8)

8 we summarise the changes undergone by university and how they affected the academic activity system and its components, methods of instruction and the very notion of literacy and academic identity.

As universities became increasingly specialised, comprehensive, multinational and competitive, the subsequent inclusion of hitherto excluded citizens rendered the teaching of academic genres an intensive cure care against students' inherently defective writing skills, blamed on a similarly defective secondary education. The transformation from elite to mass education fuelled tensions between the members of the academic communities at a departmental, institutional, national and international level. These conflicts were mirrored in the solutions that each institution implemented to initiate new members, as academic genres determined the identity and status of the new members as insiders or outsiders.

Illustration 9: Views of writing in the academic context

In spite of genres being essential tools for the members of the academic community both regarding its goals and identity, faculty do not often consider themselves "responsible for addressing the issue of language and access to professional roles" (Russell, 1990, p.53), since writing has been traditionally interpreted as a matter of previous instruction, personal aptitude and intelligence, or work, instead of

discipline-specific teaching (Russell, 1990). University instructors tend to regard teaching others to be part of the community as a diversion from the community's efforts from its research goals:

> To research-oriented faculty, service often meant the advancement of knowledge (...) service to humanity would inevitably come through service to the discipline. The ethic of disciplinary specialization applied to writing as well. If students needed to learn to write better or in certain ways, they could go to composition teachers. If such problems lay outside the activity of one's specialized research and teaching, the problems at hand, then one had no duty to address them. (Russell, 1991, p.107).

A lack of implication on the part of universities in the development of a system that is "conscious, discipline-specific" leads to an elitist university in which "students whose language backgrounds allowed them to learn the discourse of a discipline without such instruction were more likely to enter successfully the professions associated with it" (Russell, 1990, p.53). The institutions' denial of their role in the acquisition of these genres by the largest possible number of students drives us away from the university with a social vocation heir to the ideas of Dewey and other reformers, and takes us back instead to the traditional elitist vision of university, where writing is a single, generalizable skill that can be smoothly transferred across contexts of use. This transparency of writing regards discourse as "merely a conduit for transmitting pre-existing, preformed truth" (Russell, 1991, p.73). Because of the gradual process through which a neophyte acquires the genres of a discipline, writing ends up seeming a transparent thing, the simple transcription of science and research, with an emphasis on function in apparent opposition to form. Moreover, the implicitness and uniqueness of genres make writing a hard object to study. This causes instructors to often misinterpret students' difficulties comprehending genres and operating within them, as the instructor "has been so gradually and thoroughly socialized into the symbolic universe of the discipline that higher education often cannot see or understand why others, who are writing about the same 'content', do no 'make sense'" (Russell, 1991, p.18). The myth of transience (Rose, 1985; Russell, 1991) helps the academia mask their lack of implication in students' acquisition of academic genres behind the assumption that past students did not need any further instruction, and that it is a problem with the present students. Such misconceptions on the nature of writing instruction led, in Russell's words to "a

120-year tradition of complaint about student writing" (1991, p.6), with language and literacy becoming visible only as a problem to be fixed through additional or remedial measures (Lillis & Scott, 2007).

> The 'undisciplined' gropings of student prose were of course far from the research ideal held up by the disciplines. as faculty never tired of pointing out, student papers were replete with ignorance and error of all sorts, which could seemingly never be entirely eradicated. Students were thus banned from the discipline's goals, as only the texts written in a suitable form can become new knowledge in the academic field, Because faculty tended to regard poor writing as evidence of poor thinking, not as evidence of a student's incomplete assimilation into a disciplinary community. (Russell, 1991, p.74).

b) Trends in writing instruction and research

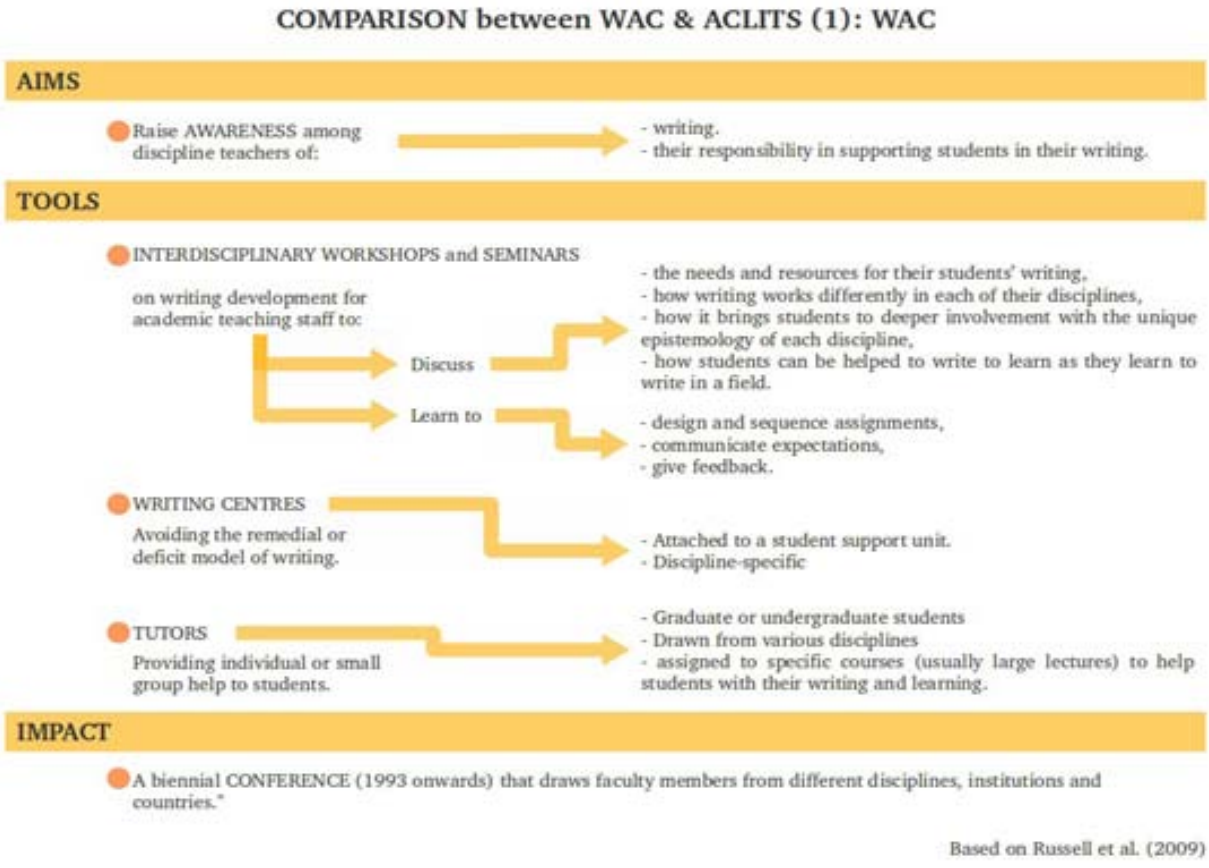
The first programmes to take into account the context of use of academic genres were the Cooperation Movement, the Correlation Movement and the Communications Movement in the 30s, 40s and 50s respectively. The Iowa Rhetoric Program, for instance, combined instruction in writing and speaking (Russell, 1990:61) for first-year students. Other programmes developed the tools to teach writing throughout the four years of the degree, as UC Berkeley's Prose Improvement Committee (1950-64), which prepared assistant professors and lecturers from a range of disciplines in teaching techniques and writing tutorisation. The Functional Writing Program at Colgate structured written assignments as an essential part of the curriculum, and provided support for teachers in the design of these tasks (Russell, 1990). These programmes eventually crashed, victims to the specialisation of disciplines and faculty, and to internal pressure towards research.

Unlike previous solutions that different universities implemented to tackle the abrupt increase in the number and variety of their students throughout the 20th century, WAC and ACLITS have resisted the internal and external pressures of the academia. Both furnish us with suitable models for the development of programs of writing instruction because 1) they take a social approach to genres, aiming at increasing inclusion through identity negotiation and awareness; 2) they encompass a variety of voices within

themselves and in their object of study; and 3) they regard discourse as a tool for communication and access, taking into account all the aspects of the academic community as an activity system. In the following pages, we provide a description of their defining traits, their origins, their ideological backgrounds, and their aims -what they want to achieve and what they challenge. Then, we talk about their impact on methods and research-wise, and the resources they used to overcome the conflicts in writing instruction in relation to the components of the academic activity system, with some conclusions to guide our course design.

Despite their different backgrounds and histories, there is a lot of cross-influence between American and British pedagogical traditions (see figures 1.9.1 and 1.9.2). WAC, refers to "efforts to improve students' learning and writing (or learning through writing) in all university courses and departments" (Russell, Lea, Parker, Street & Donahue, 2009, p.395)[9]. The term WAC and its original appearance are in fact the product of British educational reformists – James Britton and the University of London Institute of Education-, who had initially applied it to secondary education (Russell, 1991, p.276). "Britton [...] viewed writing (and talk) as a gradually developing accomplishment, thoroughly bound up with the particular intellectual goals and traditions of each discipline or profession, not as a single set of readily-generalizable skills learned once and for all". The succeeding movement, Language Across the Curriculum, did not initially have a lasting impact on British education, but it was picked up by their US counterparts, who also drew from the humanities and the social sciences, and regarded composition teaching as a field of study beyond literary analysis and the teaching of "skills and drills" (Russell et al., 2009). ACLITS also operates in the context of higher education, challenging current views on literacy by taking social practices approaches to multiple and plural literacies, often in association with New Literacy Studies (Street, 1996). This trend appeared in the 1990s due to university reformation in the UK, originating out of studies in language, literacy and ethnography.

[9] For further bibliography on the term, these authors suggest reading Bazerman, Joseph, Bethel, Chavkin, Fouquette, & Garufis, 2005.



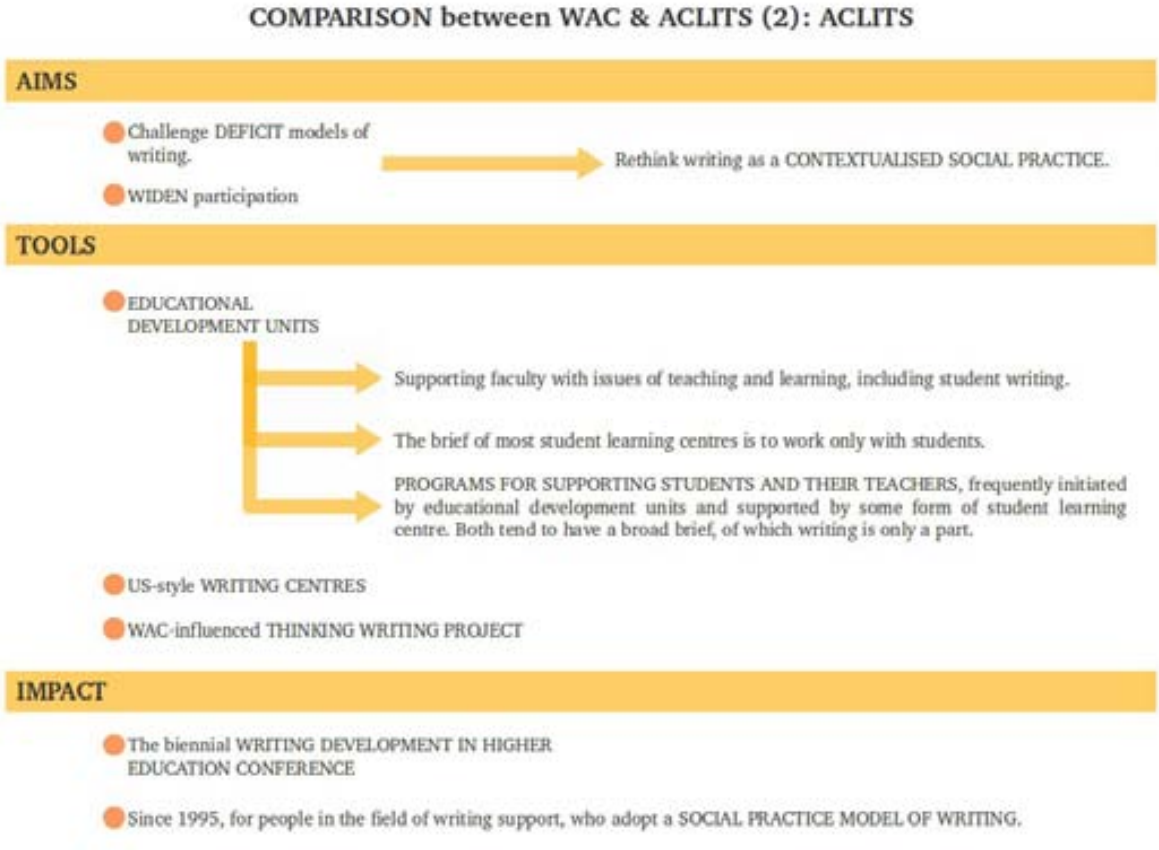


Illustration 10: Main features of WAC and ACLITS

Due to its relatively short existence, ACLITS is more focused than WAC, which comprehends many dissenting voices and different currents. The British movement has been mainly concerned with research and theory, analysing practices, only recently turning to pedagogical reform. WAC is a much larger pedagogical reform movement that was born out of the professionalisation of teachers of first-year university general writing courses in the 1970s.

Even though they appeared very distant in time, both movements stem from an increase in the number of students. In the US, this situation started with the expansion of university after the two World Wars, and under the influence of the industrial revolution. WAC was a response to the entrance into higher education of hitherto excluded groups through open admissions policies in public institutions (Russell et al., 2009). This situation forced the academy to dramatically rethink the remedial model of writing and set up “writing centers, special curricula, and systematic research into the differences between student and teacher perceptions of error" to improve writing and learning (Russell et al., 2009, p.401). Britton's social view on discourse readily sank in thanks to the century-old US tradition of academic writing courses, required of first year university students. Similarly, ACLITS was born as a consequence of the Education Act in 1992, which increased numbers of students and class sizes “with no concomitant expansion in resources" (Russell et al., 2009, p.397). In the UK, undergraduate writing courses had traditionally been unique to Oxford and Cambridge, where teaching was based on individual tutoring by faculty members supervising student disciplinary learning in weekly sessions. The post-1992 expansion, which entailed larger class sizes and an increasingly diverse student body, and the growth of interdisciplinary curricula drew more attention towards writing as meaning-making and as social practice (Russell et al., 2009). Both trends were also born out of frustration with the limitations of practice in writing instruction, and the stereotypically remedial view of student writing.

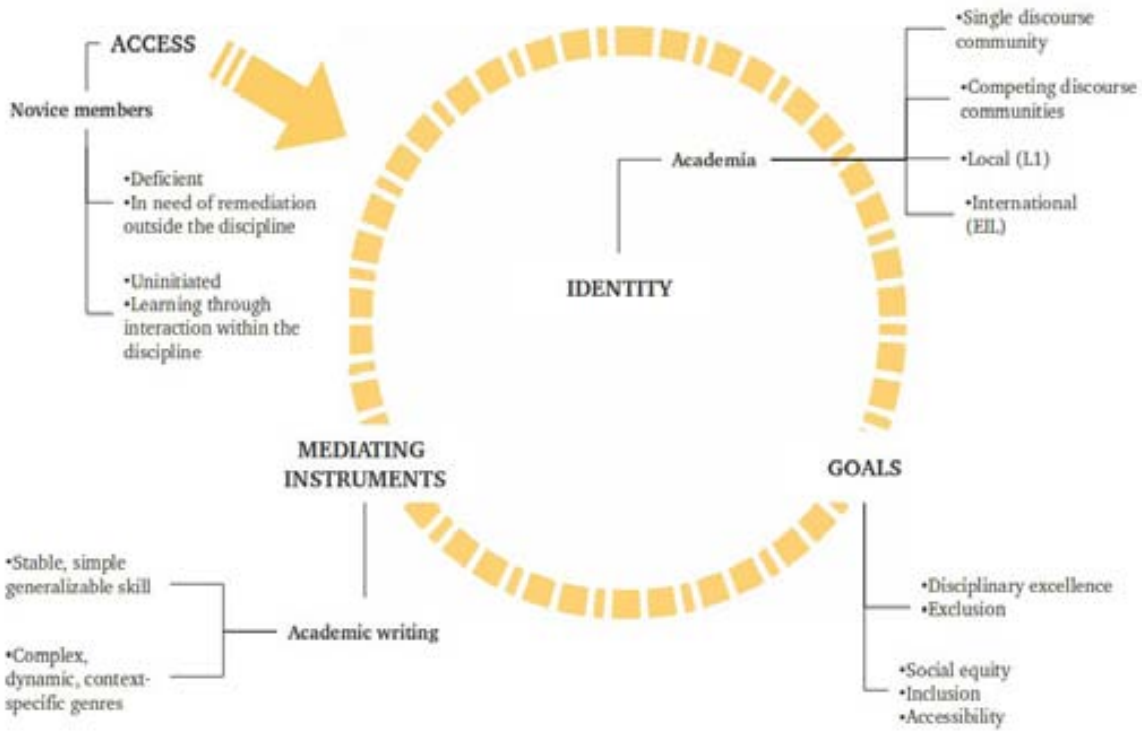


Illustration 11: Conflicts in writing instruction

Regarding the context in which these trends operate, higher education systems in the UK and the US have a very different history and organisation. US university, on the one hand has opted for late specialization, with a two-year period of general education, and writing instruction in several disciplines (Russell et al., 2009). In the UK, on the other hand, students tend to specialize early, although there in an increasing mix of disciplines and consequently more genre switching (Russell et al., 2009; Lea & Street, 1998, 2006). In the UK, assessments typically involve extensive written work, whereas in the US exams tend to be multiple-choice. In the UK, higher education tends to rely on supporting writing centres that work with students, whereas in the US most first-year students go through a general writing course.

Using our diagram of the academic activity system as the guiding line for our discussion, we shall now describe the solutions that WAC and ACLITS can offer to the inherent conflicts of academic activity system, which Russell (1991) identified as three recurrent and interconnected issues affecting all the components of this type of communities (see illustration 12). These conflicts stem from the view the academic activity system have of themselves, the tools they employ, their goals and their participants' roles and marks of status. Both WAC and ACLITS expose and challenge these deeply entrenched

conflicts within academic activity system in an attempt to enhance democracy and transparency in modern higher education.

The first conflict, related to issues of identity and access, originated with the disintegration of the traditional elitist university, which led to a rethinking of the functions of academia in modern society, and of the status and identity of its well-established and novice members. Cross-curricular writing instruction emerged with the social need to integrate new students in the compartmentalized and bureaucratic university environment, with the diversity of its goals, and its increasingly heterogeneous participants (Russell, 1990). When the elective curriculum compartmentalized knowledge, it disintegrated one relatively stable academic discourse community into many fluctuating ones (Russell, 1991). The discourse of the new academic community likewise became more and more fragmentary so as to keep up with the increasing specialisation of knowledge. Transfer across disciplines, or even departments, became impossible, condemning students to a long period of apprenticeship, with dramatic consequences on their status and self-image. By exposing this situation to the members of the academic community via workshops, conferences and training opportunities, WAC contributes to make the academic activity system more accessible to newcomers, eliminating the false transparency of genres and exposing the myth of transience. WAC has acted as a tool to assimilate previously excluded students by means of language instruction. The disclosure of these conceptions shows to what extent the implementation of cross-curricular composition programs influences and is influenced by cultural, economic and political interests, “over who will teach what forms of discourse to whom and for what purpose" (Russell, 1990, p.66). Similarly, ACLITS contextualises student writing within institutional practices, power relations and identities, in a continuous negotiation of meaning between experts and novices, with their different understandings and interpretations of the writing task (Russell et al., 2009). By making explicit the tensions between local and international focus, competition for resources, research prestige, and power relations within the academia, WAC and ACLITS provide a space for challenging the demands imposed on departments regarding academic results, exposing "fundamental gaps between students’ and faculty understandings of the requirements of student writing, providing evidence at the level of epistemology, authority and contestation over knowledge, rather than at the level of technical skill, surface linguistic

competence and cultural assimilation" (Russell et al., 2009, p.400). Both trends use literacy to explicitly portray and challenge stereotypes about writing, and student and discipline identity, considering the complexity of communication in relation to learning (Russell et al., 2009).

The second conflict derives from the modern focus on excellence and research, based on the competition between institutions for funds, students and prestige. It affects the goals that every system of activity identifies as its own, as "pressure from excluded groups to widen access almost inevitably conflicts with pressure from various sources to maintain or rise standards" (Russell, 1991, p.26). The focus of universities wavers between disciplinary excellence and social equity. The experienced members of a discipline may perceive that incorporating large numbers of newcomers needing basic writing instruction may require an explicit account of the discipline's genres into a language that first-year students could understand, which may be seen as watering down the very knowledge of the discipline (Russell, 1991). The community's goals, and their view of the tools it employs embodies the conflict between academic writing as a single elementary skill and WAC and ACLITS's conceptualisation of academic genres as a complex rhetorical activity, embedded in the practices of academic activity system; genres as a tool of inclusion rather than exclusion. ACLITS's views on academic genres as social practice and their relationship to their users connects language with what individuals do, exploring the connections between the implicit assumptions on language made by individuals and social institutions, and to what extent "by engaging in an existing practice we are maintaining a particular type of representational resource; by drawing on a particular type of representational resource, we are maintaining a particular type of social practice" (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p.12).

The third conflict informs the identification of the specificity of the genres employed by different communities, the academic perceptions on the transmission of knowledge of these tools, and the status of new members of the community in relation to their skills in using them. ACLITS and WAC challenge the idea of writing acquisition as remediation of deficiencies in skill, regarding instead genre acquisition as a continuously developing intellectual and social learning key to disciplinary learning (Russell, 1991). WAC practitioners suggest that it is precisely through participation using those very tools that students learn to connect generic formulations to the meanings and functions of the community. The first WAC

programs adopted a learn-by-doing methodology, “genre acquisition” (Russell et al., 2009, p.409), which had students learning to write by writing in the disciplines. This was later on complemented with some explicit teaching of generic features. In a second approach to WAC, “genre awareness” (Bawarshi, 2003; Devitt, 2004), students observed genres they were familiar with. Then, they would move to more unfamiliar genres, studying the form and the context of each exchange, and exploring their relationships in what Devitt (2004) termed “genre ethnography”. One further approach to language instruction, “New Rhetorical”, consisted of explicitly teaching students the features of a genre within its context of use, as students are implementing it within the discipline, thus teaching them "the logic of communication in terms of the logic of the learning/disciplinary activity—the “why” and “where” and “when” of a genre as well as the “what” and “how” of it" (Russell et al., 2009, p.409In the UK, ACLITS authors identified three models of writing instruction: The study skills model, the socialization model and the Academic Literacies model. The first model is based on mastery of the textual features of genres: grammar and syntax, punctuation and spelling. The academic socialization model uses explicit teaching of the requirements of the genres of specific disciplines to acculturate students into the academic activity system. The Academic Literacies model collects features of the other two models to study the nature of student writing in relation to institutional practices, power relations and identities, discussing the complexity of meaning making in the academic context, hence providing a deeper understanding of student writing and its relationship to learning, and offering a space for formative writing as an alternative to deficit models (Russell et al., 2009). By exposing faculty to WAC in seminars and congresses, this trend has long resisted similar pressures now working on ACLITS: Fund-determining institutional demands of writing courses that teach students writing as a measurable generalisable set of skills; research pressure on faculty; and large enrolment figures. The practices approach “takes account of the cultural and contextual component of writing and reading practices, and this in turn has important implications for an understanding of student learning" (Lea & Street, 1998, p.158). The literacies approach, therefore, does not imply that there is one unique path for academic writing, but rather that it depends on the context in which it takes place: the type of institution students belong to, their nationalities, their first language, the field of studies, etc. Literacies – in plural, then - are social practices at the level of epistemology and identities rather than an isolated skill or a process of socialisation. From

the students' point of view, academic literacy practices require them to switch practices across settings, to implement a range of suitable language practices, and to deal with the social meanings and identities that each one implies (Lea & Street, 1998), the learning of which frequently derives in challenges to the students' identities and status.

2.3. Conclusions: Considerations for course design

To start contributing to the goals of the system, novice members need to be incorporated into the academic activity system by being initiated into its tools and conventions, as genres constitute marks of identity and status inasmuch as they contribute to materialise an individual's social interactions. The expert members of the academic activity system in charge of instructing novices should be aware of the context-specificity of genres, their mutable nature and their three-fold use for personal meaning-making, as proof of insiderdom, and as a test of belonging and knowledge of the field. For new members to construct their identity within the academic activity system, it is necessary to expose them to the defining features of the system, abandoning the myths of transparency and transience.

Unlike the trends that only focused on some of its components, the programmes that captured the organic changing nature of academia as an activity system have successfully transcended in spite of external difficulties. The combination of research on the nature of literacies and trends in writing instruction can help us gain a deeper understanding of the mechanics of academic activity system, furnishing institutions with a range of solutions to the conflicts caused by the multiplicity of voices and purposes within an activity system. By illuminating these conflicts, researchers increase the transparency of identity issues within the academic activity system, thus providing room for discussion and contestation of their members' assumptions and roles. As an alternative to deficit models that marginalise non-expert members, formative writing opportunities within the disciplines can engage novice subjects of an academic activity system in the analysis and discussion of the identity, goals and tools of their chosen discipline, enriching their process of genre acquisition and awareness with the opportunity to partake of its interactions. The inclusion of new members into the academic activity system should be approached as a process of construction of social identity, as this new identity is the product of negotiating the goals and

roles within a community by means of generic interactions. Thus, academic genres are not barriers for incoming students, but rather tools to participate and construct their identity within the academy. WAC and ACLITS study of writing and writing instruction trespasses simplistic textual approaches to incorporate a social view of discourse that uses ethnographic methods to conceptualise writing and writing instruction as cultural-historical phenomena (Russell et al., 2009) that are deeply embedded in their context. The work of US authors such as Bazerman, Berkenkotter and Huckin pioneered the analysis of the "social dimensions of the disciplines and professions—how and why professionals write" (Russell et al., 2009, p.402). Later on, UK authors (Ivanic, 1998; Lea, 1994; Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 1997) picked up their lead to examine "students' struggles with meaning making and the nature of power and authority in student writing" (Russell et al., 2009, p.398). Street's contribution to New Literacy Studies defined writing and reading practices as deeply social activities, which occur in specific social contexts, coloured with deep ideological complexities (Russell et al., 2009). Street (1984) distinguished between two models of literacy: autonomous and ideological. higher education suggested that the myth of autonomous literacy regarded it as "a decontextualised skill, which once learned can be transferred with ease from one context to another", something that can be learnt automatically on one's own; whereas the ideological model of literacy takes into account the contextual and social nature of literacy, in relation to issues of power and authority (Russell et al., 2009), thus exploring the inherent conflicts underlying any academic activity system.

As academic genres are multiple, so are the academic personae students need to construct to participate of the different academic activity systems within their university, their roles and status changing as they switch from one to the other. It is necessary for university instructors to avoid genre transparency and the myth of transience in order to help new members access the system: Literacies are multiple and changing, as they depend on the social practices of different cultural and linguistic contexts. Genres, goals, knowledge and identity are all mutually dependant, and they are simultaneously built in the context of the academic activity system through participation.

Chapter 3: Case study

The structure of the new Humanities degree at UPF shares some of the features we have previously described as characterising American and British contexts of higher education. Students first go through a two-year period of general courses to specialise in the second cycle. This general period includes two instrumental courses dealing with the genres in the field, which are key for students' permanence, as extensive writing assignments are required throughout the degree. It is therefore very important to work on the development of a suitable framework and methodology to ensure the highest possible ratio of success for such an instrumental course, so as to make up for the lack of any previous programmes in writing instruction, students' low English proficiency, and their troubled construction of an academic identity, which seems to be questioned by the imposition of compulsory instrumental courses in academic know-how as a requisite to pass their first year.

The first version of the course materials of this new instrumental subject (*Llengua Anglesa per a les Humanitats*) as part of the new Humanities degree, taught during the AY 2008-9, had a purely linguistic approach, with assessment covering mainly students' language accuracy with an emphasis on field-specific vocabulary and use of academic register in a variety of genres connected to the Humanities. The materials for the following year were based on a systemic-functional approach to academic genres, loosely including some notions of genre theory. This approach contributed to articulate our syllabus in easier to assess terms, as we provided students with a list of the functions that academic genres perform and some textual features that correspond to them. The assumption underlying this choice of materials was that students would be enabled to carry out the functional requirements of one academic genre – the literary paper – regardless of their low English skills (Oliva, 2011)[10]. To emphasise this, we included some examples from essays written by students from the previous year that successfully illustrated the different components of academic genres in spite of having language issues. The implementation into writing instruction of this approach during the academic year 2010-11 proved to be quite successful with

[10] Based on SFL, the literary essay was viewed as the textual realisation of Halliday's three components of discourse: the textual, the interpersonal and the ideational components. Students were assessed accordingly, using a series of markers as evidence of students' use of these components in their essays (literary terms, hedging, and such).

students[11]. However, the data obtained in the interviews we conducted with voluntary students evidenced their consistent appeals to identity issues in conflict with the process of initiation into a multilingual university. Before the third year of implementation (AY 2010-11), it was thus apparent that a more solid basis was needed to develop the materials to be able to successfully initiate students into the academic activity system. Further contextualisation of academic genres within their context of use could potentially reinforce and make more explicit the notion of genres (and hence student texts and expert texts) as a form of social action and a tool to construct an identity for novice members of the academic community.

Following this lead, we analysed the history of writing instruction of countries that were more experienced in these matters. Our study of US and UK traditions further showed that a purely textual approach, one that would not take into account content, subjects and goals, could not succeed in the long term. We had to expand our theoretical framework to find a minimal unit of analysis beyond the text itself, one that included the key contextual elements that define a subject's identity. Bibliographical research conducted us into the notion of systems of genres, and then on to activity systems, within the theoretical framework of CHAT and ACLITS, as discussed in the previous section. Consequently, during the third year of implementation, we experimented with a combination of methodologies from both WAC and ACLITS, applied to discourse and context analysis, with the goal of enabling explicit discussion of students' developing identity as part of the activity system of the Humanities as scaffolding for their acquisition of genre knowledge. Using a range of data gathered during these years, we engaged into a case-study to assess our combined method and draw some conclusions on the future path of writing instruction in English in the evolving context of Catalan higher education[12]. It is our belief that such programmes should include not only textual and contextual work, but also opportunities to explicitly work on identity issues (Russell, Ivanic, Hyland), which can contribute to empower students to see themselves as valid members of the academic community, and hence to act accordingly.

In the long term, the goal of the instrumental course we describe in the following pages is to guide students' development of their academic persona in English as an international language. This goal is

[11] See the questionnaires from year 2009-10 in appendix 3.

[12] In appendix 1 we have included some of the information gathered during the first years of implementation, as a result of talks with students and teachers. However, the lack of systematic data gathering methods and the tools to analyse it made it impossible to include it as part of this project.

realised by 1) explicitly teaching students about the components of the academic system in which they intend to participate and offering them opportunities to reflect on these components through the analysis of texts, as illustrated by the activities we describe below; 2) promoting students' awareness of the cultural, ideological and linguistic aspects underlying the nature and mechanics of Anglo-American style academic genres in comparison to Continental genres and how these determine one's relation to the other components of the academic activity system; and 3) providing room for discussing the conflicts they experience regarding the construction of their own identities in relation to their initiation into the academic activity system.

3.1. Research methodology

In the following pages, we describe the method we used to gather data, and how we adapted the principles of the ethnographic approach to our particular means and context of work at UPF Humanities, using an action/research cycle in which course materials doubled as research tools, with both functions providing feedback on each other. These research/teaching tools we present consist of a series of reflective activities which are the result of a three-year-long process during which we interviewed different members of the academic community and progressively fine-tuned these tools and course materials in general to make the most out of the context and the resources available[13].

Before describing the tools and the data in detail, we start by briefly discussing ethnography as a method, and the advantages of using an insider's perspective to expose students' process of initiation by looking beyond texts into context and identities. Secondly, we describe the context of our research and the participants involved. After that, we list the tools we used and describe them, and finally list and discuss the results obtained with them.

a) The ethnographic approach

By using qualitative research to analyse a group of first-year Humanities students, we attempt to provide some insights on students' initiation into higher education as a cultural phenomenon, describing

[13] In appendix 3 we discuss some of the problems that we faced during the first three years of this research project, and the decisions that led us to change our approach to data gathering.

students' construction of their academic identity through their writing, as their realisation of academic genres can provide clues as to their perceptions of the knowledge and the system of meanings of the academic system of activity they are about to join. Driven by our focus on the relationship between context and text, as described in the theoretical framework, we chose to use an ethnographic approach to data gathering because it could provide an in-depth analysis of the context of particular forms of literacy in relation to their users, rather than a textual description of the texts *per se*.

Ethnographic data can offer an “emic, insider's definition of what literacy is, or what qualifies as literacy for the particular members of the community" (Discussion transcript, Blommaert, p. 142). Ethnography analyses text and context jointly (Lillis 2008, Blommaert 2007), enabling researchers to gather data about writers' perspectives about text beyond the text itself, with a wide range of data sources and a long-term involvement with the context in which texts occur. Because ethnographic methods enable thick description (Gertz 1975) and thick participation (Sarangi 2006, 2007), researchers can study how users conceptualise specific texts and contexts at a specific socio-historical moment (Lillis 2008). Another advantage of ethnography is that it avoids narrowing down academic literacy to “just a handful of highly standardised and highly codified genres" (Blommaert, transcript, p.145), so that researchers can picture the ways “in which literacy is being organised in societies - micro communities as well as macro communities, in a state as well as the communities within a state and across states” (Blommaert, transcript p.145). Ethnography makes the process of initiation visible, that is why it can help students and professors “to understand that learning in the academic context is to some extent a defamiliarising process" (Turner, p. 143). Awareness of this process and its implications can make students feel more comfortable with their own struggle in seeing themselves as part of the academic activity system, as the researcher/instructor has already partaken of this process and can therefore understand students' struggles.

In order to make up for the lack of personal and financial means ethnographic methods require, we decided to use the resources available (opportunities for tutoring sessions, small seminar groups and an easy-to-use Moodle virtual learning environment) to reconstruct the process of students' development of their academic identity. Hence, we designed research tools and course materials jointly, so as to obtain as much information as possible in order to analyse students' participation in progress. This could potentially

undermine the object of the analysis, as one of the problems for academic literacies researchers who are also practitioners is that being inside the system, one risks taking a subjective view on students' writing. However, the insertion of research into course design had many advantages that compensated this risk. Firstly, it narrowed down three gaps – the gap between research and instruction, the gap between text and context/users, and the one between expert and novice writers –, contextualising academic literacies by linking "activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help to shape" (Barton and Hamilton 1998:6). Secondly, using compulsory and voluntary coursework rather than only voluntary activities contributed to widen the range of student types participating in the study. Bearing in mind the rate of absenteeism in class, which is usually around 40% of students, this was already an issue with compulsory activities, and volunteered data would risk being compromised, especially if it had to be distributed throughout the ten weeks of the term.

b) Context of research: Writing and foreign language instruction in Humanities at *Universitat Pompeu Fabra* (UPF).

The European Space for Higher Education, with its emphasis on mobility and internationalisation, is pushing universities to produce multilingual and communicatively competent graduates, with English stamped as the academic lingua franca. *Universitat Pompeu Fabra* started preparations for the changes required by the Bolonia process in 2005, redistributing teaching hours and introducing new seminar-based methodologies[14] that would be more fitting to the new European Space for Higher Education. Simultaneously, UPF had been working on a plan to promote multilingualism - or, rather, trilingualism – across all their degrees, establishing Catalan, Spanish and English as the vehicular languages of teaching. To this purpose, UPF implemented a range of resources, such as offering subjects or whole programmes in English, promoting student and teacher mobility, language courses, teacher training opportunities, and other such initiatives. Other measures were intended to increase the institution's transparency and accountability towards students regarding the use of the three official languages at UPF, so that students can tell before they enrol in a subject what the vehicular language will be, and make sure this is respected throughout the term. In practice, however, because English has become the main language of scientific

[14] For more information, see www.upf.edu/llengues.

publications, many aspects of academic life are now unavoidably bound to be in English, thus effectively pushing aside the other two languages, particularly Catalan, due to the scarcity of impact journals in this language in the social sciences. In the new Humanities degree, this new policy translated as the introduction of compulsory subjects in English as a requirement to obtain the degree, namely an instrumental subject in 1st year and more mandatory credits in English during the rest of the degree (at least one subject per year).

In terms of organisation, the structure of the new degree in Humanities at UPF, which was introduced as part of the Bolonia process in 2008-09, combines features similar to what we discussed in reference to the US and the UK, and the measures implemented in these countries to deal with the boom in enrolment figures. As we previously mentioned Humanities students start by doing a two year period of general courses, and then specialise in the second cycle. This general period includes two instrumental courses dealing with the genres of the field, which are used simultaneously for most of their assessment throughout their degree. As in these countries, UPF has seen its number of students grow dramatically during the past years, affecting the ratio of students per teacher and the methodologies employed. As for the acquisition of genres, the range of fields in the Humanities degree and the number of literacies associated to each one requires students to switch practices across settings, particularly during the first two years, when they are less experienced and more vulnerable. To solve this, two instrumental courses were incorporated into the new plan, one in Catalan and Spanish, namely *Metodologia d'Estudi i Escriptura Acadèmica* (MEDEA), and one in English, *Llengua Anglesa per les Humanitats* (LAH), so that all first-year students go through both courses before moving onto more specialised subjects. The goals of MEDEA are somewhat more ambitious than those of LAH, as MEDEA deals with two languages simultaneously, Catalan and Spanish, and it involves teaching staff from many different departments, not just language professors. MEDEA was created to ease students' struggles reading and writing the variety of genres required in each discipline in order to help first-year students from acquiring the general knowledge to specialise in the second part of their degree, since the Humanities is a degree in which an extremely wide range of oral and written genres are used to convey and construct knowledge. Whereas LAH assesses students' written skills, MEDEA requires students to produce and understand oral and

written genres in both languages, following the requirements of different discipline professors. The goals of MEDEA consist of providing an "introduction to the analogical and digital strategies of research, reading, interpretation and management and communication of the information of academic documents (texts, images, maps), including knowledge of the main academic conventions covering the formal expression of meaningful contents by means of oral and written discourse in Catalan and Spanish"[15].

LAH has been a mandatory first-year subject for all Humanities students since the implementation of the new degree. It replaced a year-long course on foreign language and literature in which students could choose among English, French and German. With the new plan, all students need to take LAH during their first year of studies, and enroll in the German or French equivalent as an option[16] during the second year. All three departments have seen their subject shortened to a one-term subject instead of a year-long one. Whereas the focus of the French and German subjects is placed upon enriching students' knowledge of the culture and literature associated to these languages, the English course is intended to provide students with instrumental generic know-how in English for academic purposes, therefore becoming a so-to-speak contentless subject that aims at being an "introduction to the knowledge of the standard use of English in an academic context, as well as the key vocabulary and most relevant semantic fields for academic usage within the Humanities"[17]. The description of the course, as brief as it is vague, only covers the language aspects of English for academic purposes, presenting field-specific vocabulary as the key knowledge to be acquired by students, with no references to genres, users or context. As a field of knowledge, Humanities encompasses art, literature, history, anthropology, geography, and modern and ancient languages. It would be impossible to cover all the genres of all these disciplines in only ten weeks, plus it would require an army of specialised teachers to master all the specific vocabulary and semantic concepts of all disciplines, and even if this were possible, they would still run into trouble with the teachers of these disciplines in Catalan and Spanish. Being a young institution, UPF professors come from a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds, and consequently they teach and employ a very different repertoire of genres, even within the same discipline due to cultural, linguistic and personal differences between them. Therefore, the course must

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[15] Universitat Pompeu Fabra (2010). Retrieved from http://www.upf.edu/estudiants/titulacions/grau-humanitats/pla/

[16] In the UPF webpage, Catalan, Spanish and English are listed as the three vehicular languages for the degree, with the possibility of choosing a second foreign language (French, German or Latin). Source: http://www.upf.edu/estudiants/titulacions/grau-humanitats/pla/

[17] http://www.upf.edu/estudiants/titulacions/grau-humanitats/pla/

necessarily remain as an overview of academic English that complements the work done in an instrumental course in Catalan and Spanish, which first-year students have to take during their first term at university. Both instrumental subjects are still undergoing modifications in order to adapt to students, whose negative perception of both MEDEA and LAH means that two compulsory first-year subjects have high abandonment rates, complaints and poor results.

Before devising the syllabus for LAH, there were certain issues we had to take into account. These issues either depended on the particularities of first-year students or on organisational restrictions. Regarding the students, we had to include foreign language instruction due to their language level[18]; their interest in different areas of the Humanities; their reluctance to the new system of higher education and to compulsory subjects in English; and students' perceptions of their scarce ideational and generic knowledge being as they are new members of the Humanities. The second category of issues, dealing with organisational restrictions, included timing problems such as the shortness of the course (only ten weeks); possible clashes with MEDEA; and deeper issues such as the lack of an institutional policy and previous programmes of writing instruction at undergraduate level. Consequently, we decided to use functional and social approaches to academic genres in context, covering textual and identity issues on a similar basis. In the design of the course, we worked on the assumption that by exposing the conflicts of ambivalence latent in students' negotiation of difference between their previous identities and their academic ones they would become capable of managing their construction of the new academic identity. As discussed in the theoretical framework, our conceptualisation of academic identity is underpinned by the following assumptions, which are embedded in the materials we developed and our approach to students' tutoring throughout the seminars:

- Identity is connected to social activities, and consequently it is connected to ideologies and power relations, and constructed out of interactions between the members of a community.
- Discourse contributes to construct identity as it enables users to align themselves with certain groups and distance themselves from others through a series of discoursal choices. Discourse

[18] Link to the voluntary language test by the UPF Programa d'Ensenyament d'Idiomes.

genres are thus inextricably bound to the context that produces them, and they simultaneously construct this context by successfully performing social actions for its users.

- The acquisition of an academic identity demands from users the partaking of the ideologies, field-specific knowledge, goals and ways of doing of the expert members of the community.
- Novice members are expected to use the genres of the community they intend to become part of in order to contribute to its collective goals and the social construction of knowledge.
- In the academic communities, genres are also used to signal status and show one's value and knowledge of other users' contributions, with written genres being the main tool of interaction with other members of the field and achieving a higher status.

c) Tools employed

The small-scale study conducted at UPF Humanities enabled us to explore students' initiation into university as a cultural phenomenon, and to analyse their acquisition of its knowledge and system of meanings in order to construct an academic identity through the learning of written genres. In order to evaluate the effects of the syllabus on students' construction of an academic identity and hence the extent of their appropriation of the goals, tools and mechanics of the academic activity system of the Humanities, we have used a range of tools designed with an ethnographic approach: With an emic perspective, process-focused, context-specific, and user-centred. The tools to gather data consisted of a series of activities that doubled up as course materials. Students' course work provided us with information on their perceptions of the academic activity system and their process of initiation into it. By students' work we refer to activities that were used as part of the course, both in-class and for autonomous work, including questionnaires, online forums, written assignments, reactions to class discussions and so on. In order to make up for the scarce voluntary contributions[19] in the AY 2009-10, which threatened to

[19] The data obtained during the second year of our research can be found in appendix 3. These were not included as part of the body of this paper because they represented only a small part of the students – only 7 students out of 180 returned the questionnaire. Still, they were instrumental in shedding some light on students' perceptions of the academic activity system and their initiation into it, which strongly determined the design of the materials and teaching practices we present below.

compromise the range of the study, the data gathering methods for the AY 2010-11 were thus incorporated into the course with the following goals:

1. To provide more detailed information on students' construction of their academic persona.
2. To engage students in a process of awareness of and reflection upon their process of initiation into the academic activity system of the Humanities and its components.
3. To be able to check students' progression throughout the term.

The design of the **course activities** for the seminars was accordingly adapted to these goals[20]. The list of course activities used for research purposes is listed in *Table 1,* along with a brief description of each one, and the goals set for each one, based on the methods employed by WAC and ACLITS, as discussed in section 1.2 of the theoretical framework.

Every plenary group is made up of roughly ninety students, who are assigned to six seminar groups. The seminar sessions are planned with a very hands-on approach to the course, making the most of the small group sizes to offer students opportunities to participate more than in the plenary sessions. As for assessment, the seminars account for four points out of the total ten points of the subject. The assessment of the seminars is based on participation (2 points) and two written assignments (1 point each). In the groups I was teaching, I divided participation into online and in-class participation, with one point each, in an attempt to encourage students to participate in the forums and tasks set up in the course virtual learning environment (VLE). The written assignments consist of two short writings which are based on texts from the plenary dossier. These texts are prepared in the seminars, and seminar instructors are encouraged to use peer-editing and self-editing in class to help students improve their chances of passing the subject. The assessment grid for the seminar assignments, which can be found alongside the other materials in appendix... is based on a list of descriptors of Anglo-American papers, and adapted to students' level. The assessment grids are built throughout the term, and can be accessed and downloaded by students in Moodle.

[20] The syllabus we used to gather the data for this study is the one that was implemented during the third year (see appendix 2). It covers the seminar classes only, as the plenaries were mainly devoted to language work.

We have employed a variety of resources to make course materials as adaptable and interactive as possible, while trying to maximise the number and range of data obtained, and making these data available to students. As VLE, we used the Moodle version available at UPF because it enabled us to use forums, online feedback, surveys, presentations, and many other tools. Some of the advantages of using online forums to complement classroom discussions, for example, are that online forums were open to re-reading, and for many students it was less challenging to participate in these than in oral discussions. The materials for the seminars were available at all times, so that students could read the presentations ahead of time and prepare the activities if they chose to, they could read the assessment criteria before they handed anything in, etc. Every reflective activity/research tool was designed to fulfil one or more of these goals, based on ideas from ACLITS: To raise students' **awareness**, to engage into **analysis**, or to offer opportunities for **contestation**. These goals do not exclude each other, but occur in a continuum, as awareness leads to analysis, and both are necessary to create opportunities for contestation. In the following pages, we provide a longer more detailed description of the reflective activities for each seminar listed in chronological order. The categorisation of these activities is not strict, however, as there are no clear-cut limits between the goals we have set for each type of activity in the sense that activities aimed at, for example, raising awareness, are intrinsically connected to analysis and contestation. In terms of goals, therefore, rather than a hierarchical classification, we find a continuum that mirrors students' gradual understanding of the nature of the academic activity system and their subsequent critical attitude towards some of its aspects as full active members of it.

The first category, **awareness activities**, refers to tasks aimed at raising students' awareness of the nature of the academic activity system and its components. This type of activities starts at a very basic level, with a description of the concept of activity system applied to students' context, and explicitly naming and discussing its components, taking into account students' previous background to point out elements that may be more implicit to students' conceptualisation of the academic activity system (such as the readers, the collective goals of the system, the relationship between status and genres, and such). The resources for raising students' awareness comprehend anything between the explicit teaching of what an activity system is and the components that make it up to activities in which students infer the relationships

between these components out of a sample text. An example of an awareness activity is seminar one's whole-group discussion on the nature and components of the Humanities as an academic activity system.

The second category, **analysis**, consists of activities in which students analyse academic genres and the underlying assumptions that determine their functions and features. This analysis starts at textual level, but students are requested to discuss textual features in relation to the context of use, and the power relationships and marks of status associated to them, insisting on how textual features cast an image of text authors and their perceptions of their readers, field, knowledge, and such. Language forms are therefore always connected to the knowledge and particular ways of communication of the field. For instance, the activity on the differences between Continental and Anglo-American academic writing styles is intended to promote self-analysis and comparison, so that students locate themselves within the continuum between these two traditions and the reasons they have to endorse either style.

The third category, **contestation**, comprehends activities that provide room for discussion and challenging of the academic activity system and its components, students' role in it, and their own process of initiation into it. The goal of this type of activities is to offer students opportunities for critical reading and analysis, so that they can challenge the prescriptive view on specific genres as permanent, correct or transparent. For example, students are requested to discuss and challenge the use of modality in relation to issues of authorship, assertion and contribution to individual and collective goals. Following, we provide a brief chronological description of the reflective activities carried out during the seminars that we used to gather data for this study, which will later be discussed in the results and analysis section. The full materials as used in the classroom and the syllabus are available in appendix 2.

Session	Type	Description of the reflective activities	Aspect of AAS	Goal
1	Class discussion	• Collaboratively, whole group. • Teacher-guided discussion on what it means to be a member of the Humanities, students' perceptions of their first-year, their problems, good points, and such.	All	Awareness

Session	Type	Description of the reflective activities	Aspect of AAS	Goal
	Questionnaire	• Collaboratively, in pairs. • Students answer ten questions on the components of the activity system of the Humanities and their perceptions of their role within it.	All	Awareness
2	Class discussion	• Collaboratively, first in pairs and then with the group. • Students debate the difficulties they experience when writing in L1 and in L2, and attempt to see them from their teachers' perspective and find a way to fix them.	Genres	Awareness
	Online forum	• Collaboratively, in the VLE. • Students list the differences between Continental and Anglo-American writing conventions by picking items from a list of descriptors.	Genres	Analysis
3	Class discussion	• Collaboratively, first in pairs and then with the group. • Students discuss individual and collective goals within the academia.	Goals Users	Awareness Contestation
	Online survey	• Individually, in the VLE. • Students pick the problems they frequently experience when using academic genres in L1 or L2.	Genres	Awareness
	Online forum	• Collaboratively, in the VLE. • Students discuss their frequent problems when writing in L1 and L2, their most likely causes in relation to the components of the academic activity system, and possible solutions.	Genres	Awareness Contestation
4	Class discussion	• Collaboratively, in pairs then with the group. • Students list the functions of genres in the Humanities, and how they relate to other components of the academic activity system.	All	Awareness

Session	Type	Description of the reflective activities	Aspect of AAS	Goal
	Online forum	• Collaboratively, in the VLE. • Follow-up of the class discussion, in which students discuss their goals within Humanities, their motivations to become part of this community of knowledge, and other related issues.	Genres Users Goals	Awareness
5	Class task	• Collaboratively, first in pairs and then with the group. • Functional analysis of paragraphs (introductions) in relation to voice and the reader/writer relationship.	Genres Relations	Analysis
6	Class task	• Collaboratively, first in pairs and then with the group. • Functional analysis of paragraphs (argumentation) in relation to modality and the writer/discipline relationship.	Genres Relations	Analysis.
7	Class task	• Collaboratively, first in pairs and then with the group. • Functional analysis of paragraphs (conclusions) in relation to the goals of the academic activity system.	Genres Relations	Analysis.
8	Class discussion	• Collaboratively, whole group. • Teacher-guided discussion of the components of the activity system of the Humanities, based on students' answers to the first questionnaire and their participations in the other reflective activities.	All	Awareness. Contestation .

Table 1: Reflective activities/ research tools.

On the day of the **first seminar**, students discussed their answers to a questionnaire in pairs, and then contributed to a whole group discussion on the Humanities as an academic activity system. In comparison to the questionnaires from the previous year, which were mainly focused on genres and their ideational function within the academic activity system[21], the **questionnaires** from the academic year 2010-11 took a more comprehensive approach to the functions of genres, including issues related to the construction of an academic identity through discourse, and of genres as tools to relate to the academic activity system and its other components. We introduced, for example, questions about students' self-image as novice members of the field, and their relationship to other members of this community. The

[21] See the questionnaire with a discussion of the questions and the results obtained in appendix 3.

aim of this activity was to assess the differences between students' perceptions at the beginning and at the end of the term.

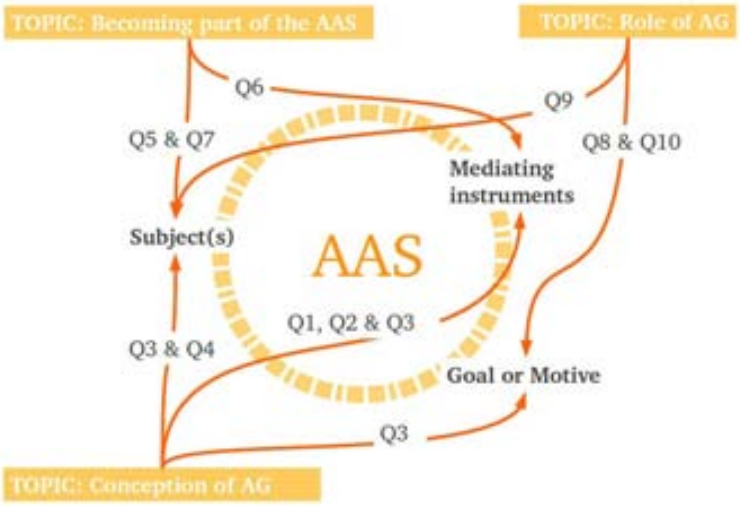

Illustration 1: Questionnaire topics connected to components of activity system

As shown in table 2, the questions touched on the following topics: Students' conception of academic genres (questions 1-4); students' perceptions on the process of becoming part of the academic activity system (questions 5-7); and students' perceptions on the roles of academic genres in the academic activity system (questions 8-10S)[22]. The questions were kept open and simply-worded to ensure students' spontaneity. Students were allowed 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaire in class, either individually or in pairs/small groups if they felt they needed some help. By using pair or group work on the first day, we intended to provide students with a safe less challenging environment in which to discuss and articulate their ideas. The professors emphasised that this was not a graded test, but a tool to gauge their perceptions of university and its forms of communication. In order to measure students' progress, the same questionnaire is used on the first and the last seminars.

TOPIC 1: STUDENTS' CONCEPTION OF ACADEMIC GENRES

Q1: Five words that describe academic writing.

[22] See appendix 2 for a sample questionnaire.

Q2: The format of academic writing is...

Q3: The most important thing about academic writing is...

Q4: In comparison to writing in my mother tongue, writing in English feels more... and less...

TOPIC 2: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROCESS OF BECOMING PART OF THE ACADEMIC ACTIVITY SYSTEM

Q5: As a member of the Humanities, I feel...

Q6: Learning to write in the academic community means...

Q7: My relation to other members of the Humanities is...

TOPIC 3: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF GENRES IN ACADEMIC ACTIVITY SYSTEM

Q8: Academic writing is used in university to...

Q9: The target audience for academic papers is...

Q10: When I write academic essays, I intend to...

Table 2: Questions for the questionnaire, arranged by topic.

In **seminar 2**, the professors asked students about their experiences with MEDEA and writing in other subjects, and to what extent these experiences differed from their reading/writing experiences in English. As follow-up to this discussion, students were asked to participate in an online forum in which they had to engage in a collaborative task to engage students into the analysis of academic genres in English and other languages. After a brief description that made explicit the influence of cultural background on a community's approach to academic knowledge, students had to pick out of a list which features corresponded to Continental writing and which ones to Anglo-American writing, based on the work by Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen (2003). These items included general descriptive sentences such

as “interpretive, epistemological in nature”, descriptions of the textual components of academic genres, “clearly distinguished sections”; descriptions of the interpersonal component, “short introductions, little meta-communication, little reader information”; and references to the genre's ideational component for each style “research questions often begin with 'what' or 'who'”, in reference to the tendency for Continental papers to focus on authors rather than on problems as Anglo-American papers tend to do. Apart from their previous experiences in other subjects, students were encouraged to use the reading materials for the plenary sessions in order to help them pick items for each tradition[23]. When presenting the activity in class, teachers were instructed to emphasise that there was not a clear-cut distinction between Continental and Anglo-American genres, but that texts were placed in a continuum. Hence, students had the opportunity to reflect on the features that characterise the genres they had been exposed to so far and the features of their own writing in relation to different cultural backgrounds.

The topic for **seminar 3** was students' frequent problems when writing in L1 and L2, and their relation to the components of the academic activity system. At the beginning of the lesson, students were asked to list the difficulties they encountered when setting out to write an assignment, either before, during or after the actual writing process. Then, the teacher asked students to name the types of errors that teachers typically found in students' assignments, and the similarities or differences they perceived between their weak points in L1 and in L2. Then, a common list was created for all the seminar groups, with their problems classified into four categories: ideational, interpersonal, textual and identity-related problems. This list was transformed into an online survey, in which students were invited to tick the problems they experienced. The survey consisted of four multiple-choice questions which paraphrased the four categories mentioned above, in which students were free to tick as many options as they chose to:

What are your most frequent problems regarding the formal aspects of academic genres?	Textual problems
In your relationship to your audience, which of these problems do you experience?	Interpersonal problems.

[23] In the last section of this project, we discuss the problems caused by students' lack of familiarity with academic genres, and suggest possible ways to improve this activity.

What are your most frequent problems regarding the formal aspects of academic genres?	Textual problems
In relation to the field-specific contents of your papers, what sort of problems do you experience?	Ideational problems.
Thinking of your voice and your identity as an academic writer, which of these do you find problematic?	Identity-related problems.

Table 3: Questions from the survey about students' problems, for seminar 3.

The answers were saved anonymously, and they were visible to their classmates. Students were also encouraged to participate in an online forum in which they could collaboratively analyse the source of these problems in relation to the components of the Humanities as an academic activity system by discussing the underlying reasons of their conflicts with academic writing.

For **seminar 4**, the lesson started with a group discussion on the role of writing in higher education and in academia in general. In pairs or small groups, students were asked to think about the purpose of writing in the Humanities, their potential audience, the ultimate goals when writing and their strategies to achieve them. These ideas were then shared with the rest of the group. As a follow-up to this discussion, an online forum was opened to gather students' ideas as new members of the academic community, their projects for the future, and their views and motivations within the Humanities.

Seminars 5, 6 and 7 revolved around the functional approach to genres. They were designed to raise students' awareness of the way genres do things with words. Besides engaging students in the textual analysis of different sections of an essay, the supporting materials used for these three seminars were intended to hint at the context beyond texts, looking at the relationship genres establish between members of the community, between writers and their individual and collective goals, between writers and their texts, and so on. For every section of an essay (introduction, body and conclusion), students had to write a list of the functions that different sentences performed in it – such as attracting the readers' attention, illustrating one's arguments, acknowledging the limitations of one's research, and so on. These functions

were then connected to an adapted version of the diagram of the academia as an activity system, so that functions were explicitly connected to its components (see illustration 7 on page 30). Then, students were asked to work in pairs and look for these functions in a sample paragraph, underlining the textual resources used by the authors of the text to carry out each function (engaging readers, introducing an argument, and so on).

The reflective activity for the last seminar, **seminar number 8**, consisted of a revision of the results of the questionnaire students had filled in during the first seminar session. In order to facilitate the processing of students' answers to the questionnaires, we decided to use word clouds[24] as a visual display, which offered a simple, low-tech solution to data processing and facilitated identifying the trends in students' responses[25]. This choice required us to translate students' answers in case they had written them in L1, to revise their spelling and phrasing, and to convert everything into lower case, as seen in the tables in appendix 5. Using these visual displays of their answers to promote discussion, the professors scaffolded students' analysis of their views of the academic activity system and its components. Students then redid the questionnaire individually, assuming that they would be more familiar with the concepts that appeared in the questions. The results of the questionnaires are described in the results section, and further discussed and compared in the analysis section, contrasting students' answers in the first and the last sessions.

3.2. Results

In this section, we provide a description of the results obtained via the reflective activities used as course materials/research tools, chronologically organised into seminars. In table 4 below, we provide a list of the data recorded, detailing the number of participations and the number of students who took part in it. All the data obtained can be accessed in the appendices, with students' names deleted for reasons of privacy.

[24] We opted for http://www.wordle.net.

[25] The word clouds for questionnaires from seminars 1 and 9 can be found in appendix 4, along with all the data gathered during the other seminars.

In the description and analysis of the results, we have used as evidence students' answers to the questionnaires and forum entries and students' oral contributions as recorded by the seminar teacher. Students' participations are quoted using two different methods to distinguish the data we analyse quantitatively (using word clouds to find the most frequently used words) from the data we analyse with a more qualitative approach (discussing students' participations in forums, results of class tasks, etc). The answers to the questionnaires as recorded in the word clouds are quoted in italics, whereas we have used inverted commas and italics to quote students' answers extracted directly from the questionnaires, forums or as written down in class.

Through the questionnaires for seminar 1 and seminar 8 we collected data from all the students enrolled in the subject – provided they attended the first and the last seminar. For all the other seminar activities, we could only obtain data from the seminar groups I was teaching, two seminar groups from group one and two seminar groups from group two. Since there were six seminar groups for each of the two plenary groups, there were eight seminar groups whose contributions we cannot share in this project, either because their seminar instructors did not collect the data, or because the reflective activities were not used at all. Even though all seminar teachers share materials, everyone is free to choose what activities and assessment tools they use in their own seminars.

	Activity	Description	Data collected	Students participating
SEM. 1	Class discussion	Teacher-guided discussion on what it means to be a member of the Humanities, students' perceptions of their first-year, their problems, good points, and such.	-	Students who attended the seminar, unknown number.
	Questionnaire	Students answer ten questions on the components of the activity system of the Humanities and their perceptions of their role within it.	60 questionnaires	Between 60 and 180 students.
SEM. 2	Class discussion	Students debate the difficulties they experience when writing in L1 and in L2, and attempt to see them from their teachers' perspective and find a way to fix them.	List of difficulties for 4 seminar groups.	Students who attended the seminar.
	Online forum	Students list the differences between Continental and Anglo-American writing conventions by picking items from a list of descriptors.	13 entries	7 students.
SEM. 3	Class discussion	Students discuss individual and collective goals within the academia.	-	Students who attended the seminar.
	Online survey	Students pick the problems they frequently experience when using academic genres in L1 or L2.	4 participations	4 students
	Online forum	Students discuss their frequent problems when writing in L1 and L2, their most likely causes in relation to the components of the academic activity system, and possible solutions.	12 entries	11 students
SEM. 4	Class discussion	Students list the functions of genres in the Humanities, and how they relate to other components of the academic activity system.	-	Students who attended the seminar.
	Online forum	Follow-up of the class discussion, in which students discuss their goals within Humanities, their motivations to become part of this community of knowledge, and other related issues.	9 entries	8 students
SEM. 5	Class task	Functional analysis of paragraphs (introductions) in relation to voice and the reader/writer relationship.	List of functions for 4 seminar groups.	Students who attended the seminar.
SEM. 6	Class task	Functional analysis of paragraphs (argumentation) in relation to modality and the writer/discipline relationship.	List of functions for 4 seminar groups.	Students who attended the seminar.
SEM. 7	Class task	Functional analysis of paragraphs (conclusions) in relation to the goals of the academic activity system.	List of functions for 4 seminar groups.	Students who attended the seminar.
SEM.	Class	Teacher-guided discussion of the components of the	-	Students who

	Activity	Description	Data collected	Students participating
8	discussion	activity system of the Humanities, based on students' answers to the first questionnaire and their participations in the other reflective activities.		attended the seminar.
	Questionnaire	Same one-page questionnaire as for the first seminar.	11 questionnaires	11 students

Table 4: Data obtained through the reflective activities.

a) Seminar 1: Questionnaires.

Out of 180 students, at least 60 filled in the questionnaire after a brief introduction to the seminars[26]. We cannot be more precise about the number, as some students did it in pairs or small groups. While they worked on the questionnaire, some students complained about the questions being very general, about not understanding their scope, about the questions being repetitive, etc. All seminar professors had been instructed not to guide students' answers, but rather to help them only when they had some vocabulary problems. Students were thus encouraged to write whatever they considered fit for the question, as no answer would be regarded as a wrong answer.

As shown in the table below, the freedom granted students resulted, however, in a number of blank answers, as shown in table 4, although 8.5% is a low percentage, considering that students could have not responded to any of the questions at all with no consequences for them individually. The questions about their perceptions of their process of initiation into the academic activity system got remarkably more blank answers than the other two topics (twenty-seven, in comparison to ten and fourteen for the questions on academic genres). The motivation behind these blanks seems to be very different. On the one hand, the blanks in question three (The most important thing about academic writing is...) seem to be caused by students' perception of the repetitiveness of the contents in questions one, two and three, which all deal with the nature of academic genres, its essential elements and their format. On the other hand, the blanks in questions five (As a member of the Humanities, I feel...), six (Learning to write in the academic community means...) and seven (My relation to other members of the Humanities is...) seem to be caused by students' confusion regarding the existence and the nature of other members of the academic activity

[26] All questionaires, word clouds and data gathered during the seminars can be found in appendix 4.

system, and the very likelihood of their being members of the Humanities, as we see again in the number of blank answers for question 9 (The target audience for academic papers is...). Summarising, the distribution of blank answers seems to indicate that students appear to be mainly puzzled by their own role in the academic community, while they also seem to experience trouble relating to other members of the system and, less so, defining the tools they use to communicate with them.

Topic	Questions	Nº of blanks	%	Blanks per topic	%
Conception of academic genres					
	Q1: Five words that describe academic writing.	0	0		
	Q2: The format of academic writing is...	2	3,33		
	Q3: The most important thing about academic writing is...	7	11,67	10	4,17
	Q4: In comparison to writing in my mother tongue, writing in English feels more... and less...	1	1,67		
Becoming part of the academic activity system					
	Q5: As a member of the Humanities, I feel...	7	11,67		
	Q6: Learning to write in the academic community means...	9	15	27	15
	Q7: My relation to other members of the Humanities is...	11	18,33		
Role of academic genres					
	Q8: Academic writing is used in university to...	2	3,33		
	Q9: The target audience for academic papers is...	7	11,67	14	7,78
	Q10: When I write academic essays, I intend to...	5	8,33		
			Total	**51**	**8,5**

Table 5: Blank answers to the questionnaire in seminar 1.

The first topic for the questionnaire was **students' conception of academic genre**, which consisted of four questions that covered students' perceptions of academic writing, its format and key elements and a comparison of academic genres in their mother tongue and in English. Students' answers emphasized above all the formal aspects of academic genres in English, mainly its organisation and the formal register used in them, presenting them as something alien and challenging to their communication goals. In their comparison between academic genres in L1 and L2, students associated feelings of insecurity to having to

use academic genres in English. Academic genres in English seem to isolate them from the other members of the community and their collective goals, narrowing down their communicative scope rather than opening it up.

In the first question (five words that describe academic writing), students' description of academic writing is very form-focused, as we see in the visualisation of the answers to question one. The most widely used words are *formal, vocabulary, structure, specific, cohesion* and *coherence.* Most of these are connected to the rigidity and hard-to-achieve internal coherence of canonical Anglo-American papers, with their formal register, fixed structure and emphasis on internal cohesion and unity of meaning. Close to these, we find *technical, ideas, register* and *clear.* Again, one item connected to vocabulary (*technical)* and the rest of them connected to formality and structure. Negative words such as *hard, difficult, strict, bored* (possibly meaning "boring")*, stressful* or *impersonal* have very few occurrences, but they all point at essays being highly demanding on students, except for *bored*, which probably refers to the repetitiveness of writing following the same formulae again and again. Grammatical aspects also occur rarely (*grammar*, *connectors*, *contractions*, *rhetorical*, *verbs*, *mistakes, adverbs*). Some of these language-related words refer once more to the structural aspects of academic genres (*connectors,* probably *verbs* and *adverbs,* as students were instructed to use full sentences), whereas others refer back to formality (*contractions, rhetorical)* and to students' negative views on their language level (*grammar, mistakes).*

The answers to question two (the format of academic writing is...) echo students' perceptions of academic writing in the first question, as students emphasized again the formality of the textual aspects of academic genres *(formal, clear, register).* There were also multiple references to the genres they associate to the academic community (*essays, letters, articles, newspaper, speeches),* and specific sections of the essay genre (*paragraphs, introduction, conclusion, discussion).* Students connected format (i.e. the textual features of genres) to genre, register and structure. In other words, they did not distinguish the textual features of genres, such as length, general structure or layout from the interpersonal component of voice (register). The formality of the academic register feels alien to them, it is something "*strict*", "*organized*", "*structured*" or "*well-structured"*, something out of their reach that they "*need to learn*", because it is "*more formal than other kinds of essays*". These responses possibly reflect the way the

teachers in our department tend to introduce Anglo-American essays to them, focusing on the differences rather than on the similarities, and insisting on their adoption of a formal tone, with no contractions, informal expressions or overtly subjective phrasing, as if these issues were somewhat less problematic in Continental academic genres. One of the most frequent complaints students have about academic genres, for example, is the fact that they are not allowed to use any contractions ("don't" needs to be written as "do not" and so on), which they perceive as a very random unnecessary rule. Not using any contraction undermines their previous experiences in English in secondary education, as some students complained that their teachers had encouraged them to use contractions. On top of that, students do not have enough experience in English to perceive contractions as informal or as an impediment to communication at all. Hence, contractions become not only textual errors, but also marks of their low status for the other more expert members of the community.

Question three, which complements the opening question in the definition of academic genres, requested students to name what they considered to be the key aspect of academic discourse. Students' answers tended to focus, as in the previous two questions, on the structural aspects of academic genres, both regarding textual organisation (*coherence*, *cohesion, organise*) and issues of accuracy and register (*language*, *form/formal, correct, register*). However, we can also find attention to the communication of contents and interaction with the audience, with prominent words such as *ideas*, *information* and *clear* – which still seem to resonate of the need to maintain unity of content – and, to a lesser extent, *topic, opinion, express/expressing, message, convey, plagiarism* and *understand.* In these last words, we find references to students' authorship and relation to the contents of their papers and other members of the academy, some of them positive (*express, message, convey*), but in others we can perceive a certain anxiety about students' sense of ownership of their ideas or their capacity to convey them (*plagiarism, understand*). Even though students' answers seem to indicate a very well-established, if narrow, view of academic genres as characterised by their rigid structure and formal register, question number three is the one with the highest number of blank answers in this section. This may be due to students' finding questions one, two and three very repetitive. Having focused so narrowly on format and register in the first two questions, writing down the same things again may have felt unnecessary. They might have

simply written down “same as before” or some such formulaic answer, however, but repetitiveness still remains the most likely explanation for this, particularly considering the pattern followed by students' blank answers in this section, going from zero to two and then to seven. Question number four, dealing with something different, has a low number of blank answers (merely one), which could be seen to reinforce our interpretation.

In the last question describing students' conception of academic genres (question four), students were asked to compare their perceptions of their own writing in their mother tongue to their writing in English. Some students argued that they had had little experience writing in English, and not much writing academically in general. Their answers reflect their awkwardness and alienation regarding academic genres in English: *difficult, insecure, unconfident, complicated.* Half of these most frequently used words refer to the difficulty and challenging nature of academic genres (*difficult, complicated*), whereas the other half describes students' relationship to them, and how using academic genres makes them feel *insecure* and *unconfident.* There are fewer references to the level of formality required by academic genres (*colloquial,* possibly *words*), which appears at the same level as students' worries about their command of English (*grammar, fluent).* As for the potential international projection of academic genres in English over the genres written in their L1, there was hardly any mention of English being *international, cosmopolitan* or *communicative.* Many students only replied to half of the question, which seems to imply that whatever they responded to the section they filled in, which is mainly English, means that the opposite is true for academic genres in their own language. This assumption, however, seems to clash with their accounts of students' writing experiences in other subjects, and with the results of class discussions later on in the course in which they find similar difficulties with academic genres regardless of the language used. Their initial negative perceptions, then, could have been partially changed thanks to the reflective activities of the seminars or the opportunity to use academic genres during the course.

As a summary for the first section of the questionnaire, students' answers regarding the nature of academic genres show a rather negative perception of academic genres in general, and particularly in English. These negative feelings about Anglo-American genres are caused by their conceptualisation of these genres as excessively formal and structurally rigid in comparison to the same genres in their native

language(s), which students claim that they can use freely and creatively[27]. Because of their negative views of the textual component of academic genres, students oversee their potential as tools to communicate knowledge to a wider audience, and the opportunity to focus on contents because of the predictability of the structure of academic genres in the Anglo-American tradition. Academic genres in English contribute to their feeling of not belonging to the academic community, as they cannot adopt the type of voice that is required from them. From students' point of view, this is a consequence of partially incomprehensible prohibitions and impositions when using academic genres in English and (less so) to their lack of language skills in English.

Questions five (As a member of the Humanities, I feel...), six (Learning to write in the academic community means...) and seven (My relation to other members of the Humanities is...) covered the second topic of the questionnaire, **students' perceptions on the process of becoming part of the academic activity system**. This topic was approached using three different components of the academic activity system: user identities, genres as tools, and inter-relations between members of the community, which correspond to questions five, six and seven respectively. Shifting the focus away from genres and genres in English has a dramatic effect on students' responses. Their perceptions on the issues discussed below is very positive and optimistic for their future as members of the academic community. Even if they still view their status as low, they seem to fully partake of the collective goals of the specific disciplines within Humanities. Peer support and affinity appear as two pillars that motivate them to acquire the necessary know-how to communicate with other members of the field and participate of the social construction of knowledge.

Remarkably, many students connected question five, their feelings as members of the Humanities, to notions of international communication, in connection to the importance of using English in the academic community in terms of contents and opportunities (*English, important, educated, language, necessary, learn/learning, academic*). Similarly to their answers in the first topic, there is a mix of language-related and identity-related responses. Academic writing in English is perceived as a necessity for their future in the academy, something they need for learning ("*reading texts, working with them", "an important*

[27] Further on, in the forums, we have more examples of students' views regarding the dilemma between creativity and formality associated to their L1 and English.

matter we have to know to understand the subjects"). Academic genres are necessarily bound to their academic life since "*knowing how to write academic writing or how to interpret it is really important for the development of my degree and my ability as a student".* Using academic genres successfully would thus become a mark of status to show that one's *educated*. There were some specific references to the disciplines contained within the degree *(literature, history, philosophy),* which seems to indicate students' self-adscription to these more specific communities of knowledge, rather than to a general overarching community of the Humanities. These more specific fields are regarded positively by students, particularly in terms of their contents *(interested/interesting).* Because students tend to have problems distinguishing -ed and -ing adjectives, it is hard to tell whether they are talking about their own interest in the ideational contents of these disciplines or about some value of these contents regardless of students liking them or not. Beyond the academic context, English linguistic proficiency is perceived as a useful asset for their professional career, since *"English opens many doors".*

Students′ answers to question six show a more open focus regarding their acquisition of academic genres compared to students' responses to the first questions. The most widely used word still referred to the formal aspects of academic genres (*vocabulary)*, even though in this case this word connects language forms to the ideational contents of the field, and it is not related to students' previous emphasis on formality and structural rigidity. The acquisition of field-specific vocabulary is mainly the task of plenary teachers. In these plenary sessions, students read a variety of academic texts connected to different topics in the Humanities, and they work on their language-related aspects and practise skills such as summarising, finding thesis statements, making diagrams, and other reading comprehension skills. There were also terms connected to students' goals within the academic activity system (*future, ideas, possibility, professional*) and its their will to communicate with other users (*people, community, express, know, communicate).* Writing is seen as a *"fundamental skill to express ideas, opinions and theories",* a tool that "*is very important for my future".* Although many of the references to the process of acquisition referred to language-related issues *(vocabulary, grammatical rules, correctly,* and such), there are also references to the relationship established with the audience and the contents of the field through the written word: "*so people understand me", "relationships with other people", "to communicate better",*

"being able to share my ideas in the academic community". The sudden change in tone may be an effect of students' positive responses to the previous question. Once they stopped focusing solely on genres, their relationship to the academic community, including its goals and users, was far more appealing and reassuring for their identities in construction. Inclusion seems to be a matter of communicating and sharing knowledge, which is an extremely positive goal for their self-image. However, the process itself of communication, the tools or genres that they need to use seem to hinder communication more than they contribute to it.

Question seven presents students' views of their relation to other members of the Humanities. Most students viewed their classmates as the only other members of the Humanities, and defined their relationship with them as *good* or *interesting,* describing them as *friends, classmates, people* they share *interests* with, who are *interested* in the same areas, who can *help* each other. Solidarity and companionship are highlighted as the bases for their good relationship, which is also perceived positively because they partake an interest in the same field and they can learn from each other ("*cooperative, everybody must participate in the different processes to get and share information*"). Even though these features may apply to their professors and academics from other institutions as well, we do not find a single mention of them in students' responses. Their difference in status with their teachers and other members of the academy become too insurmountable a barrier to perceive them as members of the same community. Rather than age differences, considering that Humanities is a popular second degree and has a well-established senior programme, professional status and skills cause the gap between students and other members of the community.

In comparison to students' negative perceptions on the nature and function of genres within the academic activity system, students' view of the other elements of the system is extremely positive, particularly regarding field-specific contents and peer novice members. The academic activity system is viewed as a collaborative community – at least at their level. Teachers and more expert members seem to be more of a challenge, and are therefore excluded from students' academic community. This may be due to the teachers' and experts' command of genres and, consequently, their ability to spot students' errors or inadequacies when using them. Even though genres – and English ones in particular – are admittedly part

of the social construction of knowledge, they are regarded more as an obstacle than enablers of communication. Besides, when we take into consideration the number of blank answers in this section (the highest percentage of the whole questionnaire), the positive overtones of these answers are contrasted by students' refusal or inability to describe their very own process of becoming a member of the Humanities.

The last topic covered by the questionnaire was **the role of genres in the academic activity system**. Questions number eight (Academic writing is used in university to...), nine (The target audience for academic papers is...) and ten (When I write academic essays, I intend to...) requested students to discuss the use of writing in the academic community in general (question eight) and personally (question ten), and in terms of their projection of the receivers of these genres (question nine). Students' responses to the last section of the questionnaire show more awareness of the key components of the academic activity system and their inter-relations. Students explicitly mention the three roles of genres in the academic context that we listed in the theoretical framework (writing to learn, writing as proof of status, and writing as assessment), different types of users, and the relationship between genres and contents of the field. However, there are also echoes of students' previous focus on the formal aspects of genres, as in their blaming on their lack foreign language command the difficulties they experience acquiring academic genres and using them to construct and communicate knowledge, and by extension students blame genres for their struggle to prove their validity within the community.

In question number eight (Academic writing is used in university to...), the function of academic writing was mainly assigned to the writing of *essays* – although students also mentioned *exams, texts* and *project* – with a focus on accuracy (*properly, improve)*. Students referred to the three functions of academic writing at university that we discussed earlier in the theoretical framework – writing was an *assessment* tool, a test *"to pass subjects",* writing as a learning tool to acquire *"new knowledge of the degree",* and writing as proof of status to show their *knowledge* of the ideational and procedural knowledge of the academic community. As in previous questions, students' responses are mainly focused on the textual aspects of genres, their format and layout, and there are less mentions of the contents conveyed through these genres and their use in the construction of collective knowledge, even though

some students did view academic texts as a way to "*communicate them to the rest of the academic community"* and as an aid to "*convey knowledge*". These responses provide further evidence of students' conceptualisation of academic genres as challenging their identity construction rather than supporting it. Academic genres are imposed on them by more experienced members of the field, in this case their university teachers according to students' answers. Nonetheless, they fail to see the top of the ladder, as the imposition of genres is not solely their teachers' choice but is also supported by the other expert (and not so expert) members of the community who choose to use them to achieve their own goals and contribute to the collective ones. These responses hint at students' possibly perceiving the genres as immovable and permanent, possibly transferable across disciplines, languages and contexts.

According to their replies to question nine (The target audience for academic papers is...), academic genres are addressed to *expert educated people* from the *community, professor/s,* their *teachers,* other *students, professionals, specialists.* The audience of their writing are people who *know,* who are *interested* in and partake of their *knowledge* of the *specific topics* of the Humanities. They perceive that these texts are not suitable for everyone ("*not everybody can read such specific papers*", *"people who really know what you're writing about")*. In this case, unlike in previous questions, teachers do appear to be part of the knowledge community: "*educated people like teachers*", "*they usually know more than you about the ideas which you expose in it*". Hierarchically, students considered their readers' status to be higher than their own, even if this is not explicitly stated in the case of *students.* This perception of their inferiority is due to their lack of command over the procedural and ideational knowledge of the field. The focus of students' attention, in this case, is shifted from the formal aspects of genres towards their contents, emphasising their specificity and complexity, and vaguely hinting at the length and complicated process of education expert members of the field have had to undergo in order to understand genres and use them to convey their knowledge. Students' answers seem to hint at the connection between the acquisition of the ideational and the procedural knowledge of the field, the link between academic genres as communicative tools and the contents that are conveyed and socially constructed through them.

In spite of their focus on form in students' answers to previous sections of the questionnaire, the goal of students' writing, as stated in question ten (When I write academic essays, I intend to...) seems to be the

successful transmission of their *ideas,* even if this needs to be done in a *clear, formal, coherent* and *correct way*. The emphasis on contents and on their will to contribute to the social constructive of knowledge is watered down by their perceptions of the difficulties of achieving unambiguous communication due to the requirements of academic genres. Students seem to be very concerned about the transparency of their communication, they want to be *understood,* and to convince their readers. Their will to communicate (*express*, *transmit*), however, needs to overcome some obstacles, hinted at in their answers by the use of hedging expressions such as *possible, careful, try, mistakes.* The obstacles referred to, the formality, unity of content and prescriptiveness of academic genres, all resonate of students' earlier focus on the formal aspects of academic genres (*words, arguments, structure, easy, rules, simple*) that make these genres so alien to students' previous experiences and to their own self-image. Students perceive these features as an imposition on their naturally more fluent, spontaneous writing methods. Even though these writing methods had proven problematic in MEDEA and other subjects, students still viewed English as the main cause for their trouble in LAH, as their problems to write hide behind their lack of proficiency in the foreign language ("*use English as correctly as I can", "transmit the same thoughts that I transmit in my mother tongue").*

In the last section of the questionnaire, students' conceptualisation of the academic activity system appears to be more comprehensive than it could be inferred by their answers to both previous sections. Students expressed their wish to participate of the collective goals of the system, to interact with other members of the community (not just their peers) and to successfully use genres to mark their belonging by contributing to the knowledge of the community. However, students did not seem to be aware of the range of issues impeding their initiation into the academic activity system, and blamed their problems with the use of academic genres mainly on their lack of knowledge of English, effectively ignoring the difficulties of codifying any personal ideas into collective genres, and their lack of control on the receiving end of this communication. Students seemed to know the community they intended to join, but they still felt as outsiders because of their inability to communicate knowledge they appeared to be certain to have or to be going to have in the near future.

In an overview of students' answers to the questionnaire distributed during the first week, there is plenty of evidence pointing at a strong correlation between first-year students' struggle constructing an academic identity and their struggle acquiring the academic genres of their field. Students' negative perceptions on the formal features of genres (as excessively rigid and formal, and alien to their own cognitive and writing patterns) affect their relationship to the ideational contents of the community, to other users and ultimately to themselves. Their lack of expertise using academic genres undermines their position and the way they are seen by other users. According to students' view, whenever they try to negotiate meaning with expert members, their contributions risk being disregarded due to their poor attempts to communicate their ideas through academic genres credibly because of the language requirements students inevitably fail to meet, which consist mainly of register, structure and vocabulary. On the other hand, students seemed to be rather optimistic regarding their future in the academy, even if the process to achieve their goals, and the genres necessary to achieve them, was not quite clear. Their negative views on their foreign language skills and procedural knowledge are therefore counterbalanced by the support of their peers, their commitment to the specific field they have chosen, and their self-confidence regarding their knowledge of ideational contents.

b) Seminar 2: Online collaborative task on the comparison of Anglo-American and Continental academic genres.

The online activities used as follow-up to the second seminar consisted of a collaborative task in which students had to tell out of a list of descriptors which ones corresponded to canonical Anglo-American genres and which ones corresponded to canonical Continental genres, regardless of the language in which they were written but on the basis of the contents, the writer's approach, structural features, and such. The list of descriptors was based on the work of Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen (2003), and was only slightly reworded to make it more understandable to students. This task was carried out using an online forum in which students presented one or two of the items they had chosen and justified their decision in a short paragraph. The seminar instructor corrected students' participation if necessary. There was a forum for the characteristics of Continental essays and another one for Anglo-American essays. The learning goals for this reflective activity consisted of making students aware of the

cultural differences across different discourse communities, and their own place within the Continental/Anglo-American continuum. Ultimately, we wanted students to become aware of the connection between the adoption of certain genres and the cognitive processes involved in the construction and communication of knowledge. Unless they had had some previous experience in higher education, most students' answers were based on their rather short experience of academic genres during the first and second term, which was mainly in Spanish and Catalan, and on the texts seen in the first three plenary sessions. When presenting the task in class, we used practical examples and students' own experiences (or the seminar teacher's) to help them understand the descriptors. We asked them, for example, to describe the way they planned the contents of their papers. Most of them admitted to not using any diagrams or brainstorm, but preferred to write straight away and then edit the result into the type of paper requested by their teachers. This type of automatic writing, in which conclusions tend to be reached while one writes, is very hard to apply to the Anglo-American tradition of "one point, one claim, one conclusion"[28], which requires writers to reach the conclusion to their argumentation before they start the actual writing, and which allows no digressions or excursions from the goals set in the introduction to the paper.

Students' answers to this activity are shown in table 6, in which we list the features they assigned to each tradition. We have not included the whole list of features[29], but only the descriptors students picked, and therefore there are many items left out from the original list in the handout. This results from the low rate of participation. Out of the four seminar groups (roughly sixty students) that were supposed to carry out this task as part of their continuous assessment in the seminar, only seven students participated, amounting to thirteen entries in the forums. This meant that many of the descriptors were not assigned to any of the traditions, as students had been instructed to write down only one or two in order to make the forum more dynamic and less repetitive. In the right-hand column, there are two features a student mistakenly assigned to Continental essays, which are marked with an asterisk, but all the other answers were correct from the start. Students initially picked mainly form-oriented features out of the list of

[28] As all the other statements regarding the Anglo-American writing tradition, this one is a shortened version of the list by Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen (2003). It is important to note that these distinctions are never presented to students as being clearly divided.

[29] Available in appendix 2.

descriptors, which corresponded to the way they were being taught in the subject – hence the emphasis on the rule of unity and the distinction between sections. In their justification of their choices in the forum, however, students also mentioned the different processes of acquiring these genres and their level of demand on writers and readers. In students' answers, which we discuss in the following paragraphs, there are evidences of their successful crossing of the boundaries of their initial textual focus to become aware of the effects of these features on writer identities, interactions with their texts and readers, and even creative processes, with a more positive attitude than in the questionnaire for the first seminar – although this may be due to the size of the sample and the level of engagement of the students who participated in the forum.

Characteristics of Anglo-American essays	**Characteristics of Continental essays**
• Learned craftsmanship. • One point, one claim, one conclusion. • Clearly distinguished sections (*2 times*). • Clear, concise, often impersonal language. • Linear structure, digressions discouraged.	• Interpretative. • Non-learned art. • Excursions, digressions, associations. • Numerous points, claims, conclusions about the subject. • Often a non-linear discursive structure. • Linguistic complexity and abstraction, demanding language. • Research questions often begin with what or who. • *One point, one claim, one conclusion. • *clear, concise, often impersonal language.

Table 6: Students' collaborative classification of the descriptors in seminar 2 forums.

Students picked in the first place the features that describe the textual aspects of Anglo-American essays as they are introduced to them in this subject – a formal register, unity of content and form – and only one descriptor related to the process of acquisition of genres within this tradition (“learned craftsmanship”). This view corresponds to their responses to the questionnaire, in which they defined academic genres in English solely in terms of formality and rigidity of structure. Continental essays, with which they identify themselves, are on the contrary characterised by their extremely flexible textual organisation and the complexity of their language and their contents. The relationship between author,

contents and readers in Continental essays seems to be a more important issue than in the Anglo-American essays. The ideational component of the texts, the relationship between the author and the contents of the essay and the field, is more complex and comprehensive than in Anglo-American essays, which restrict the number of topics and claims authors can make. The freedom enjoyed by authors of Continental essays requires from readers the capacity to follow the author's point regardless of digressions, complexity of expression, and multiplicity of contents, associations and claims. Anglo-American essays have a more scientific flair about them, whereas Continental essays seem to be more artistic. Anglo-American essays can be rehearsed, practised, learnt; whereas Continental essays are only available to the chosen few, both regarding authors and readers. That is why it was quite remarkable that one of the students chose the ability/inability to learn academic genres as the first descriptors to discuss. Do students feel they belong to these chosen few? Is that why they are so reluctant to give up this exclusivity when they are requested to write within a different tradition? Students' answers to the forum can shed some light on these issues. For their forum entries[30], students first copied from the list the descriptor they wanted to assign to one of the traditions, then they paraphrased it and justified why they had assigned it to one of the traditions. In the following paragraphs, we use excerpts from the forums to attempt to infer out of students' conceptualisations of the two writing traditions summarised above their views on the functions of genres in the academic activity system, their role as novice members and their relationship to the goals of the academic activity system.

From the students' point of view, Anglo-American essays seem to be all about formal restrictions: They have to be "*very clear and neat*" rather than deep and personal. These structural boundaries determine the scope of Anglo-American essays, which are ruled by the concept of *"one paragraph, one idea; which is at the centre of English articles".* Continental writing, on the other hand, is less "*strict"* in terms of structure, it can "*have two ideas for paragraph, or more than three (or five) paragraphs",* which makes it a more "*spontaneous thing".* Students' view of the linguistic simplicity of Anglo-American genres in comparison to Continental genres is probably influenced by the type of writing prompts they get in our course and in the other subjects. In class discussions, they often complain that using simple syntactic structures in English makes their novice status very obvious, because their academic models are

[30] Available in appendix 4.

more complex. At this point in the course, their experience reading academic genres in the Anglo-American tradition is rather limited, and that is probably one of the reasons why they mix in their answers their experiences as readers and writers

Because in Anglo-American academic genres *"everything is predetermined",* all essays written in this tradition "*must have a linear and argumentative structure, with clearly different distinguished sections, each one with its thesis statement or its topic sentence. And each essay treats one point, presenting one thesis and reaching a single conclusion".* From students' point of view, the writers of Anglo-American genres have no stylistic choice in their writing because of their focus on facilitating readers' understanding of the contents. The freedom Continental writing bestows on the writer in terms of formal and ideational structures has its counterbalance for the readers. Because Continental essays often do not contain a "*clear thesis or a specific problem to research"*, they tend to be harder for the reader because they require "*an effort of interpretation".* The rigidity of Anglo-American essays facilitates reading and writing because content restrictions divide *"the text in clearly different parts",* and *"the statement of an idea for each paragraph makes easier that kind of distribution",* which results in *"a clear, fixed structure with clearly distinguished sections"* that is easier to grasp for writers and readers. As a tool of academic communication, Anglo-American genres are *"more understandable and allows the reader to comprehend my ideas in a better way"* because they tend to "*summarize in a clear and brief way*" the points they are trying to make. Continental essays lack this focus on the readers, whereas for Anglo-American essays, *"the point is to make the reader understand the topic and the thesis and to give him some clear clues about a problem".* The authors of Anglo-American texts *"try to be respectful with the reader"* and construct texts that are "*more objective and scientific".* Readers of these essays can *"see the idea very quickly and easily because they're concise and don't introduce more than one topic or idea in a paragraph".*

In terms of writer identity, students felt that Anglo-American genres tend to be more "*impersonal"*, "*rigid and formal*"; and they do not "*reflect the writer's personality".* As the formal constraints are looser in Continental papers, writers have *"more possibilities to develop ideas which are not directly connected to the main topic or thesis", "there is more freedom for digressions in Continental articles".* Students

think that Anglo-American papers are more restricted in length, even at sentence level, which makes it harder for writers to develop complex ideas*: "Europeans use more words", "syntax much longer and more complicated, but it helps a lot when you have to develop abstract ideas".* In spite of the teachers' instructions and the types of texts they have in their course dossier, students have established English as the only language for Anglo-American genres, and the other European languages (or perhaps only the Romanesque ones) as the languages to be used in Continental genres. This could potentially lead students to view their writing issues as the consequence of their language background, and lead them to label these problems as features inherent to Continental genres/languages instead of trying to sort them out. This sort of generalisation may contribute to see English in more positive terms, because it would seem that writing in English could contribute to facilitate and broaden academic communication, even if at the expense of creative freedom and complexity of ideas. Hence a students' conclusion that *"the academic world should be bilingual: in the native language and in English".* According to students' views, the local language would be used to create and develop one's ideas, and English would be used to communicate them more efficiently to a wider audience. The goal of the activity was to analyse the differences between two writing traditions, not to force students to choose one particular way of writing over the other, and certainly not to encourage them to ban their mother tongue from public use. Throughout the discussion, however, students regarded the activity as a debate about the goal of writing in relation to the language used for it, and between writing to create (in their mother tongue) and writing to communicate (in English). This prejudiced attitude regarding the uses of language in academia may be connected to students' attitude towards the course, and might be one of the causes leading to the high rates of absentees and general lack of participation in class. It could be that some students did not attend the classes or participate in any activity as a form of covertly protesting university policy and the way English is being imposed upon them. Even if this were not the case, this activity clearly needed students to have more experience using genres, and probably would need a corpora of texts to illustrate the features that define both writing traditions, so that students could find them for themselves in the texts and see the gradation and the individual differences caused by context, field of work, personal status, and so on.

c) Seminars 2&3: Online survey and forum on students' frequent problems when writing academic genres.

In the second seminar, the teacher asked students to list the problems they experienced when writing papers, either in their mother tongue or in English. Since students had only handed in one piece of work so far, their experience in English was rather limited in the academic field, but we thought it would be interesting to compare their perceptions on their difficulties across languages. During the following oral discussion, students mentioned experiencing a series of problems regardless of the language they wrote in, which the teacher helped them articulate and wrote down on the board as guidance for the discussion. The list for the four groups amounts to: *wrapping up the essay, use of vocabulary, use of complicated phrasing, dense sentences, punctuation, content distribution, problems phrasing their ideas, repeating ideas/words, sorting out ideas, plagiarising, formal aspects, use of voice, sentences are too long, focus on content/form at the same time, synthesizing information, references, formal register, staying on-topic,* and *vocabulary*. In order to create the online survey, we classified students' contributions into four categories, we added some of the problems we had noticed in their first seminar assignments, and rephrased them slightly in order to adapt them to the survey format. In table 7, we have listed the items as they were used in the survey. The ones in italics are students' contributions; the others were added by the teacher based on students' work; and the ones in bold got the most votes. Accompanying the survey in the VLE, we also opened a forum in which students could discuss the problems they experienced most often, offer their solutions, and guess the causes for these problems.

The learning goal for these activities was to unpathologise the way students write by making them aware of other sources for their trouble besides their lack of command in English as a foreign language, on which they tend to blame all their problems. Accordingly, the classification of students' problems in the survey explicitly mentioned the elements in the academic activity system students' issues were connected to – based on CHAT and SFL – so that students could concentrate on them when trying to find their voice to write academic genres. The left-hand column of table 7 displays the four guiding questions that were used to arrange students' problems into categories: “What are your most frequent problems regarding the formal aspects of academic genres?” (academic genres, textual component); “in your relationship to your audience, which of these problems do you experience?” (users, interpersonal

component); “in relation to the field-specific contents of your papers, what sort of problems do you experience?” (goals, ideational component); and “thinking of your voice and your identity as an academic writer, which of these do you find problematic?” (identity).

As in previous online activities, the participation rate was very low for both activities. Four students took the survey, and eleven students participated in the forum, most of them only once. Regarding the survey, students' answers confirm their contributions to the class discussion, as most answers got at least one tick (see table 5), including the problems the teacher included based on their first seminar assignment. The items that got the highest number of votes are “*I find the academic register too stiff*” and “*I need more specific vocabulary*”, which mirror the results of the first question in the questionnaires from the first seminar, in which students had to list five words that defined academic genres. Students struggle to find a voice they feel comfortable with when writing academic papers in the Anglo-American tradition, and they need more field-specific knowledge to acquire the tools to contribute to the field.

Questions	**Answers**	**Votes**
What are your most frequent problems regarding the formal aspects of academic genres?		
	I can't use punctuation properly.	1
	I find content distribution complicated.	0
	I have problems phrasing things.	1
	I find it hard to be synthetic.	2
	I don't know how to include references.	1
	I can't seem to wrap up essays.	2
	I repeat things too often.	0
In your relationship to your audience, which of these problems do you experience?		
	When I write, I can't imagine an audience.	2
	I can't think of interesting ways to capture my audience.	2
	I make categorical statements without noticing it.	1
In relation to the field-specific contents of your papers, what sort of problems do you experience?		
	I feel I have nothing interesting to say.	1
	I can't focus on contents and form at the same time.	1

Questions	Answers	Votes
	I can't stay on topic.	2
	I need more specific vocabulary.	3
	I plagiarise inadvertently.	2
Thinking of your voice and your identity as an academic writer, which of these do you find problematic?		
	I use complicated phrasing and dense sentences, so it's hard to follow my ideas.	2
	I find the academic register too stiff.	3
	I don't know what voice to use.	1
	I use very subjective vocabulary.	1

Table 7: Students' answers to forum for seminar 3

As we discuss in the following paragraphs, we could infer from students' entries in the forum that their problems with academic genres probably stem from their lack of the generic repertoire to realise the ideational, interpersonal and textual components of Anglo-American essays. The problems students mentioned in the forum that referred to issues going beyond textual features were their representation of the audience in relation to themselves and the contents of their message; the intercultural differences between academic genres as they have experienced them in their native tongue and in LAH; and their inability to construct themselves and their contributions to the field accurately through their texts. It is important to note that, as in the previous reflective activity, students automatically assigned their first languages to Continental academic genres and English to Anglo-American genres, as if they were only foreign to the language, not to the genres or the context in which they are used. In this activity, however, students also associated languages to different writing and cognitive processes – e.g. planning, developing, structuring, etc.

Students' representation of their audience when they write academic genres, i.e. the interpersonal component, is listed as a problem in the forum because students view it as another source of restrictions on the natural flow of their creative process. As one of the students says in the forum, *"we don't make the text according to our public, we sometimes just write down our ideas without thinking who concerns the text".* Students are probably too cognitively engaged when dealing with the ideational component of their

essays, and hence their contribution to the field, to be able to deal with the foreign language and think of the audience that is going to receive, accept or reject the ideas students want to convey – and students' academic personae along with their ideas. Students tend to ascribe the level of cognitive challenge that writing academic papers in English purely to foreign language issues. As they say in the forum, students' representation of their audience and the role they need to adopt when communicating with it requires them to switch *"language and composition"*. Students' language-determined problems undermine their content development because they are unable to focus on it, but there are many other aspects involved – the complexity of the contents, dealing with unfamiliar textual structures, register issues, and so on. This quote from one of the students illustrates the multiple sources of their trouble when writing Anglo-American papers: *"It's very difficult to change our way of thinking (...) I start writing in English, but then I forget a lot of things that I wanted to write, therefore I first write in Spanish or Catalan and then I translate to English. Well, I know it's wrong but if I write directly in English I can't control my ideas"*. For this student, being in control of the language goes hand in hand with being in control of the contents. Because discourse constructs knowledge, knowledge requires proficient articulation, and this is hard to achieve in a foreign language after only eight two-hour sessions.

Besides their issues with ideational content and its realisation in academic genres, students also seemed puzzled whenever they had to write for a wider audience than their teacher, even if they were not being evaluated. This attitude is probably the result of students' conception of the role of writing in education, which they view exclusively as an assessment tool, hence disregarding the communicative function of writing to share ideas with other members of the community, and the epistemological function of writing as a tool to organise one's ideas and build new ones. Even though students claimed to have a good relationship with their peers in the questionnaire from seminar one, some students felt awkward when they had to write for the group. In order to overcome this problem, we used group writing and peer editing extensively in the seminars. Students would write a short text in every seminar session, either individually or in pairs. These texts were then projected using transparencies, and edited together with the rest of the students. Students could choose not to write their names on the transparency when the texts were collected, and any tips were addressed to the whole group to avoid making students feel exposed.

Some of the seminar teachers would not do this activity as they thought that it would make students feel very uncomfortable and they would stop attending seminars. As the term progressed, however, most of the students that carried on attending my seminars would grow more and more eager to show their authorship by discussing editing tips, or clarifying obscure points. Some students even felt comfortable enough to draw pictures to illustrate their paragraph. In some of the groups, on the other hand, peer relationships remained too undefined to be comfortable, particularly when there was no assessment: *"Although most times the paper is going to be read by professors, there are some specific cases, such as this forum, where I don't know who the readers of my text are going to be".*

Many of the difficulties students experience when attempting to write academic genres in LAH are due to the differences between the academic genres they have read/written in MEDEA and other subjects and the type of genres we ask them to read/write. Students are prone to regard these differences as purely language-related, but there are also intercultural, field-specific and even teacher-specific differences. First of all, students struggle to translate their thoughts in L1 into academic English. As two students say: *"When I am writing in English firstly I think in Spanish and after I translate into English (...) the structures of my phrases are very incongruous because I use the Spanish structure but in English"; "the academic English that we learned, sometimes doesn't teach us to deal with some issues"*. Secondly, students find it hard to follow the Anglo-American style we ask them to write in for LAH. Students' tendency to over-complicate syntax is mirrored in their tendency to over-complicate the structure of the essay itself: *"As a Romanic language native speaker I tend to write sentences with many subordinates. It is not usual in English and it also implies a risk of falling into digressions".* Regarding the textual function of academic genres, students claim that Anglo-American essays use *"adequate vocabulary and simple syntax",* a hard-to-follow structure of *"one paragraph, one idea, without writing about something which is not directly connected to the main idea",* and short sentences, which are also problematic because students are "*used to using long sentences with subordinate clauses".* Overall, *"English rules are too different from Spanish ones (...) I make complicated sentences and I find it difficult to structure and respect the ideas of each paragraph".*

As in the forum for seminar 2, students are faced with the dilemma of creativity vs communication. On the one hand, Anglo-American papers are better tools to communicate their ideas in a more comprehensible way because *"they are more linear",* and *"academic writing should be as linear as possible, to be extremely clear and understandable".* On the other hand, students find it *"hard to start writing an academic paper and to find the topic sentence".* Anglo-American genres require planning the contents of the essay before starting to write (*"planning should be the most important aspect");* therefore, students feel that this kind of writing hinders their natural way of developing their ideas as they progress through the essay: *"I can start writing only when my thoughts are totally structured and when I know how I am going to conclude. So I have the feeling of being paralysed for a while before starting the writing"*. As we saw above, discourse and cognition are mutually dependent, and cannot occur in isolation. The way students are requested to write in LAH does not feel natural to them because it does not reflect their mental patterns. Anglo-American writing can neither help them construct knowledge nor convey their thoughts faithfully because *"mental structure is not linear: it does not use discursive arguments and it presupposes a lot of things because the subject is the only one who works with it (...) it employs many digressions, excursions and associations with memories and other mental issues".* Content-wise, Anglo-American essays are more restricted than Continental ones, causing students to feel that they *"explain more things than are necessary and I often expand the topic and add some new ones, which is not correct in English texts".* Continental papers seem to reflect more accurately their creative processes because this style of writing can include some digressions, multiple claims and the use of non-linear structures. However, students feel that when they write following this type of genres, their texts become too subjective and personal to be understood by their readers: *"textual structure needs to be clear and specific because papers will be read by other people. All the ideas have to be explained"*. Such' feelings of confusion and estrangement signal there are some issues with the way we approach academic writing in LAH, and more specifically, with the way we present to students the differences between Anglo-American and Continental styles. Students should not be made to think that there are inadequacies in the way people communicate, but rather see writing traditions as cultural constructs in specific contexts, in which textual features reflect the history of the community where these genres are being used. It seems

necessary from now on to emphasise more that the divide between these two traditions is a continuum, and that in no way is one of the traditions superior to the other.

Regarding the ideational component of academic genres, students argue that because they are new to the Humanities, *"when I have to write an academic text, I don't know what I'm talking about"*. The source of this lack in ideational knowledge tends to be connected to their inability to communicate their ideas in English, as we mentioned previously (*"sometimes we have to talk about something we don't know or it's hard to explain our ideas in English*"), but there are also mentions of doing *"extra readings"* in order to learn more about the topic, and of being "*clear about what I want to say before I write"*. Not being able to adopt field-specific genres successfully damages the credibility of students' academic identity, as genres are essential to construct and negotiate academic knowledge, and by extension to prove their value in the community. In the first place, students' replies to the forum show that they perceive a gap between their representation of what they can say and what they actually say through their writing, which they justify due to "*the difference between mental structure and discursive one"*. Anglo-American genres have a linear structure, and this prevents them from transparently reproducing their patterns of thought on paper. Students feel that the rigidity in structure and register that students thought characterised academic genres in the Anglo-American tradition restricts the contents of their papers, their cognitive processes, and even their own academic persona. Even though there was no mention of such ideas in the previous forum on Anglo-American and Continental genres, students argue that there is no room for authorial expression in a good academic paper. One of the students states that "*a well-written academic text must have a good draft, be documented and few subjectivity*", in implicit opposition to the type of texts they would like to write. Students feel that being forced to write according to the Anglo-American tradition inevitably results in their personal contribution being banned from their texts, as no academic author writing in English is allowed to "*show his opinions*", but only "*must be clear in his sentences*". These genres, therefore, do not allow them to fulfil any of the two functions academic genres are supposed to perform.

As a summary, students' inability to convey their ideas through academic genres affects their construction of an academic self and their academic career, as academic genres are the tools used to construct collective knowledge and to prove one's value within the field. Students ability to communicate

their ideas is undermined by their problems with the contextualisation of academic genres, and by their novice status within the academic activity system. The solution to students' problems using academic genres needs to be approached from three different fronts. Firstly, they need a better command of English as a foreign language and English for academic purposes to be able to deal with the level of cognitive demand posed by academic tasks. Secondly, they need to change some processes at deep epistemological levels, such as the way they approach writing, and their planning and development processes. Finally, they need to locate their essays in their context in which they occur, and hence becoming aware of the audience they are addressed to, the purpose of the essays themselves, and how the textual component of the essays reflects the author's relationship to the other members of the community and to field-specific knowledge.

d) Seminars 3&4: Online forum on students' goals as novice members of the Humanities

As a follow-up to the class discussion on students' goals within the Humanities in seminar three, we opened a forum in which they could tell each other about the reasons that made them choose to study Humanities, and their goals for the future as expert members of this academic community. The learning goal for this forum was to make students aware of their current status in the academic activity system and the process of identity construction they were currently undergoing, in connection to their relationship with the genres, the users and the collective goals of the discourse community they were attempting to join. The data we discuss in the following paragraphs consists of nine entries in the online forum written by eight students[31]. Most students are deeply committed to the Humanities, as they all describe it as a vocational degree with not many professional opportunities for graduates. The interpersonal relationships with other members of this community are very ambivalent. On the one hand, they all share an affinity for the Humanities; on the other hand, they perceive the other users as rivals in the competition to stand out academically and professionally. Students' identity is challenged as well outside the academic community, as the process of initiation into the Humanities activity system destabilises students' previous identity by separating them from their peers outside university. Students' circles outside the Humanities do not know

[31] These are available in appendix 4.

of nor partake of the goals of this community, and are therefore shun from this new persona students are constructing.

Students' goals within the field of Humanities consist of becoming very knowledgeable in a variety of fields as a way of gaining a deeper understanding of the human mind and its historical evolution; and to prove their value within the field, in spite of the competition with the top members of the community. Students used very positive terms to describe the chances the academic community offers them in terms of personal development. These opportunities cover mainly field knowledge: *"You can learn a lot of things, and not only in one subject, like history, you have knowledge in every field – history, art, philosophy and literature"; "I think that degree of Humanities is the basis of knowledge".* Thanks to the acquisition of field-specific knowledge, students perceive that by becoming experts they *"can also understand better the human beings and this is amazing"* and *"this degree allows us to have a global vision of the world, in which we learn about our past and by the same token we learn about our present".* Students feel that the collective knowledge of the Humanities opens up the gates for further development and learning, as *"it makes me think of some aspects that I had never thought about before";* and hence learning becomes a deeply transformational experience: *"I think all the knowledge we acquire in Humanities gives us the possibility to be critical with the present. I believe when I finish university I will see the world through different eyes, with a better perspective".* Students are very ambitious regarding their self-image as experts members of the Humanities, not based on professional or material achievements but on their getting close to this ideal knowledgeable individual that can understand the meaning of present and past people, objects and events. Regarding their professional goals once they major, none of them mentioned pursuing an academic career, even if they had already thought about specialising "*in art or maybe history", "or literature, or perhaps, in modern or contemporary times"*. They rather see themselves working *"... in a museum or in a theatre, maybe in an art gallery or something related with culture",* or *"...in a publishing house or to be a teacher".* Despite the doubts they perceive in their environment, none of the students manifested any doubts about their professional future, or uncertainty about their options in the job market: *"In the current economical context, it is often better to do something that you like, being able to work hard in order to succeed, than doing anything without*

personal implication, expecting to earn a lot of money in an uncertain future". Sharing these ideals with their peers makes students feel more reassured about their own goals, as they feel that they are joining a group of people who are deeply committed to the pursue of knowledge. In two words of one of the students, who took up Humanities as a second degree after a scientific one, *"to study Humanities is a vocational decision, and it results in motivated people who enjoy doing it, not only thinking about their future, but also their everyday tasks".* The demanding process of acquiring this learning is not perceived negatively, but as a source of enjoyment for students: *"now it is important to enjoy what we are doing and try to learn everything we can".* For some students, this quest for knowledge is embedded in meaningful personal experiences. One of the students, for example, describes in the forum a stay in Rome that became a life-changing eye-opening experience that made her switch from a career in biotechnology to one in Humanities: *"I realized that I didn't know anything about art or history or literature and also found that I was so interested in these. That is why I decided to study the Humanities, to learn but specially, to enjoy!"*

In spite of students' positive participations regarding their engagement to the community of knowledge and its collective goals, their future role within it and the acquisition of field-specific knowledge, students also experience many insecurities in the process of identity construction. In most cases, entering university and joining the academic activity system deeply challenged students' identity. They feel diminished by the competition with other more proficient members of the community. The positive aspects of their relationship with their peers within the academic activity system, based on their shared interests and vocational approach to these studies are counterbalanced by their perception of the competition within the community: *"There are a lot of competitive, smart and hardworking people, and if you don't make an effort, it will be difficult to succeed in the Humanities";* "*this is a hard and difficult world, because there will always be better people than you*". As for the competition, students do not seem to be referring to their professional careers once they graduate, since many state that professional options after graduation are rather bleak; the competition is rather about their success within their degree. Students seem to lack a clear definition of what it means to succeed in the Humanities, seen the contrast between their ambitions regarding the sort of identity and status they want to achieve and their lack of

career ambition. On top of that, many students perceive that entering the Humanities has distanced them from their up-to-then peers and immediate environment, as they "*don't understand why you do this, they think that our degree is not serious and it's useless".* Some students think that people outside the academic activity system tend to *"have a low opinion of the studies in Humanities, maybe because it is so hard to join its labour market",* or simply *"don't know what it is (...) or they think that I study something humanitarian",* even if some may *"idealize you".* Students are consequently faced with the dilemma of choosing between their former identities within their families, group of peers, and other communities and their commitment to the Humanities, which requires them to redefine their ways of thinking and communicating, as these are often rejected by the academic community.

In conclusion, students have ambivalent feelings regarding their construction of an academic identity and their relationship to the components of the academic activity system. Students manifest very positive feelings towards the components they feel more in control of, such as the ideational knowledge of the field (which they can study) or their self-image as expert members (which they all seem to expect to reach). On the contrary, students feel very insecure about the components of the academic activity system that escape their control, such as the competition with other members of the field, or the need to gain access to a new group of peers in which they are not sure they are going to be valued as they were in their previous circles. None of the students mentioned field-specific genres as the tools to achieve status and to construct identity, even though this had been one of the points discussed in the previous seminar, and it did appear in the first seminar questionnaires. Due to their apparent lack of professional ambition, students did not consider the local/international contexts, and the possibilities offered by mastering academic genres in more than one language. Some more explicit guiding on the part of the teacher might have helped students discuss the role of genres in identity construction and personal development.

e) Seminars 5, 6 & 7: Class discussions on the functional components of academic genres, section by section.

In seminars five, six and seven, students analysed the role each sentence played within an introductory, an argumentative and a concluding paragraph respectively. These sessions were based on the functional components of discourse according to SFL, focusing on what textual resources delivered the

functions required for each section. The first session, devoted to the introductory section of essays, studied authorial voice and the interpersonal component of Anglo-American essays. The second session analysed the use of modality and the ideational component. The last session revised the textual component of the whole essay, and how it deals with the goals of the community. Methodologically speaking, the first seminar discussion was heavily teacher-led, whereas the second and third sessions on this topic allowed students to discuss functions on their own. Discussions were aided by excerpts from expert and student academic texts in the first and second seminars, but there was no supporting text in the third one, which was more focused on students' productions.

Focus	Introduction	Argumentation	Conclusion
Ideational component	To present the topic and point of view. To explain information. To contain the main ideas of the text. To state your thesis.	*To inform about the topic. To construct a coherent thought. To introduce new ideas. *To provide background information.	To move on to more universal topics.
Textual component	To state the problem/issue to be discussed. To describe text organisation. To go from general to specific. To be a summarised version of the whole paper.	To give some examples to support your argument. To explain. To provide arguments. To compare. To refute. To validate.	To wrap up the essay. To remember your thesis. To summarise your arguments.
Interpersonal component	To help the audience understand the text. To get the audience interested. To give you the main idea of the text and the general topic. To be very reader-focused.	To defend your point of view. To agree to someone else's opinion. To start a discussion. To persuade your reader. To undermine the opponent.	To completely convince your reader.

Table 8: Students' list of functions for each sentence in every essay section.

The goals for these sessions consisted of raising students' awareness of the functional components of discourse, and engaging them into the analysis of how these components are realised through actual linguistic structures so that students could approach the last seminar assignment from a functional point of view to help them overcome their language limitations. The class discussion around the extracts offered students the opportunity to contrast and compare different types of authorial voices, studying the ways in which language choices determine the authors' relationship to their audience, the contents of their text and

the goals of the community of knowledge, effectively projecting an image of themselves to relate to the other members of the community, as this analysis could potentially help students construct their own voice and with it their own self-image as members of the Humanities.

The data we discuss consists of the lists of functions students developed individually or in pairs for each section of a classic three- five-paragraph essay. Most of the functions are correctly distributed for each section except for two that we marked with an asterisk ("to inform about the topic" and "to provide background information"), which belong in the introduction but were assigned to the argumentation. To elaborate these lists, students were given time to look at the illustrative texts and work out in pairs what function(s) each sentence realised[32]. Once they were done, students shared their ideas with the whole group, while the teacher wrote down the items on the board and negotiated with students the component each function belonged to. Students' lists are shown in table 8, in which the functions are distributed according to section and component. The table contains the lists for the four seminar groups I was teaching, as the other groups did not follow the same methodology for these sessions. Overall, students' answers show a striking balance between the three functional components of academic genres considering their answers to previous reflective activities, in which they saw discourse and contents as a dichotomy, and they thought there was no relationship between author and readers or between author and contents in Anglo-American academic genres.

Regarding the **ideational function** of academic essays, students identified nine sentences that dealt with field-knowledge in the three sections of the essay. For the introduction they found one sentence that was used *"to explain information",* one that was used "*to present the topic and point of view",* another one *"to contain the main ideas of the text"* and one *"to state your thesis"*. These four sentences describe the steps in which the introduction advances the information that is going to be developed later on in the essay (the general topic, the arguments and the main idea). The first descriptor ("*to explain information")* shows through its vague phrasing the trouble students had understanding the differences between general topic, thesis statement, and supporting arguments, and the need to talk about them already in the introduction, as students were rather concerned they would have nothing much to add in the following

[32] All course materials are available in appendix 2.

sections if they did this. It would seem that they were reluctant to share the contents of their essays with the readers so early on because it would mean sharing power with them and assuming a position in which they were accountable, and not in control anymore. For the argumentative section, students mistakenly included "*to inform about the topic*" and "*to provide background information*", which actually belonged to the introductory section, but which they tend to do throughout the entire essay. Under the argumentative section, students also included "*to construct a coherent thought*" and "*to introduce new ideas*". These two descriptors show students' anxiety over their image in relation to other members of the knowledge community, as students perceive that they have to contribute something ("*new ideas*") and that their contribution needs to be clearly conveyed rather than lost in translation. Clearly conveyed, however, is easier said than done, as students face two problems when attempting to articulate their thoughts in English: firstly, they need to organise their thoughts into logical, academic phrasing, bearing in mind the textual, interpersonal and ideational requirements for this type of genres; and secondly, they need to translate their ideas into English, with the added cognitive processes this entails, particularly when the academic genre they have used in Spanish or Catalan is extremely different from the one they need to use in English. For the concluding section, students only wrote "*to move on to more universal topics*", which shows their problems accepting that they need to recast and repeat things throughout the essay to help their readers identify the contents of their contributions. In their articulation of the functions, students focused on the contents these sentences contributed to the text, but they lacked some detail regarding existing knowledge, the collective knowledge shared by other members of the community, such as the introduction of semantic concepts or the discussion of bibliographical references and theories in the introduction, vaguely hinted at by "*to explain information*". There are no references to the social construction of knowledge because at this stage, writing is an individual process in which students need to prove their value by proving their knowledge and their capacity to contribute to it. Using somebody else's ideas or words may seem to students a sign of weakness on their part, an admission that there is something missing in their knowledge or in their capacity to articulate themselves.

Students' description of the **textual function** of essays is mainly focused on content-related functions and structural aspects, which may be a consequence of their difficulties following Anglo-

American textual conventions, as they recognised in the previous reflective activities. There was no mention of register or more language-related issues such as accuracy, use of field-specific vocabulary and such, even though these were some of the essays' most distinctive features in previous reflective activities. For the introductory section, students found that one sentence was used "*to state the problem/issue to be discussed*", another sentence "*to describe text organisation*", another one "*to go from general to specific*" and another one used "*to be a summarised version of the whole paper*", which possibly refers to the introduction as a whole. Students' content focus for the textual component disregards any language issues and seems to be more concerned about proving students' command over the contents of the essays, i.e. the ideational component of texts, related to the knowledge shared by the community, than about proving their knowledge of the genres used to communicate in the academic community. Students assigned to the introductory paragraphs organisational functions connected to informing the reader of the distribution of contents in the essay ("*to go from general to specific*", "*to be a summarised version of the whole paper", "to describe text organisation"*) and key contents to be conveyed, "*the problem/issue to be discussed*", which refers to the thesis statement of the paper, one of the problematic issues students mentioned in the follow-up forum for the previous session. In the argumentative section, students found a sentence used "*to give some examples to support your argument*", another one used "*to explain*", "*to provide arguments*", "*to compare*", "*to refute*", and "*to validate*". Students only assigned this section argument-building functions. Because of students' focus on contents, the functions of the argumentative section are the most specific functions so far, since it is through the contents of their essays and their argumentative powers that students can prove to themselves and to the other members of the community their own validity. By listing the necessary steps to build a solid argument (the use of examples, contrasting different elements, etc) students show their will to engage in scientific debate to build knowledge, even though they have forgotten to include some basic functions such as a sentence to state their argument or to wrap up the argument at the end of the reasoning/discussion. As for the conclusion, students found a sentence "*to wrap up the essay*", a sentence "*to remember your thesis*" (probably meaning to "remind") and one "*to summarise your arguments*". Similarly to the other sections, the functions of the sentences in the concluding paragraphs of the essay are very content-focused ("*to remember your thesis", "to summarise your arguments*"), with only one

rather vague reference to organisational functions ("*to wrap up the essay"*). Students' focus on content probably results from their difficulties dealing with foreign language issues, cultural differences and the lack of familiarity with the type of task this reflective activity required them to engage in. We can also find some more evidence of students' dichotomy between form and content, and how the level of cognitive engagement required by working with complex contents in a foreign language prevents them from seeing the connections with the tools that construct the contents[33].

Students interpreted the **interpersonal function** of essays differently for each section, showing their ambivalent relationship to other members of the academic community, as seen in previous reflective activities. Students regarded the introduction as a section that is used to establish a positive collaborative relationship between the reader and the author of the essay (*"to be very reader-focused", "to get the audience interested")* with a focus on reader-guidance (*"to help the audience understand the text"***,** *"to give you the main idea of the text and the general topic").* In the argumentative section, on the other hand, the relationship between reader and writer becomes less collaborative and more competitive as soon as the author's construction of knowledge (and status) risks being challenged by the readers ("*to start a discussion*", "*to persuade your reader"*). Students feel that they need to engage their readers in a variety of ways, either competitively as in *"to undermine the opponent"* and *"to defend your point of view"* or collaboratively "*to agree to someone else's opinion"*. Students made no reference to some obvious tools needed to fulfil the interpersonal component, such as hedging or modality, even though these were extensively exemplified in the texts used in the seminars. When approaching their writing tasks, students feel that they need to prove their knowledge and defend it against highly probable criticism because of the usual nature of their audience, composed mainly of teachers and their peers, with whom they compete as novice members in the field. This insecure attitude still persists in the concluding paragraph, in which students feel the need to reinforce their arguments in order "*to completely convince your reader*"[34]. Again, the collective goals of constructing field knowledge are subordinated to students' individual needs to

[33] Cummin's work, and particularly Cummin's matrix (1984) reflects the hard-to-find balance between cognitive and linguistic challenge in the second-language classroom and its effects on students' ability to concentrate on one or the other.

[34] All materials are available in appendix 2.

reinforce their academic identity and defend it from the challenges posed by the potential disapproval of other members of the community.

Students' struggles with the contents of their essays prevent them from observing the particular ways of doing of the community they want to join, and make them miss the opportunity to learn to use language resources functionally and efficiently so that they can partially overcome their difficulties with English as an academic language and the specificities of Anglo-American genres. If students could focus on simple formulae with which to express modality, reader guidance, or different degrees of assertiveness, for example, they could successfully fulfil the basic functions Anglo-American essays require from them and thus participate in the collaborative construction of knowledge. However, and regardless of the teacher's explicit teaching of generic tools, and the availability of supporting materials to accompany the sessions, in which language tips were available, students seemed to be too overwhelmed by the multiple levels of complexity academic genres require from them to be able to change the way they approach writing tasks to adopt a functional method.

f) Seminar 8: Questionnaires.

The second round of questionnaires was scheduled for the last seminar as a check on students' changing perceptions on the nature of academic genres, their initiation into the academic activity system, and the role genres play within the academy. The goals for this session included discussing with students their process of initiation into the Humanities, and how it had been affected by MEDEA and LAH, tell them about their answers to the questionnaires distributed during the first seminar, and give them the opportunity to discuss and challenge their views of the academic community and its components, and their expectations for the future regarding their participation in the Humanities. For this seminar, we chose to ask students to fill in the questionnaire individually because we assumed that they would need a lot less guidance after eight weeks of discussing these concepts in class, and they would feel more self-confident about their answers, particularly after the whole-group discussion preceding the questionnaire. For the analysis of students' answers to the second questionnaire, we have used a combination of word clouds and direct quotations from students' answers, marked as before with italics and italics plus speech

marks respectively. When describing students' answers to the second questionnaire, we will refer to their answers to the first questionnaire whenever they differ, and try to account for the reasons causing the differences.

The number of questionnaires we gathered in the second round, however, is much lower than the one from the first session (only 11 questionnaires compared to 60). This is due to a variety of reasons, involving both teachers and students. To begin with, due to space problems caused by the high rate of students retaking the subject and the need to provide more individual attention to students with low English levels, the faculty decided to give students the option to transfer the credit for this subject if they could issue a certificate above B2 level. This decision, based on language level, does not take into account students' issues with generic knowledge, and is simply delaying these problems until the following year, when students need to take *Literatura Anglesa* and end up having the same issues with the type of papers they are expected to write. As a consequence of the faculty's policy, twenty-six of the students who took the first questionnaire disappeared after the third seminar once the credit transfer had been accepted. Secondly, students who had obtained very low results in the continuous assessment tasks for the plenaries and/or the seminars dropped the subject and focused their efforts on other subjects. First-year students have a minimum number of credits that they need to pass in order to access the second year. Consequently, students tend to prioritize work for the subjects they have more chances of passing. Thirdly, due to organisational issues, the students who are retaking the subject are unable to attend the lessons because of overlapping subjects. This creates a vicious circle trapping students into retaking the subject again and again without ever turning any work and therefore not being able to take the exam. Fourthly, low attendance is a recurring problem in the Humanities degree, with many students regarding attendance as a right, not as an obligation. Moreover, attendance rates tend to drop dramatically toward the end of the term due to paper deadlines, presentations, exams and such. The generalisation of continuous assessment within Bolonia has only contributed to increase this problem, despite faculty attempts to coordinate and spread out deadlines. Finally, some of the other seminar teachers decided not to pass the questionnaire around because they wanted to devote the last seminar to another kind of task.

Regarding the number of blank answers, shown in table 9 below, the percentage in this second round of questionnaires is much lower than in the first one. There were no blank answers for most questions, and a very low percentage for questions nine and ten, which referred to the audience of the academic genres students were supposed to address. Even though students still struggled to imagine an audience for their writing, their own position in the system seems to be well-established, if still vulnerable. In comparison to the first questionnaires, we find a more social approach to the Humanities on students' part, overcoming their isolation and lack of academic value through their hopes for future opportunities and the collaboration with their peers in the construction of collective knowledge at local and international levels. Whereas such positive results could be interpreted as a success on the part of the seminars, the increasingly limited amount of data obtained, as in previous reflective activities, inevitably questions the applicability of the materials we have developed as a method to successfully initiate students if the context of the subject remains the same, as we shall discuss in the analysis and the conclusions. Still, for the students who stayed on track, the reflective activities carried out in the seminars helped them become more aware of the different components of the academic activity system, particularly the goals and the tools used to achieve them, as shown in students' answers to the questionnaire in the last session.

Topic	**Questions**	**Nº of blank answers**	**Total blanks per topic**	**%**
Conception of academic genres				
	Q1: Five words that describe academic writing.	0		
	Q2: The format of academic writing is...	0		
	Q3: The most important thing about academic writing is...	0	0	0
	Q4: In comparison to writing in my mother tongue, writing in English feels more... and less...	0		
Becoming part of the academic activity system				
	Q5: As a member of the Humanities, I feel...	0		
	Q6: Learning to write in the academic community means...	0	0	0
	Q7: My relation to other members of the Humanities is...	0		
Role of academic genres				

Q8: Academic writing is used in university to...	0		
Q9: The target audience for academic papers is...	3	4	12.12
Q10: When I write academic essays, I intend to...	1		
	Total	**4**	**3.64**

Table 9: Blank answers for the questionnaire on Seminar 8.

Regarding the first topic of the questionnaire, students' conception of academic genres, students' answers mirror the essence of their responses in the first seminar. For students, academic genres are characterised by the rigidity of their structure and the formality of their register, which can sometimes prevent them from successfully conveying their ideas. Using English as a foreign language tends to make them feel insecure and requires much more effort than using academic genres in their native language. On the other hand, students show a deeper understanding on the relationship between these features and the other components of the academic activity system, which enables them to see Anglo-American academic genres as tools to communicate their ideas to an audience, and to add scientific credibility to their academic identity. Students' responses to the second round of questionnaires show they have gained some insight into the mechanics of genres, i.e. how to use discursive resources to carry out social functions such as proving one's status by sharing one's knowledge or contributions to collective goals. This generic know-how can potentially enable them to switch the focus from form to contents.

The cloud for question one (five words that describe academic writing) shows that students' view of academic genres revolves around the particularities of their register and format, and the language resources that realise these. As in the first seminar questionnaire, students' descriptions are very form-focused. They characterise academic genres mainly as formal, with a polite and impersonal register, in which organisation and structure are important, and there is a sense of unity. Students also stressed the need for coherence and cohesion, the use of a specific clear objective language (also described as difficult), and a slight focus on making their views understandable/comprehension. As in the results for the first questionnaire, students consider structural format and register as the most defining features of academic genres, assuming the Anglo-American style as the default type of genres as it was the model most frequently offered in class. In comparison to students' descriptions of the structure and register of

academic genres in the first seminar, students' descriptions in the last seminar are much more precise and less emotionally loaded. Structure is connected to contents and authorial voice through the need for unity and cohesion, and there is a new emphasis on interpersonal communication that makes the register and the rigidity of Anglo-American content distributions more human and understandable.

As for the format of academic genres, described in question 2, students highlighted its textual aspects, as in the first seminar questionnaire. Again, there are references to structure, how academic genres need to be well-structured into paragraphs and specific sections such as the introduction, argumentation (with mention in this case to specific features of it, illustrative and examples) and conclusion. We find further references to language issues such as format and grammar, and to being organised and correct, terms which echo students' answers in the first seminar. However, even though the contents of their answers are very similar, the attitude expressed through them is very different, and their approach is very different as well. In the last seminar, students seem to have a more comprehensive and less fragmented overview of academic genres in the Anglo-American tradition. The connections between its features and functional components are clearer, as shown in the increased specificity and level of detail of their responses. There are also some mentions of the reader and the contents of the text itself (thinking, understanding, idea), thus establishing a connection between the format of genres and the successful communication of contents to an audience.

According to students' views in question number three, the most important aspect of academic genres revolves around the ideas or message, and the proper construction and way to convey these ideas. In terms of content construction, students used cohesion and clear most frequently, with further references to coherence and more structural aspects such as arguments and organisation. They find it important “to write with cohesion and coherence”. We can also find references to the meaningful communication of these ideas (show, comprehension, understand/ing) to other members of the academic activity system (“to convey your ideas to people with good arguments”), and issues of authorship (“not plagiarising”). In comparison to their answers in the first seminar, students express more assertiveness regarding their capacity to communicate their knowledge using the tools of the community to their own advantage. There is less anxiety about their capacity to get the audience to understand thanks to their increased awareness

of the resources used to achieve efficient communication (arguments, cohesion, and such), which seems to reflect the work carried out in seminars five, six and seven, in which students worked on the functional approach to genres. This question shows students' increased self-confidence in their ability to follow the rules of the academic activity system for their own benefit, proving their value as members. Academic genres are now regarded as tools to reinforce one's status. Even though this is a very individualistic goal, we can consider it as the first step towards the recognition of discourse tools as tools to construct knowledge socially, in cooperation with an audience.

Students' answers to question four, which compared their writing in L1 and L2, display a wide variety of key words, as diversity is more obvious in smaller numbers. Still, most answers revolve around language-derived difficulties with students' writing in L2, as in the first seminar. Students find it “difficult to express our ideas, because we don't have a lot of vocabulary expressions”, and they “do not know how to use all the resources that you can use in your mother tongue”. We find plenty of words referred to language, such as vocabulary, alphabet, mother tongue, grammar, and such; but we also find words related to their own experience and feelings: difficult/easy, comfortable/uncomfortable, secure/security/insecure, self-confident, incapable, careless, and so on. In general, students feel that in their mother tongue they are “free to write what I want to show”. These views reflect their assumptions about Anglo-American and Continental genres, and the dilemma between creation and communication they associated to them and by extension to writing in L1 and in L2. Students connect their difficulties writing in English as a foreign language to their issues of identity in relation to the academic community. Writing in English, which for students erroneously implies writing Anglo-American genres, does not allow students to be themselves, but forces them to adopt a new voice that still does not feel like their own. When a student states that “it is easier to write in English than in my mother language, because the ideas are clear and short and the English words give us more details than Spanish ones”, he/she is adopting students' general view that Continental genres are used in local languages and Anglo-American genres are written only in English. For this student in particular, however, the cognitive processes triggered by Anglo-American genres seem to be more successful than the ones associated to Continental

genres, so adopting them has been a positive experience. Nonetheless, it is still very problematic that students' seem to have fossilised this kind of language prejudice.

As a summary for the first section, students' attitude towards academic genres in English seems to cause less anxiety – at least in part of the students – than it did at the beginning of the term. This could enable them to recognise the variety of sources for their problems using academic genres in L2 rather than focusing merely on foreign language issues. As we see in students' answers, they perceive now the relationship between the formal requirements of academic genres and the type of relationship they attempt to establish between the different components of the academic activity system. In this new point of view for students academic genres become tools to prove one's status and to articulate their contributions so that they can be communicated to a wider audience. The downside to students' new positive attitude towards academic genres in English is that they seem to have established English as the main language of communication in the academic field, viewing other traditions as less scientific because their generic features differ from the Anglo-American ones. Our goal to initiate students into the system by soothing their anxiety about how their lack of proficiency in English undermines their academic persona does not require students to blindly accept the features of Anglo-American genres and abandon the Continental genres they have used in other subjects. Awareness and analysis should be followed by contestation, and this seems to be missing in students' answers to the questionnaires.

The following three questions (as a member of the Humanities, I feel...; learning to write in the academic community means...; my relation to other members of the Humanities is...) dealt with students' perceptions of the process of becoming part of the academic activity system, focusing on their relationship with the other components of the system while they build their academic identity, namely the conceptualisation of genres as tools for the community, their own identities as members of the Humanities, and the interpersonal relations between the users of this community. Students responses to this section

In students' replies to question five (as a member of the Humanities, I feel...), there are many references to the foreign language problem in relation to their learning. As in the first seminar questionnaire, proficient command of English is perceived as an important and necessary skill for the

obtention of the degree, and as part of their interaction with the system, since “a lot of information about our studies is written in that language”. In their responses, students appear to connect discourse to their personal learning goals. Academic genres are regarded as their “tool as Humanities students”. Genres are approached in a much more functional way than at the beginning of the term, when genres were being imposed upon them, whereas now it is students who want to use genres to obtain recognition, widen their bibliographical scope, and in general contribute and participate of the goals of the field. As for the relationship between genres and students' native and foreign languages, there is evidence from one of the students participating of him/her having apparently overcome the stereotype linking genres to specific languages, as he/she states that it is possible to switch languages within the same genre, as the essay genre students have been working on during the term has “a format they can use in other tongues”, either because of the cognitive skills attached to the creative processes required by this genre or because this genre feels prestigious enough to be able to exploit some of its features in other contexts. Students' relationship to the ideational content of the academic community is very positive, as in the first seminar, with students claiming to be happy about and in love with what they do. In contrast, their belonging to this community is still challenged by the insecurities associated to their novice status. Being a beginner requires students to work harder so that they can catch up with other more experienced members of the Humanities. Still, students seem to be more in control of their insecurities, as they have shifted their focus from form to contents and onto their own identities built in interaction with the other elements.

Students' answers to question six (learning academic genres means learning to...) seem to interpret their process of initiation into the academic activity system as the process of learning to communicate their ideas more efficiently. Academic genres are viewed as tools to better express their thoughts. These tools are not acquired effortlessly, nor are they innate. Genres require making an effort to express themselves following their requirements (impersonally, in a formal way, with coherence and cohesion). Genres connect learning to their personal construction within the field, because writing contributes to “improving also the way of developing thoughts”, and then gear them to communicate “especially internationally”. The formal requirements of academic genres (the need for coherence, clarity and unity of meaning) are justified by their communicative function. Students perceive that they can use academic

genres to articulate their ideas in a credible way so that they can be more readily accepted by other members of the community: "that we are prepared to write texts that have coherence, cohesion and a complete, clear sense. It is very important, because in this way we can express our opinion impersonally, and we will be listened to by the world". The word impersonally, in this case, does not feel as something negative or diminishing for students' academic persona. It sounds as if this student planned to use the formality of Anglo-American essays as a shield to protect his/her academic identity from criticism, which is thus solely directed at the contents of the text rather than at the author. In comparison to students' answers in the first seminar, the students who took the second questionnaire have a more comprehensive view of genres, their nature and their role within discourse communities. They seem to show a more mature approach to the role of genres in higher education because they feel more in control of these tools, and therefore they may feel a bit closer to being legitimate members of the Humanities.

In their replies to question 7 (my relation to other members of the Humanities is...), students reported feeling very positively within the system (good, fine, happy, glad), surrounded by friendly people who share their affinity for the humanities, "they understand me and they make me feel happy", "have a lot of things in common" and can therefore help each other. This word, help, is the only hint we can find at the social construction of knowledge, which students mention in many other questions but not in relation to their peers. There are no traces of competition among students, even though these consistently appeared in students' participations in other activities throughout the term. This may be due to the students having strengthened their bonds after working in such small seminar groups[35], or it might be connected to their lack of ambitious professional goals in the future. Being more self-confident about their own identity and role within the system, students are not as anxious about proving themselves to the teacher or to their peers as they did at the beginning of the term. As in the first seminar, all references to other members seem to refer strictly to their classmates, and cross the professional boundary to be described in a rather social way. It might be necessary to change the phrasing of the question to include the different types of people students have the opportunity to interact with, and perhaps ask them to describe them.

[35] As a personal observation, students who were in friendly terms with other members of their seminar group were more likely to attend the seminars than students who did not have a friendly relationship with their peers.

As in previous sections, students seem to be more in control of their own process of initiation into the academic activity system. Because students feel more confident about the genres and their capacity to communicate and share their ideas, they show less anxiety regarding the audience, and are willing to engage with them and participate of the exchanges of the field because students' increased command of academic genres probably makes them feel less vulnerable to criticism. Their representation of the other users in the academic community, on the other hand, seems to be stabilised at a very local level and within patterns that are more adequate for their social life than for their academic one. The informality of their relationships to their peers contrasts with their acceptance of the formal register demanded by academic genres. The lack of conflicts regarding such contrasts seems to indicate on the part of students a better established academic identity that can coherently coexist with students' other identities and status.

The last section of the questionnaire was intended to measure students' perceptions of the role of academic genres in the academic activity system. As shown in questions eight (academic writing is used in university to...), nine (the target audience for academic writing is...) and ten (when I write academic papers I intend to...), students tend to regard academic genres as tools of learning and assessment, used mainly by teachers and students as a test of belonging, so that their productions are not available to a wider audience. The multiplicity of roles writing has in educational contexts makes it hard for teachers to look at student texts with a communicative purpose, as written products are inseparable from the contents they convey, and attempting to grade them separately can be a source of conflicts for students and teachers alike.

As we see in students' responses to question eight (academic writing is used in university to...), assessment is the primary function students assign to academic genres in the academic activity system: “academic writing is for teachers to evaluate your written expression, among other things”. Students perceive that they are being assessed mainly on the formal aspects of texts because of the lack of background knowledge they have, as some students mentioned in the forums. Their contents or contributions, the “other things”, are not an essential part of the assessment. Students' views shed some light on one of the main problems exposed by Bolonia style assessment. If students feel that their written products are being assessed only according to their formal aspects, they will never be attached to these

tasks, and therefore their motivation to write will disappear. We have seen in most reflective activities that students are very committed to the contents of the field. If teachers ban the contents from the assessment of academic genres, students will feel they have nothing to say, so that their papers will be empty of meaning and, in most likelihood, very poorly written. This is an issue that recurrently appears in oral discussions in class – students feel there is nothing they can say to interest their teachers, and therefore do not feel motivated to write because they have no communicative purpose. As for the nature of their written products, students say that they write mainly essays, but also a wider range of texts, such as paragraphs, compositions, bits of work, projects, presentations, exams or even powerpoints (meaning presentations). These genres have an informative focus, they are specialised, academic and formal, "they talk about academic and specialised issues". Students do not mention the languages they use for these different genres, which might be an interesting question to ask in future editions of the course.

Students view their teachers and classmates as their target audience, as we can see in question nine (the target audience for academic papers is...). In general, students' essays are read by people who are interested in the subject they discuss. Their teachers remain their primary audience, but "sometimes we show our work to friends and family". In fact, many students keep a blog, and a group of them have been publishing a free journal named Hac d'Hac with a variety of genres ranging from poetry to essays, travelling journals, reviews, and such, with some of them written in English, but mainly in Spanish and Catalan. Hence, students are very focused towards the possibility to communicate and share their ideas with a wider audience, people who would rather focus on the contents of their work than on their formal aspects. In the questionnaires, students do not mention that teachers are not interested in students' ideas, maybe because they consider themselves to blame for this situation. This stereotype can partially explain students' sometimes sloppy assignments: If students feel that the audience is not concerned with their ideas, they will not feel the necessary support to attempt to use academic genres outside the context of the class.

Students' goals when writing academic papers, as gathered by question ten (when I write academic papers I intend to...), revolve around building a message and their will to convey it in such a way that their audience can follow it and understand their points. Students' answers show again a strong focus on

the communication of their personal contribution to the field they are attempting to join. The message contains their ideas and opinions, which need to be explained following an academic register: containing a thesis, using “formal language”, paragraphs, with “coherence and cohesion”. Students do not seem to question the legitimacy of academic genres and their format, but apparently accept it as part of their academic life. Academic genres are thus viewed as some sort of jigsaw, so the writing process becomes a matter of putting on paper “all the aspects that are necessary to make an academic writing”, without explicit distinctions between writing in their L1 and writing in English as a foreign language. This conceptualisation of academic genres seems to have been influenced by the functional approach to genre analysis we used in seminars five, six and seven. In reference to the number of blank answers, we may infer that understanding the genres used to communicate within the community positively affects the relationship new members establish with other members of the system. Before they master the successful patterns of communication, students are unable to imagine the potential audience for academic communication and consequently their possible role in it. Without meaning, the community does not feel real.

As an overview of this section, genres seem to have a key role in students' construction of their identity. The role of genres in this process consists of binding the users of a community to the ideational contents they pursue. Academic genres connect the members of the academic community because they all obtain the knowledge of the discipline through genres, and because genres provide comfortable predictable ways in which to communicate, so that once the users have mastered the mechanics of context-specific genres, they can shift the focus of their attention towards the contents of the field. As a third function, genres also contribute to consolidate the identity of novice members, because they help students protect themselves from criticism by providing them with a feeling of objectivity and rationality thanks to their formality and predictability

Concluding, the questionnaires from the last seminar seem to indicate that students have reached a later stage of their process of initiation into the academic activity system. Students' account of the elements that constitute the academic community tend to be more and more articulate and definite. Students' view of the academic community as mediated by genres comprehends the relationships

established by these components, and how genres are used to construct knowledge and an identity associated to the relationships established with other members of the community and their image of one's value as a member. The students who were committed to the seminar work appeared to feel more confident regarding the legitimacy of their academic identity, and their capacity to participate meaningfully in the construction of the ideational contents of their area of interest. The change in students' attitude towards genres includes their attitudes towards English as a foreign language and towards Catalan and Spanish as European languages. Students started the term in denial of English and the genres they associated to this language. Then, as the term progressed, they hyperbolically reversed this attitude to place English as the only language of true academic communication, in opposition to the creative capabilities of their mother tongue, which was relegated in this view of things to private use. Finally, students became aware of the complementary uses different genres and languages have in the particular contexts in which they are put to use.

3.3. Analysis

For this section, we have used two approaches to organise the analysis of the results obtained out of the small-scale ethnographic study we conducted at UPF. First, we will analyse the course materials according to ACLITS principles, in order to determine whether we successfully applied these principles to the design of the reflective activities we used to gather information, and to discuss any problems that came up during the implementation. Afterwards, we discuss the data obtained through these materials in relation to the goals of the course and using as guidelines the key principles from our theoretical framework, based on CHAT and SFL.

a) Analysis of course materials according to ACLITS principles

In accordance to the guidelines set by the theoretical framework underpinning the design of the seminar materials we have presented, we have adapted Lea's (2004, p. 744) list of ACLITS principles for course design to guide our analysis of the seminar reflective activities and determine whether or not we have successfully implemented some of the findings of ACLITS research. Lea's description of an ACLITS approach to course design includes, for instance, the implementation of principles derived from

research, suggestions of tools to use with students, ways to deal with conflicts in higher education, and instructors' views on students' process of initiation into the system, Due to the limitations of the course – in terms of time, resources, personnel – we could not attempt to implement all the principles she includes, particularly the in-depth analysis of all the types of texts and the working guidelines she suggests in this list.

- *"Takes account of students' present and previous literacy practices"* - In some of the oral discussions, we tried to help students establish connections between their literacy practices in our course and those in content courses and in the other instrumental subject (MEDEA), both across languages and across disciplines.

- *"Acknowledges that texts do more than represent knowledge"* & "*Recognizes the relationship between epistemology and the construction of knowledge through writing and reading practices, using both written and multimodal texts"* - Using CHAT and SFL, we guided students' analysis of how genres mediate the relationships between the different components of the academic activity system, rejecting the idea that academic genres are purely transparent objective knowledge-telling tools. However, the range of texts we could work on in class was very limited, particularly in the seminar sessions. Many tasks would benefit from the inclusion of more and more varied texts to illustrate the discussions and help students situate their own texts by comparison.

- *"Recognizes the gaps between students' and tutors' expectations and understanding of the texts involved in learning"* - In class discussions, I would sometimes use my own personal experiences as illustration of some of the conflicts students undergo, or refer them to cases from research studies to show them that there was nothing wrong with them, but that these conflicts were a natural part of entering a community. As a way to increase the transparency of the assessment process, we made available to students the goals of the seminars and the assessment procedures and tools. We also offered one-on-one tutoring sessions in which students could discuss their work and their results.

- "*Attempts to create spaces for exploration of different meanings and understandings by all*

course participants" - Students were offered different means of participation, to maximise the instructors' interactions with them: seminar group, tutoring sessions, virtual learning environment, e-mail.

- *"Does not create a dichotomy between other literacies and academic literacies"* - The implementation of this principle was not entirely successful, as we ended up creating a dichotomy between academic literacies in English and academic literacies in students' native languages.
- *"Recognizes and builds upon issues of identity and how these are implicated in the creation of texts"* - The implementation of a solid theoretical framework into course design was key to the achievement of this principle, as literacy research furnished the essential elements to focus on and the concepts needed to make identity issues apparent to students.
- *"Acknowledges the power dimensions of institutional structures and procedures and the ways that these are implicated in text production"* - As before, the material limitations of the course prevented us from fulfilling this goal. Even though there was some mention of this issue, there were no supporting activities that could engage students into the analysis and contestation of power struggles in academia.
- *"Rather than trying to acculturate students into a discipline, attempts to see students as engaged participants in the practices and texts which they encounter during their study of the course"* - The implementation of this principle was only partially successful, as many students in fact seemed to wish to be acculturated in order to align themselves with more prestigious communities of discourse. The high rates of absenteeism and abandonment of the subject seem to indicate that many students perceive LAH as an imposition, an institutional attempt to acculturate them into a university that does not correspond to these students' expectations.

In conclusion, whereas the core principles of the seminars faithfully reflected the ideals of ACLITS course design, the actual implementation undermined some of these goals. The progression from awareness to analysis and then to contestation requires more time and materials that those available in the current curriculum. Students need to see a wider variety of texts, and they need to be able to study these

texts longer so that they do not need to rely on teacher guidance so much. Finally, we would like to raise the issue of responsibilities, as it does not seem fair to require from students a high level of English already in their first year, and not to provide any of the tools necessary to achieve it.

b) Analysis of the outcomes of course materials

The analysis of students' participations in the reflective activities is arranged in accordance to the diagram of the academic activity system that we introduced in the discussion on CHAT in the theoretical framework (see illustration 7). Accordingly, we start by describing students' general perception of the academic activity system at the beginning of the term, and then move on to discuss students' relationship to the community itself, and then to the elements of this community, namely the tools and their functions, the other users, the collective and individual goals and the knowledge shared by its members.

We can infer from students' answers to the questionnaires that at the beginning of the third term of their first year, and after having gone through an instrumental course on academic discourse in their L1, 1) some students still do not have a clear picture of the basic components of the academic activity system they are attempting to enter and the way these components interact through writing practices; 2) some students feel very insecure about their own identity as members of the academic activity system and their relation to its components, particularly its genres and audience; and 3) they blame this feeling of isolation within the academic activity system on academic genres in English, which they think undermine their participation in the academic community due to their rigid structural features and their level of formality. Students' academic persona is still under construction at this stage, and as a consequence, they are very sensitive to what they perceive as threats to their position. Consequently, if students feel that using academic genres in English makes them appear inadequate and inexperienced, they will reject them and any other tools associated to them. Moreover, students' perceptions of the academic activity system and its components, and the role they feel they can play are still superficial. The range of interactions an expert member can engage in is much wider than the range of interactions a university student (and hence a novice member) is allowed to take part in, which are mainly assessment-focused and institutionally controlled, so that students do not have much control or decision power regarding the genres to use, the

goals to fulfil or the register to adopt.

At the beginning of the term, students view academic genres as text types defined by a series of formal aspects. They perceive this form as complex and alien to their own forms of communication, mainly due to the level of formality that these genres require from them and to the rigidity of their structure in the Anglo-American tradition. Students are aware of their novice status, they do not feel they have internalized the tools of the system, and as a consequence they cannot identify their goals and their audience clearly when they write. However, and regardless of students' similar problems with academic genres when writing in their L1, they still assume these issues are due to the foreign language problem. English seems to obstruct their ability to communicate clearly and efficiently; students feel that English undermines their capacity to be coherent and articulate, to make themselves understood. It is not that they lack things to say, but rather that they cannot convey them properly. There is in students' responses a clear perception of academic genres as the tools to communicate within the academy, only that this communication does not occur smoothly on their side, either as receivers or as producers.

Having to learn academic genres in a foreign language is a source of conflicting thoughts for many of the students. On the one hand, they feel that English is important for their future careers, and for their progress at an international level. Reading and writing in English is necessary to learn and to participate in the knowledge community. They envision the multiplicity of functions written discourse performs in the academic activity system, but they do not feel they have been granted access to some of them. Students feel they are being put to the test, both in terms of form and contents, they do not see themselves as participating of the collective construction of knowledge. Their high level of engagement to their studies conflicts with the barrier set up by academic genres in English between them and the contents of the disciplines they want to join, both as receivers and as producers, which triggers anxiety about their role and their image within the academic activity system.

Their conceptualisation of the knowledge community is not quite defined yet, probably due to the complexity of the tools to interact in it. The most immediate relationship they identify is with their peers, with whom they establish a relationship of mutual help and support, whereas professors and experts are people they can only relate to through texts, ergo inefficiently. Still, students see that writing can bring them closer to the expert community because it is the key to participating of the idea exchange and the

construction of knowledge. They are eager to communicate their ideas about the field so that they can be validated by the expert audience, of which themselves and their peers cannot be part. These perceived deficiencies in their communication skills cause them to perceive that they are sending out the wrong picture of themselves because of their lack in language skills. Their identity is therefore damaged by their lack of expertise in academic genres. They believe that they have the contents right – even though they still have a lot to learn – the only problem they perceive is that they cannot communicate these properly because of their problems with Anglo-American genres, which they univocally associate to English, on which they pin the conflicts they experience with the ideational, structural and interpersonal problems within the academic activity system.

As the term progresses, we find that students' answers gain in depth, both regarding their own identity issues within the academic activity system as with the nature and inter-relation of its components. Given the opportunity to analyse, discuss and voice their perceptions of and conflicts within the academic activity system of the Humanities in connection to their own initiation into it seems to provide students with a better understanding of some of its components – particularly the users and goals – and of how these partake of the construction of an academic persona. However, we can only account for such increased awareness as regards to the small number of students who attended the seminars and participated in the online tasks and discussions.

For first-year students, joining the Humanities is a very lonely process at first. It is not practical professionally because of the job market, it is not popular with their friends because they do not know about it, and it is very challenging at a personal level because they see themselves at the bottom of a very steep ladder of knowledge. However, students tend to describe it as a very positive personal achievement, a milestone in their lives, something that helps them grow as human beings, and thus strongly connected to identity issues. Initiation causes identity conflicts with students due to their relationship with other activity systems they previously belonged to, and to the members of the academic activity system, triggering ambivalent feelings that shift between friendship and competition. Students do not seem to be aware of the relation established with other members of the academic activity system via context-specific genres, as they do not mention it explicitly, even though they do perceive the need to relate in some way to an audience. This relationship, however, is not one of co-operation, as there was no mention of the

social construction of knowledge in the academia. The goals and ideas they want to construct are their own individual ones. Students seem to regard writing as an articulation of the self in order to convince the audience of one's belonging to the community; they do not see writing as part of a process of co-construction of collective goals to advance the field yet.

Regarding their views of the tools used in the academic activity system, English as a foreign language and Anglo-American genres are regarded as nearly unsurmountable obstacles – their associated forms are strange to them, and very hard to follow. In their comparison between Continental and Anglo-American genres, students discussed mainly the formal aspects of academic genres, and how these can negatively affect their delivery of contents. Indeed, the apparent formal simplicity of Anglo-American essays feels more restrictive than liberating because it does not mirror the way students think and write in their L1. Academic genres in the Anglo-American style force them to think of a thesis, have only one focus, plan things before writing, or avoid digressions, all of which do not come naturally as part of their personal creative process. In contrast, Continental genres feel closer to their creative and cognitive patterns. Students feel that language and cultural differences between academic genres in the Continental and the Anglo-American tradition can only contribute to enlarge the gap between them as authors and their texts and ideas. Students' initial representations of the differences between genres in the Continental and Anglo-American tradition consist of a series of mutually excluding pairs – form vs content, personal vs impersonal, creativity vs skill. Students seem to regard Continental genres as focused towards the writer and the creative process, whereas they perceive Anglo-American genres as more reader-oriented, and hence more communicative in terms of goals, probably due to the type of texts they work with in the plenary sessions and their previous experiences in the other subjects. Because students link each one of these traditions to specific languages, their problems with Anglo-American genres automatically become problems with English. On the other hand, because students perceived that Anglo-American genres could help them relate more efficiently to their readers, they risk abandoning academic writing in their L1 altogether and regard it as a language in which to create, but a language only used in the public sphere. Even though these differences in focus between the two writing traditions were very problematic at the start of the term, towards the end some students spoke positively of them, as observing the different approaches to genres available had helped them become aware of the elements involved in every process

of communication, and hence to think of their audience, their goals and the tools they need to use whenever they plan any texts. In the participations of some of the students, we can see that some of them have overcome the identification Continental/L1 and Anglo-American/L2, as they have reached a conceptualisation of genres as changing, dynamic tools that connect all the elements of their context of use.

As for students' views on their capacity to contribute to the goals of the academic activity system, there are also changes in students' perceptions of their legitimacy as members of the field. At the start of the term, students perceive that they have little control over the contents of their essays, due to lack of ideational knowledge, procedural knowledge or because of a focus problem. Because of the difficulties they experience adapting to the academic register, students feel that they cannot be academic enough in their approach to writing, and therefore they feel marginalised from the community of knowledge. Students find it problematic to communicate transparently because the formality of the register of academic genres feels alien to them, and they cannot seem to be thoroughly objective. Besides, planning beforehand in a structured way does not come naturally to students as the method to write their papers. Students feel that having to think of a thesis and arguments ahead restricts the flow of their creative process. Students feel that Anglo-American genres sacrifice creativity and freedom for the sake of clarity and communication. Students have ambivalent feelings towards this dilemma. On the one hand, Anglo-American writing exposes their lack in vocabulary, content knowledge, and language expertise to their readers, so they feel more vulnerable than when they write in their L1. Because of the formal register students are told to use in Anglo-American genres, students feel that there is no room for the self in Anglo-American texts, as if this kind of academic genres severed the connection between authors and their ideas. On the other hand, students also feel that Anglo-American genres can help them sort out their problematic relations with their audience by requiring them to use explicit reader guidance and to articulate their ideas more clearly. Students' issues with the potential readers of their texts stem from the fact that students cannot picture anyone beside their teachers or sometimes their peers as their audience. The problem with teachers being students' only audience is that students feel that their texts are not up to the teachers' expectations, either because they are not interesting enough and they have nothing remarkable to say, or because teachers are not interested in the contents of their papers, but only in the

format. In this respect, Anglo-American genres seem to help them construct a more academic self to communicate with this vaguely defined but challenging audience. Because Anglo-American genres in English feel so new to students, they might find it easier to construct through them a new identity that is not as strictly a student identity as the one they have brought with them with their written genres in Catalan or Spanish. Therefore, students could be using English and Anglo-American genres to distance themselves from their secondary school selves and the lower status associated with their previous persona.

Students' insecurities and lack of self-confidence in the academic context also affect their relationship with other members of the academic community. Students perceive the need to interact with other users of the academic activity system through the texts, but not in a collaborative way, as it is supposed to happen in discourse communities. They do not see the construction of knowledge as a dynamic and socially interactive process, interconnecting previous texts and other users. For first-year students, writing is a matter of either convincing the readers or proving to them the validity of their ideas. As a consequence, students are very concerned about their acquisition of the skills to guide the audience through their text and make themselves understood. Most feel confident about their capacity to contribute, but they fear being misread and therefore unfairly labelled as non-valid members of the academic activity system. Anglo-American genres both enhance and hinder their capacity to communicate, their English register and structure are perceived as an extra obstacle to what they see as an otherwise transparent weaving of ideas. On the other hand, these genres can simplify the connection with the audience because of their predictability and orderliness.

At the end of the term, students' conception of academic genres seems initially to be unchanged, as it is still defined by a very formal register and a very rigid organisation that strongly limits the contents that can fit in the paper. Students find it hard to make sense using these genres according to the Anglo-American tradition. On the other hand, we can see in their answers that beyond the level of formality and the English problem they have gained a grasp of the basic essay structure within the Anglo-American tradition and its associated functions, particularly of how they relate their texts to contents and readers. The texts they write embody students' personal contribution, and therefore need to be properly communicated in spite of the foreign language problem and the challenge of structuring their thoughts

according to the Anglo-American system. Even though their level of English makes them feel insecure, incapable, constrained and unable to show their true ideas, they still declare that academic genres in English are a necessary tool that can help them get their message across. Writing and reading in English can help them learn and connect to a wider audience beyond their current teachers and classmates.

On becoming part of the academic activity system, students feel a strong deep engagement to the degree and the field of knowledge of which it partakes, described in more positive terms than at the beginning of the term. Their view of the community is still deeply individualistic, but they see the initiation into the academy as the process of learning to share with the community. Students are eager to share their ideas and have them validated. Students show an increased awareness of the role genres play in the academic activity system at this moment and the role they would like them to play in the future. They feel they are unfairly put to the test when they write, as their essays tend to be graded only on formal aspects by a person superior in status who may not care about their ideas. Being novices in the academic activity system, they still do not see themselves as expert members of it. They have social relations to their classmates, but they barely connect in a professional way. Even though students share a taste for Humanities, they do not see themselves learning or producing anything together. Students failed to see the interconnections users establish through their texts. Even though they share the collective goals of the academic activity system, they are only concerned about the establishment of their own academic identity through the development and successful articulation of their personal ideas to a knowledgeable audience for their approval, they still do not see the opportunity to collaborate with other users to contribute to the goals of the academic activity system as established members do.

Nonetheless, at the end of the term the message of their papers has become the core of the task, replacing students' initial focus on linguistic issues with a focus on the goals of the system and their own ability to contribute to them. Students' conceptualisation of academic genres has undergone a very deep transformation, which has permeated all the other elements of the academic activity system. We find in students' participations a more holistic view of academic genres as tools to construct knowledge, have it assessed by a more experienced member of the community and prove their status and legitimacy as members of the field. Students' new understanding of academic genres comprehends the inter-relationships among the three functional components of discourse that we discussed in the section on

SFL, so that students can establish connections between the ideational, textual and interpersonal components, the language forms that realise them, and the relationships they establish among the elements of the academic activity system. Students' deeper understanding of the nature and mechanics of discourse genres and their importance in the academic activity system enables them to analyse the genres used in their context and to make their own choices by connecting through generic patterns their construction of their academic identity and their representations of the elements that make up the community.

3.4. Conclusions to the case study

In spite of students' initial negative attitude towards academic genres in English, explicit teaching and discussion of the nature of the academic activity system made students aware of other levels of difficulties besides their foreign language skills. Thus, students' trouble understanding and producing such genres was no longer purely linguistic, but also determined by cultural differences, problems finding an audience, lack of content and procedural knowledge, issues of status and identity, and their relationship to the other components of the academic activity system. When asked to reflect on their problems with academic genres, students realised that they lacked control over contents, form, audience and reception. Even though this lack of control existed in other subjects too, it was exposed even more clearly by their deficiencies writing in English, and because of the different planning and writing processes Anglo-American writing requires from them. As a consequence, their still half-constructed academic identity was undermined by their inability to communicate transparently using academic genres in English, which they initially thought they could do in their native tongue.

Faced with a writing task in English, students struggled between their will to create and their will to communicate, a conflict that challenged their still vulnerable academic persona. Their wish to contribute was still strongly individualistic, rather a personal challenge than a contribution to collective goals. Students felt that they needed to assert the legitimacy of their belonging to the academic activity system, which depended solely on their ability to articulate their contributions in an academic manner and submit them to the approval of an audience superior in status to them. In this respect, academic socialisation overlaps first-year students' entrance into maturity and their reach for new more powerful and

independent roles. Because of their acute perceptions of status and the power relations their own novice status entails, students are not interested in constructing knowledge with their peers, who are in the same precarious position as they are and competing for the same posts. At the initiation stage, students do not view the social construction of knowledge within their discipline as a feasible goal due to their problems dealing with materials by other authors, and because at this point reasserting their academic identities is much more important as an individual goal than the collective goals and patterns of interaction established by the community.

Students' relationship to the genres used in the academic context is extremely complex because genres materialise students' relationship to the components of the academic activity system they are attempting to join. By gaining a deeper understanding of how to use generic tools to interact in the system, students gain more control of the image they project and their relationship to the ideational contents of the Humanities and other members of the system.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

4.1. Regarding the theoretical framework

By incorporating the findings of research on literacies and instruction, we can abandon deficit models of teaching academic discourse to offer more students the opportunity of contributing to the knowledge community. Learning from research can help writing instructors to guide students as they learn to interact with the components of the system they are attempting to join, thus enriching their process of genre acquisition and awareness with the opportunity to partake of its interactions. Initiation becomes a process of negotiation of meaning between instructors, students, and the texts that mediate the construction of knowledge and the relationships in the academic community. This is why we attempted to break the myths of transience and transparency in our design of the seminar materials and our approach to teaching. In our materials, we attempted to implement the guiding principles derived from CHAT, SFL, WAC and ACLITS:

- Literacies are multiple and changing, as they depend on the social practices of different cultural and linguistic contexts.
- Genres, goals, knowledge and identity are all mutually dependant, and they are simultaneously built in the context of the academic activity system through participation.
- The expert members of the academic activity system in charge of instructing novices should be aware of the context-specificity of genres, their mutable nature and their three-fold use for personal meaning-making, as proof of insiderdom, and as a test of belonging and knowledge of the field.

We suggest that identity construction should be considered as a key element of the context of an activity system, as it mediates the representation of users and their participations in the system. Identities – in plural – are the tools that users construct to represent them. They are not stable or permanent, and a single user could be sporting more than one at the same time in order to interact in different activity system or within the same activity system if he or she had different roles to perform in it, for instance if

he or she were a teacher and researcher, or a doctorate student and teacher assistant. Hence, we could modify our initial diagram of the academic activity system to include the notion of academic identities as shown below. The subjects of the academic activity system are materialised into it through a series of identities or social representations that are constructed through their interactions. Their perceptions of and contributions to the collective and individual goals of the system affect the way the user and other fellow users perceive these identities – their roles, their status, their relationship to it, and so on. These identities, therefore, are not stable, but in a permanent state of fluctuation between different parameters, such as learner/expert or professor/researcher.

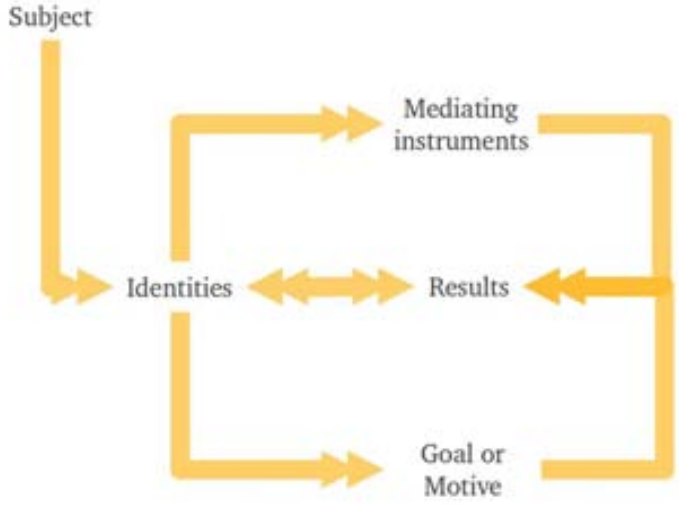

Illustration 13: Identity mediating interaction in activity systems.

4.2. Regarding the seminar goals and reflective activities

The goals for the seminar sessions of the course *Llengua Anglesa per a les Humanitats* consisted of 1) promoting students' ethnographic analysis of the academic activity systems through explicit teaching of their components; 2) promoting students' awareness of the differences between Continental and Anglo-American genres in relation to their context of use, goals and user identities; and 3) offering students opportunities for the contestation of genres and the interactions they establish within the academic context.

Regarding the first goal, the reflective activities provided us with a wide range of tools to explicitly teach students about the components of the academic activity system, including notions from genre theory, cultural-historical activity theory, academic literacies or systemic functional linguistics. Thanks to the variety in format, scope and types of interactions, students were offered different approaches to help them become more familiar with the academic context they were in the process of joining. As we have discussed in the analysis section, we found in students' participations increasingly more references to the different elements that make up the academic activity system, and in the case of some students, we also found a deeper understanding of the nature of these elements and how they contribute to shape user identities through context-specific genres.

As for the second goal, students were quickly aware of the differences between genres written in the Continental and in the Anglo-American traditions, and how these differences determined generic choices and user identities. However, some students turned the analysis of these two approaches to academic genres into a competition in which one type was necessarily better than the other, effectively suggesting the marginalisation of their local language in favour of English. This problem was the result of some students' mistakenly connecting Anglo-American genres to English, and Continental genres to Romanesque languages. In order to avoid such confusions, it would be necessary to rewrite some of the materials and make sure that a distinction is drawn both for the in-class discussions and the online forums.

The third goal we had set for the seminar reflective activities, offering students opportunities for contestation, was not successfully achieved. Even though the forums proved to be very useful tools to guide students' analysis and evaluation of the elements of the academic activity system, and to provide all students with an opportunity to participate and contribute a well-prepared entry in the forums, there were two problems that hindered students' opportunities to challenge the genres, users or goals of academia. Firstly, we cannot ignore the increasingly lower participation rate, which shows that many students were never actively engaged by the seminars. Even for students who did participate, the number of entries in the forums and other tasks in the VLE is very low, almost one entry per student in each forum – just enough to get their participation points. Even if students did respond to each other and raised very relevant questions, the dialogue did not develop enough to gain the necessary depth to consider it contestation. In connection to the problem discussed in the second goal for the seminar, students' acceptance of the imposition of academic writing in English on the part of institutional authorities, and their conceptualisation of Continental academic genres as somewhat less scientific or prestigious than Anglo-American genres, even if the former are closer to their own cognitive and writing processes, show that far from contestation, students are trying to make amends for their lack of ideational, interpersonal and textual expertise. Again, it would be necessary to rewrite some of the tasks or to change the approach to texts to avoid “good writing” and “bad writing” labels.

Considering the length of the course, and students' scarce previous experience with academic genres in general and academic genres in a foreign language, we may need to rethink the goals we have set for the seminars, and set new less ambitious ones or perhaps rearrange them to gradually lead students from awareness into analysis and then contestation.

However, there are some issues that affect the successful development of the course very dramatically but fall beyond our possibilities. The first issues are related to students, whereas the second type of issues affect teachers. As for the issues affecting students, we certainly need to find out the reasons behind students absenteeism, and the reasons that push some students to abandon the course after a few weeks. We cannot improve students' chances to be successfully initiated into the system if we are unable to interact with them. For the students who do attend the seminars and participate in the online activities, we should try and increase their participation rate so that they can develop their ideas by having to articulate them and negotiate them with their classmates. The second type of issues affects teaching staff. More seminar teachers should be involved in the project, and we would possibly require setting up training sessions for all teachers regarding the use of academic genres in their courses so as to make them aware of their own preconceptions about the academic genres of their field and how to teach students to learn to use academic genres.

4.3. Regarding the goals of the study

The course materials exposed a strong connection between students' problems acquiring academic genres and the conflicts derived from the construction of their academic identity in relation to the components of the academic activity system. Explicit discussion of this process helped students become aware of the elements that make up the academic activity system and their relationship to themselves, improving their perception of the role of academic genres in English by denying their transparency and exposing students' difficulties, thus changing their focus from language to contents, and from tools to goals, functions and relationships.

Students' struggle with the acquisition of academic genres should not be regarded from a purely textual point of view, as it is embedded in the conflicts derived from their process of initiation into the

academic activity system. Students' construction of their identity as members of the academic field is mutually dependent on their relationship to the novice and expert members of the academy, to its contents and its goals, and to the tools used to interact, mark one's status, initiate new members and negotiate the goals of the academic activity system. Our goal as writing instructors in higher education should not stop at teaching students to use a certain range of academic genres, but to help them to use them to make meaningful contributions to the community, partake of its goals and interact with other members of it. In other words, to guide them during the process of becoming members of the academic community.

Regarding writing instruction, academic genres are so inextricably bound to their context of use, their users and their goals, it is impossible to learn/teach them separately. In order for students to acquire and successfully employ academic genres, we need to move beyond a merely textual view on academic genres when designing writing instruction, and take into account the identity conflicts that academic socialisation causes in students. Because of its broader perspective on communication, CHAT can provide us with a powerful framework to analyse the conflicts novice writers experience when being socialised into the academic activity system, as it takes into account all the elements in it, and not just genres. In combining genre theory with activity theory, CHAT binds together genre and activity systems, regarding written texts as tools that mediate the interaction of individuals with groups in order to build up temporarily stable structures of action and identity. By openly teaching students through this framework the relationship between genres and the key components of their context of occurrence, we can help first-year students become aware of how these relationships determine their own academic identity and their interactions with the other members of the community as they contribute to the goals of the discipline. Such awareness and the possibility to verbalise and share their views of the academic activity system are key to their successful construction of an academic persona. Situated in context, students can analyse the genres through which academic identity is realised, and the ways in which these genres help construct and negotiate their individual and collective goals, their relation to other users and to the community itself while they act as members of the academy.

The implication of universities in freshers' passage from novice to experts should not be based on short-term or negative formulas, such as forcing students to learn academic genres out of their context of

use, making access to university harder, or placing responsibility for this on novel or unqualified staff. In spite of the limited scope of this study, our classroom intervention based on CHAT, SFL, WAC and ACLITS had a positive impact on students' awareness of the conflicts embedded in the academic activity system (disciplinary excellence versus inclusion, genres as permanent or flexible tools, new students as deficient or uninitiated, using the local or prestige language, etc.), which are inherent to students' process of initiation into it, depicting the academic world as a series of interconnected activity system.

Nonetheless, we still need to reach more students in order to increase the impact of the course. In order for this impact to be more permanent, universities need to invest in further teacher training and long-term plans for writing instruction throughout the degree, and there needs to be more co-ordination across departments, following the example of more experienced universities, so that the agents involved can construct their own theory of practice in collaboration across the curriculum. Writing instructors and all university professors who require writing assignments from their students could introduce more work on the notion of community, and more realistic interaction opportunities across the curriculum in coordination with other departments, so that students can use and discuss a wide range of genres in L1 and L2. This policy would contribute to make students feel more integrated into the academic activity system, as they would engage in genuine exchanges and partake of the collective construction of knowledge. It would also contribute to discard the transparency of genres, as exposure to different activity systems would require explicit discussion of the nature of academic genres and other conflicting issues, looking beyond texts into contexts and users' identities.

4.4. Future research perspectives

The scope of our study was limited, as our research project could not mobilise either the financial or the personal means to fully develop the ethnographic approach, with all its implications. We believe that Catalan universities badly need to set up large-scale research on pedagogies in their classrooms if they want to face the challenges of modern academia. Discourse is essential for learning to take place, in English and other foreign languages, without dismissing local languages. Consequently, it would be

advisable to investigate all the areas related to the processes involved in students' initiation into higher education and explore the interaction between genres, literacies and identities:

4. The effects of writing pedagogies on identity construction – both regarding students and instructors/researchers.
5. Identity and the digital media, and the way these have transformed the writing processes and how they mediate writers' identities.
6. The construction of collective identity within the academia, in relationship to English as the academic lingua franca and to local languages.

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Appendix 1:

Course Materials for LAH

AY 2009-10

(in folder)

Appendix 2:

Course Materials for LAH

AY 2010-11

(in folder)

Appendix 3: Students' answers to questionnaires from AY 2009-10

The table below contains the transcription of students' answers to the questionnaire. The spelling of some words has been corrected, but the general structure of the sentence remains the same as the original. The fragments in Catalan or Spanish have not been translated. The answers marked with (*) correspond to students from seminar groups I was not teaching.

TOPIC: Students' self-image as members of the AAS	
Q7: Write down 5 words that sum up your experience writing academic essays	1. Challenging, difficult, boring. 2. Laboriós, pautat, de prèvies lectures i investigacions, pesat. 3. Esforç (en quant a hores de treball), perfeccionisme, aprendre, bons resultats (fins al moment), satisfacció (sempre agrada veure quelcom escrit per un mateix). 4. Effort (a lot!), credibility, structure, information (sources), outline. 5. thoughts/think, order (ideas), rewrite (over and over), documentation (to make quotations), hard (requires a great effort and a lot of time). 6. *Hard, boring, lazy, exhausted, tried. 7. *Clear, structured, thesis, concise.
Q8: When writing academic essays in my native language I feel...	8. More confident and comfortable because I don't need to focus on the language and, therefore, I can focus on the focus. 9. No gaire còmoda, ja que no puc prendre tota la llibertat que voldria al escriure, però òbviament molt més qeu en un altre idioma. 10. Segur i sense massa problemes. M'agrada escriure (lògicament, quan ho puc fer sense presses i pressions). 11. More comfortable, but sometimes I forget to focus on other aspects such as text structure. 12. More confident. I don't have how to say the ideas so much (in other words: I don't have to translate myself) and this is a great reduction of time. 13. *More confident.

	14. *I could express my ideas easiest, although the structure is not as clear as in English.
Q9: When writing academic essays in English I feel...	1. ... 2. No tan malament com creia, però sento que és bastant pesat i dificultós en certes ocasions. 3. Totalment insegur, indecís i amb molts problemes per expressar correctament allò que vull dir. 4. I tend to focus more on formal issues (linking words, structure) and need to check words in a dictionary more often. 5. I have to use two languages (one to think, the other to write). It is likely because the english level isn't high enough. 6. *Insecure. 7. *I have a lack of vocabulary.
TOPIC: Components of the AAS	
Goals: Q2: Academic essays are used in university to...	1. Get to know different opinions and reflexions about an academic topic. 2. Veure el llenguatge utilitzat I la seva estructura per pròxims treballs, així com adquirir coneixements d'altres autors. 3. Divulgar coneixements i, alhora, crear-se un nom dins del món acadèmic (en el cas dels estudiants no tant). 4. Provide new insights on “old-discussed topics” or also to present the output of a research that has been carried out there. 5. Teach students to write in a different way from which we are used to, and that implies thinking much more than writing. In English the important is the thesis, not the arguments. 6. *Learn more vocabulary and also know more things. 7. *…
Goals: Q6: When I write academic essays, I intend to...	1. Write about an academic topic (literature, art, politics) in a formal way. 2. Argumentar correctament la meva tesis i mostrar claredat. 3. Ser lo més correcte possible i fer-me entendre. 4. Avoid extending myself too much on irrelevant issues or “ornaments” and try to keep my argumentation clear and get “straight to the point” as much as possible.

	5. Be coherent with my thesis and ideas and to cohesive them. This format concerns help the reader to understand. The finishing point is to achieve the reader (and if possible, convince him). 6. *Show my new vocabulary. 7. *Accomplish with the established structure.
Subjects: Q3: The target audience for academic essays is...	1. Academic audience (students, teachers, researchers, culturated people). 2. Estudiants, investigadors, lectors de temes específics, professionals, etc. 3. Divulgar coneixements i, alhora, crear-se un nom dins del món acadèmic (en el cas dels estudiants no tant). 4. Provide new insights on "old-discussed topics" or also to present the output of a research that has been carried out there. 5. Teach students to write in a different way from which we are used to, and that implies thinking much more than writing. In English the important is the thesis, not the arguments. 6. *the people who is studying. 7. *…
Tools: Q1: Academic essays can be described as...	1. Formal writings that express your opinion (and justifies it) about an academic subject and context. 2. Un text de caure formal destinat a estudis, investigacions, etc. amb un llenguatge i estructura determinada. 3. Una manera, a vegades massa rígida especialment en anglès, d'expressar idees. Personalment, m'agraden bastant (fer-los i llegir-los). 4. Essays that are addressed to a specific public, scholars, and therefore, need to be written following certain patterns and using a formal language. 5. A formal text that tries to show objectively a personal point of view of one specific issue, through a thesis and its arguments. 6. *Information text. 7. *A formal writing.
Tools: Q4: The format of academic essays is...	1. Always the same you have to adapt yourself to it. 2. Formal, amb un llenguatge de registre mínimament culte I amb una estructura concreta. 3. En anglès, massa rígid i pautat. Gairebé no deixa espai per a la creativitat. En castellà/català no tant.

	4. A standardised one: introduction – argument development – conclusions. Following a standard format enables the reader to quickly grasp the main points: thesis and arguments that support it. 5. Introduction (with the thesis), the argumentation, and the conclusion. However, there's a smaller structure inside the text where each paragraph needs to have one topic sentence, and evidence for it. 6. *Introduce one topic, then give some arguments and more information about the main topic and finally conclusion. 7. *…
Tools: Q5: The most important thing about academic essays is...	1. To express your ideas within a structure and clearly. 2. Tenir cura de que el tema a tractar està ben argumentat I que l'estructura sigui senzilla de segur. 3. Dir coses noves, en un registre adequat, que siguin mínimament interessants i aportin coneixement. 4. Finding the right authorial voice, so that you can communicate naturally your ideas; not being too obscure nor simplistic or colloquial. 5. Find a good thesis, without it the rest, in spite of being very good, has no sense. 6. *The subject. 7. *…
TOPIC: Process of initiation into the AAS	
Q10: Learning to write academic essays means learning to...	1. Use formal and academic language to express your thoughts, to connect your ideas coherently. It also means learning the structure of an essay according to the “British rules”. 2. Argumentar correctament, tenir varietat de llenguatge I seguir unes pautes d'estructura determinades. 3. Expressar coses ordenadament, amb correctesa I sabent argumentar cada cosa. 4. Be familiar with a more objective style that is really standardised. This standardisation is a constraint to which you need to adapt whether you like it or not. 5. Express yourself in a conventional form that everyone (with formation) accept and understand.

	6. *Vocabulary. 7. *Write in a formal and critic way.
Q11: Three things you do well when writing academic essays	1. Use connectors, structure (introduction-arguments-conclusion), formal vocabulary. 2. Plantejar dubtes que captin l'atenció del/s lector/s, fer la introducció, varietat de llenguatge en la llengua materna. 3. Expressar ordenadament, utilitzar el vocabulari correctament, argumentar (tot això en castellà i català ja que en anglès tinc poca experiència i em falten coneixements). 4. Provide evidence for my arguments, use of connectors (perhaps too many), try to keep a global structure (Introd. - Development – Conclusion). 5. Find evidence through experience and quotations; following the structure topic sentence/evidence; finding topic sentences (it's easier to find because generalisations are those anonymous quotations which velong to popular knowledgement from which we came. 6. *Link connectors, vocabulary, structure. 7. *Stay a thesis, argumentation of the thesis.

Appendix 4:

Data obtained from

the reflective materials

AY 2010-11

- Questionnaires from seminar 1.
- Wordclouds from seminar 1
- Forum from seminar 2
- Forum for seminar 3
- Forum for seminar 4
- Questionnaires for seminar 8
- Wordclouds for seminar 8

Answers to students' questionnaire: Session 1 – AY 2010-2011

The three following tables display students' replies to the questionnaire for the first seminar session. Students' answers in Catalan or Spanish have been translated into English, and some grammatical aspects have been fixed in order to avoid altering the wordclouds.

STUDENTS' CONCEPTION OF AG				
	five words that describe academic writing...	**the format of academic writing is...**	**the most important thing about academic writing is...**	**in comparison to writing in my mother tongue, writing in english feels more... and less...**
101:01	formal / rhetorical, specialized, technical, objective, structure/ knowledge / channel to convey ideas.	the format is strict /introduction /discussion /conclusion) essay articles speeches.	…	unconfident, insecure / …
101:02	formal style and specialized writing, technical: very specific vocabulary, objective, structure, knowledge: convey ideas.	it's very relevant the structure; introduction, discussion and conclusion essays/ articles/ books/ speech.	…	unconfident, insecure / …
101:03	formal, specific vocabulary – specialized, one common order structure, technical, objective, convey (conventions!), rhetorical.	essays/ books/ letters/	…	unconfident, insecure / …
101:04	formal, specific specialized words / vocabulary, uncommon, word order, technical, objective, to convey or to communicate an idea.	essays – article, books, formal letters, speeches,	…	unconfident, insecure / …
101:05	formal, specific (words) uncommon, word order, technical, specialized, structure, convey.	essays – books – letters.	…	unconfident, insecure / …
101:06	formal style, technical words / very specific vocabulary, objective, structure, convey ideas (=to convey your knowledge).	essays, books, formal letters, speeches.	…	unconfident, insecure / …
101:07	formal, specialized, technical, objective, structure / convey	strict and organized.	…	unconfident, insecure / …

	ideas.			
102:01	formal, organized, clean, easy to understand.	clear and organized.	expose the subject in a clear way.	difficult / ...
102:02	organization of parts, formal language, references of worked texts, objective information developing your own ideas, clear expression of the message.	a formal text with introduction, development (argument) and conclusion.	formal language.	complicated, uncomfortable / familiar.
102:03	specific words, formal, connector word, good structure, clear syntax.	very formal. it usually is typewritten.	express well your ideas with a correct language.	difficult / ...
105:01	formal, specific, concrete vocabulary, hard, informative.	formal	the vocabulary and the format of the paragraph.	difficult / fluent.
105:02	formal, specific, concrete, hard, informative.	formal	giving information in a formal way.	difficult / fluent.
105:03	hard, bored, tired, difficult, stressful task.	formal	write the correct register.	different, strange / comfortable.
105:04	hard, bored, tired, difficult, stressful.	formal	use the correct words, and use the correct register.	different, strange, unusual / comfortable.
105:05	formal, impersonal, high level, specific jargon.	of a description	words	accurate / personal.
105:06	formal, impersonal verbs, no contractions, no adverbs, proof.	formal	not giving your opinion.	easier grammar, hard to find the correct words in order / …
105:07	formal, impersonal verbs, no contractions, no adverbs, proof.	formal	don't give your opinion.	uncomfortable to find specific words / difficult because the grammar is easier.
105:08	formal, impersonal, no contractions, no adverbs, have or present proof.	formal	to not give your personal opinion.	easier grammar than in spanish / is more difficult to put in order, in the correct order, the words in english than in spanish.
106:01	high level and formal words, elaborated register (used for the newspapers...), long and complicated sentences, rich vocabulary, figurative language.	good structure of the text. in the beginning the main idea and after that the topic is analysed and at the end the final conclusion.	that ideas are clear.	more complicated to formulate / the sentences are more coordinated.
106:02	high register, technical words, connectors, clear structure.	clear, rich	to use the correct register and specific vocabulary to talk about the topic.	difficult / less fluent, colloquial.

201:01	means an idea, coherent, well written, structure, simple.	structured.	means the ideas and make a good writing.	find and idea / difficult to make a good text.
201:02	argumentative, logic, clear, simple, coherent.	formal.	to make the others understand what you want to say.	difficult, stressful, spend more time / easy and automatic.
201:03	cohesive, high level, structured, synthetic, clear.	a little bit elevated, it has to be formal.	make it clear, making a good distribution of ideas in the text, separate it and organise it in importance order.	hard for me, spend time / …
201:04	knowledge, clear, structured, formal, connectors.	formal.	that it has to be clear.	insecure, shy, simplified / i explain things more simply, less interestingly.
201:05	structure, meaning, sentences, ideas, message.	the standard or basic we have to learn.	know how to structure sentences and make others understand you.	interesting / easy.
201:06	correction, cohesion, register, vocabulary, spelling and grammar.	…	the difference between the oral language and the written language.	relations with people from other countries and culture, life forms / …
201:07	coherence, cohesion, structure, summary, conclusion.	rigid.	coherence, cohesion.	uncomfortable / ...
202:01	coherence, cohesion, ability to summarise, good vocabulary.	introduction, body and conclusion.	to write with correction.	difficult, because i have not the same amount of vocabulary and this makes it difficut to express and connect complicated ideas / natural, because we have to think more about the technical aspects.
202:02	formal, serious, correct, true.	proximity truth.	specific topic.	difficult to explain my feelings / comfortable for me.
202:03	inflate weak ideas, invention, paraphrasing, phallacies, references – citations.	short.	clear ideas – cohesion – coherence.	simple in a grammatical way / …
202:04	boring, long, rigid, specific.	more formal than other kinds of essays.	how to explain what you want to say.	weird / easy.
203:01	smart/ formal structure, coherence, cohesion, broad vocabulary (specific), without mistakes.	paragraphs, essays.	write in a correct form, avoiding any mistake.	interesting, useful and international / easy to use, because obviously it's not my mother tongue.
203:02	formal language/ correct register, coherence: logical structure: minding cohesion: linking ideas, with vocabulary: vocabulary clear.	with paragraph.	do a previous planning about the topics you will develop.	cosmopolitan, limited, self-conscious/ intelligent, expressive, understood.

203:03	cohesion, coherence, structure, connectors, extension, broad vocabulary.	write paragraphs...	coherence, outlines.	difficult, because it's uncommon to have a good expression with a foreign language / …
203:04	structure, cohesion, coherence, extension, connectors, wide vocabulary.	compose essays, write paragraphs.	coherence, outlines.	difficult because it's uncommon to have a knowledge or good expression with a foreign language / …
203:05	coherence, sense, cohesion/formal, extended vocabulary, without mistakes / structured, specific.	paragraphs.	that the student knows the topic.	difficult / usual.
203:06	coherence, cohesion, sense, vocabulary (formal language) / specific vocabulary, structure.	with paragraphs/ academic essay.	comprehension.	difficult / usual.
204:01	useful, strict, serious, complex, precise.	formal.	coherence and cohesion.	concentrating, difficult / safe, easy.
204:02	useful, strict, serious, complex, precise.	formal.	coherence and cohesion.	concentrated, difficult / safe, easy.
204:03	accurate, formal, normative, high level, technical.	based on ideas and paragraphs.	clear, coherent and cohesive.	synthetic / fancy.
204:04	good presentation, cohesion, coherence, specific vocabulary, with references.	formal.	communicate ideas clearly.	difficult / spontaneous.
205:01	formal, cultural, correction, elaborate, clear.	correction and comprehension of ideas.	the use of the language, the forms and the knowledge.	difficult to explain well what i want to say. and exciting / easy to write.
205:02	coherence, cohesion, high register / formal register, a lot of vocabulary, different expression / clearly.	formal register, (it would/should support with arguments).	to be clear and coherence the ideas.	difficult / colloquial (popular).
205:03	formal, technical, thought / clear, arguments / reasons, inform / transmit ideas.	formal.	to be clear: transmit ideas.	formal, distant, prepared / colloquial, spontaneous, easy.
205:04	formal, structured, coherent, with other bibliography, not plagiarism.	formal.	have basis and coherence to support your idea.	problems to express what i'm thinking about / comfort and security.
205:05	coherence, correct vocabulary, cohesion, good presentation.	high register or medium register.	the coherence in the text.	… / …
205:06	historic, high register, correct grammar, interesting.	books and articles.	the correct use of the language.	difficult. english has some variety of vocabulary / …
205:07	critical, informative,	correct and concise.	that the information	communicative, because

	objective, creative, contrastable.		could be objective and must respect the grammatical rules.	more people can understand english than catalan / plural, some people can think that iy is not necessary more languages when you know english.
205:08	formal register, research, knowledge, hard work, investigation, excellence.	formal register, clear, concise.	write in a formal register, make a good research, organise information and take care with plagiarism.	difficult, strange, high level / …
205:09	knowledge, structure, information distribution, non plagiarism, research.	…	expressing in a good way the main ideas and avoiding plagiarism.	easy, as my mother tongue is urdu and i've learnt it just from my parents while living in a context where another language is spoken / complicated when i have to use complex words as i can relate it to spanish and catalan.
205:10	grammatical and syntactic correction, specific vocabulary, knowledge, correct format, organization (the information).	an international system.	organise the information.	difficult, in english i can't say what i want. i don't know good expressions in english / “boring” for me it's difficult to learn english, so i have more expectations.
205:11	serious, research, hard work, excellence, perseverance, investigation.	concise, clear, international system.	economy and clarity in speech, formal register, organise information, avoid plagiarism.	… / standard register.
206:01	formal register of language, organised, well-structured, provided with references, coherent.	to be well-structured.	the coherence between form and contents.	difficult / fluent.
206:02	formal, coherent, good organization.	description, argumentative writings.	that the reader understands what you want to express to each other.	insecure about what i'm writing, confused about what i want to write / capable to write anything.
206:03	complex, formal, coherent, intellectual, short.	an internet article or newspaper article.	expressing in the best way, the main idea.	insecure because i know what i want to say in catalan but it's difficult to me express my ideas in english; silly because i'm doing sometning extra / …
206:04	coherence, cohesion, formality, order (organization), grammar and vocabulary knowledge.	descriptive and narrative.	to convey a clear message.	when i write in english i feel more insecure because of my level. however, i also feel more hardworking / on the other hand, when i write

				in english i feel less able than when i write in catalan, french or spanish.
206:05	complex, coherent, correct.	newspaper, interviews etc.	convey a message, an idea or argument.	insecure / silly.
206:06	formal, cohesion, intellectual.	on newspaper, book...	cohesion and not to have bad spelling.	insecure / intelligent.
206:07	cohesion, correct, clear, interesting, well documented.	summaries about texts, descriptions of a thing.	to be clear.	different / easier to do in less time.
206:08	formal, structured, coherent, interesting, well-documented.	an essay or an article.	content.	complicated / familiar.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROCESS OF BECOMING PART OF THE AAS			
	as a member of the humanities, i feel...	**learning to write in the academic community means...**	**my relation to other members of the humanities is...**
101:01	…	easier to get the ideas; adopt a specific style.	…
101:02	…	it's easier to write our ideas.	…
101:03	…	…	to express the ideas.
101:04	…	it's a way to relation.	…
101:05	…	is a way to communicate and write your own ideas.	…
101:06	…	…	…
101:07	…	…	…
102:01	that i like a lot my studies.	…	very well because i share a lot interests with them.
102:02	i can express my ideas in an academic writing.	learning to write academic writings.	…
102:03	english is important for reading texts, work them.	use the correct vocabulary in every occasion.	good.
105:01	like it's important to me to learn the right way to use english.	have more job possibilities.	pretty good.
105:02	part of my knowledge must be english and languages.	having a wider chance of choosing in the future.	good
105:03	english can be important to understand the purpose of the degree.	more preparation; more possibilities to find a job.	interesting because i meet a lot of different kind of persons with different ages.
105:04	that english is very important for my studies, to understand the text.	more preparation and more possibilities to find a job in the future.	interesting because we are different, and i have other opinions.
105:05	interested because all subjects can learn me something interesting.	learn to use words and expressions.	open and good.
105:06	learning english is necessary to	know a lot of vocabulary the	(*changed members for area*)

	find a job.	grammatic rules, tha appropriate way to express it...	closer because i would like to know a little bit of everything. i think the general knowledge can help me with my communication skills.
105:07	english is so important and necessary to find a good job.	to achieve a good level of grammatic rules.	(same thing) so good, because i'm interested in all areas of humanities.
105:08	think that english is an important matter we have to know to understand the subjects.	know a lot of vocabulary and grammatic rules.	i am interested in all the areas of the humanities, but specifically in literature.
106:01	…	to improve the writing skills.	the future!
106:02	thankful to have the opportunity to improve my english.	to have access to technical texts.	very interesting in order to share experiences and for our own personal growth.
201:01	comfortable.	the level to make write is better.	good and comfortable.
201:02	able to write in my mother tongue and in english because history, art, literature and philosophy items are written and have to be written, so other people will be able to learn them in the future.	other people in the future will read what i've written and they will learn things and get a critical spirit.	great, we are not only classmates, we are friends, so we share opinions and learn from each other.
201:03	i must make some progress in english because if i do most doors will open for me.	make an effort and try to express myself correctly so people understand me.	…
201:04	that i am not have enough level of english to write an academic text about humanities topics: no specific vocabulary, no good grammar, etc.	to structure, to learn the level of formality to use accurate vocabulary and formal aspects.	good. i have good friends and cordial classmates.
201:05	i have to learn how to write and speak well in english.	learning the language, not only to write it, also to speak it.	good, but we cannot know all the class.
201:06	learn, in this universal language, aspects of the language, the literature and the communication and the transmission.	relationships with other people.	good. in classes and the free time.
201:07	fine with all the things that we study.	that i will be able to write academic texts.	good.
202:01	that english is necessary for understanding a lot of documents.	writing with more correction.	…
202:02	very interested about culture.	can do good tasks.	good and more than english members.
202:03	english is a very important language because it is the language of shakespeare and oscar wilde.	a fundamental skill to express ideas, opinions and theories.	it's human and cordial, close relationships due to common interests and sensibilities.
202:04	like socrates.	improve your writing skills.	quite good, man...
203:01	optimistic and (culturized) educated.	getting ready to introduce myself in specific english language.	very good, all my classmates are fantastic.

203:02	a person who wants to be critical and over-mind and educated.	…	very good because we find people with the same interests.
203:03	educated.	…	perfect, we have a good cohesion.
203:04	educated.	…	perfect, we have a good cohesion.
203:05	very interesting and cool.	that english is very important for my future.	a good relationship because we share interests.
203:06	educated.	...	good.
204:01	that write in english is necessary.	to get tools to get right on your own.	different depending people.
204:02	that writing in english is necessary.	to get tools to communicate better.	different depending on people.
204:03	that english (specially academic english) in our futures.	to improve together.	very good.
204:04	predilection for arts, history, literature and philosophy.	improve your writing level.	...
205:01	happy and ambitious.	use correct vocabulary and grammar, and know what you're writing about.	good, normal, like the other relations, maybe more formal.
205:02	that i could learn more about letters.	to get more knowledge of writing.	satisfactory. i feel that i can talk with my partners of many things related to humanities.
205:03	knowing how to write an academic writing or how to interpret it is really important for the development of my degree and my ability as student.	that i'll be able to participate in this community in the future and express my ideas through it.	discuss about something we've seen in class, become friends, help each other.
205:04	motivation and compromise.	working towards specific results in the best way.	companionship, help them when they need and the same in the other side.
205:05	that i'm not prepared to english class. i'm not the level of the class.	that in the future i'll write better than now.	good.
205:06	that i'm in a different world, all seems so interesting, but sometimes it's difficult too.	that i must have a high register and a variety of vocabulary. it's a bit responsibility.	so good! they are so kind to me.
205:07	the responsibility to let free information to the rest of the community.	improve the vocabulary and to know the different ways to become a good communicator.	cooperative, everybody must participate in the different processes to get and share information.
205:08	que llegas a poseer un amplio abanico de conocimientos sobre todos los campos.	…	great because i know very different people interested in things like me.
205:09	that i fit in this degree way more than i could imagine.	learning how to write in a professional way.	good.
205:10	wiser.	to write in a professional format (more elitist).	…
205:11	positive.	aprofondir i ampliar el coneixement.	we have different and similar interests regarding scientific and humanistic knowledge.
206:01	interested in the different areas	to express oneself on a high level.	fine.

	of human sciences.		
206:02	happy because i'm doing what i like and learning thing which i'm interested.	increase your vocabulary to more specific words to get that people understand you.	fine.
206:03	stressed because i have a lot of homework and books to read in home, but it's interesting.	increase your culture.	very well, because they are good people and they have a lot of culture.
206:04	very good because i'm learning history and art. i'm also growing up with literature and i think my dream has been real.	understanding a text and being able to convey a message.	fine.
206:05	like the other members of university. it's not special.	aprove your possiblity of future.	good.
206:06	good and i like it.	a lot of work and difficult things that i have to study.	good.
206:07	fine.	too important to work in other places.	the best that i could have found.
206:08	knowing english opens many doors.	being able to share my ideas in the academic community.	fine.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF GENRES IN AAS			
	academic writing is used in university to...	**the target audience for academic papers is...**	**when i write academic essays, i intend to...**
101:01	to write, discuss in class.	educated people.	to express ideas in a correct way.
101:02	write properly.	educated.	…
101:03	…	…	…
101:04	write properly, discuss.	educated.	…
101:05	write properly.	educated.	express ideas.
101:06	write properly.	educated audience, educated.	express my ideas in a correct way.
101:07	write properly.	educated.	express ideas in a correct way.
102:01	all.	very small.	write the clearest way that i can.
102:02	exams, essays, assignments, …	to be easily understood.	be clear and argue my ideas.
102:03	learn about master classes and being evaluated.	professor.	create an original idea and do the best i can.
105:01	write the formal practices.	the readings.	use many descriptions.
105:02	write everything that must be hanged in.	teachers.	be clear.
105:03	to learn when you should write something about an especific topic.	specific.	be careful with the register, vocabulary and expressions.
105:04	learn when you should write something about and special or specific topic.	depends on the topic, but in general it is specific.	be careful with all the things (vocabulary, register...).
105:05	everything.	arriving at specialists.	at this moment, to get good marks.
105:06	write essays.	people who have an interest on these items. not everybody can	have a main idea and to present arguments to promote it clearly.

		read such specific papers.	
105:07	write academic essays and other documents.	read by people who are interested in these issues.	be careful with the academic writing rules.
105:08	write essays and another documents.	people that are interested in these kind of topics or items.	follow the rules that academic essays needs and also, to explain what the information means in a clear way.
106:01	essays, for all kind of homework, and for the final project.	professionals, higher educated people.	transmit clear ideas.
106:02	create academic texts.	the collection of professionals of the humanities field.	express my ideas clearly and to make a reflection about a topic.
201:01	normal but sometimes is high.	…	have a good text, find an idea and one text coherent.
201:02	show professors our projects so they can tell us if we improve or not in our subjects.	the professor i have to show my project to, but sometimes they are written to show them to my mates, to make them understand the things we do in class.	make my ideas simple, in order to make everybody understand it. i try not to make mistakes.
201:03	teachers for showing the level about a specific topic of the subject that you have and they can evaluate it.	critical and they usually know more than you about the ideas which you expose in it.	make formal sentences and try to make it understandable.
201:04	show my knowledge and way to use it.	professor and other classmates.	be formal and structured.
201:05	learn how to write well in other situations.	the professor and also can be all the class.	express and structure well my text and my ideas.
201:06	complete successfully the works and the studies of the partners and i.	…	send a good discourse, see all the audience and not be nervous.
201:07	write all the things that you know and that you want that other people know too.	people who know the basis of what you wrote about.	be simple and understandable.
202:01	write a lot of essays.	…	…
202:02	do everything.	know what the topic explains.	do that my reader understands me and enjoys reading.
202:03	get marks, learn, teach, study, everything.	professors and other university students.	be the most clear and specific I can; understand what other people have written on the same topic; take part in the study of one same issue.
202:04	pass subjects.	increase your knowledge in a subject.	get to the point of the subject.
203:01	write arguments, essays and other writing tasks.	expert people in humanistic topics, in all the different disciplines and other students too.	be bright at writing my texts, make them complete.
203:02	learn how to do a good work or project, have a patter for choosing the books which will be more useful.	educated people like teachers, expert people and sometimes unexpert people who are in the environment of the university or somebody who have to employ or	make an effort to use formal words and correct structure.

		contract you.	
203:03	to be a free future outside this country.	expert people.	express, the best way, my ideas.
203:04	be a free future outside this country.	expert people.	express, the best way, my ideas.
203:05	have more source information.	expert people in humanistic topics.	…
203:06	do exams.	expert people.	develop my interpretation.
204:01	present your assessments.	my teacher.	write correctly.
204:02	present your assessments.	my teacher.	write correctly.
204:03	understand and to be understood in the academic texts.	people who really know what you are writing about.	be clear.
204:04	learn new knowledge of the degree.	students, professors and investigators.	communicate some idea.
205:01	explain your knowledge about something.	explain something to others.	be clear.
205:02	do activities and exams. also, academic writing is used to do theories supported by arguments and clear ideas.	to expose many ideas and that the audience understands it.	find the correct words and vocabulary that i would describe (with arguments) and explain the essay.
205:03	expose new results of research, criticise theories, argue, present new points of view, etc.	expose ideas, become known in the academic community, to understand what it say and to be able to argue it if it's necessary.	be clear but using technical language at the same tiem. make sure my ideas are understood.
205:04	do a lot of work in different disciplines.	to say something new with all tradition on your shoulders.	be coherent and look for essays that other people wrote before me to support my opinion.
205:05	write and read a lot of texts.	to transmit my knowledge.	write with coherence and not make spelling and grammatical mistakes.
205:06	improve the level of writing of the students, because for humanities writing is so important to share our opinion.	convey to other people the importance of the world culture.	do it the best way possible.
205:07	all the workds that you must do and all the information that you must consult.	the academic students, professors, and the rest of people who want to be informed.	be objective and critical in my conclusion.
205:08	…	…	be formal, correct.
205:09	make any kind of work, research, etc.	teachers, at least in the case of being a student.	do it in the best way possible.
205:10	convey knowledge.	…	transmit the same thoughts that i transmit in my mother tongue.
205:11	estudiar textos originals i també a nivell universal.	specialists in the topics.	practise using a more universal language.
206:01	express one's ideas and thoughts and communicate them to the rest of the academic community.	the academic community and sometimes even the general public.	be as clear and coherent as possible.
206:02	improve your way of expressed yourself in a paper.	people who are interested in specific topics, and look for knowledge, and no enjoyment.	express what i think and what i want to convey to people.

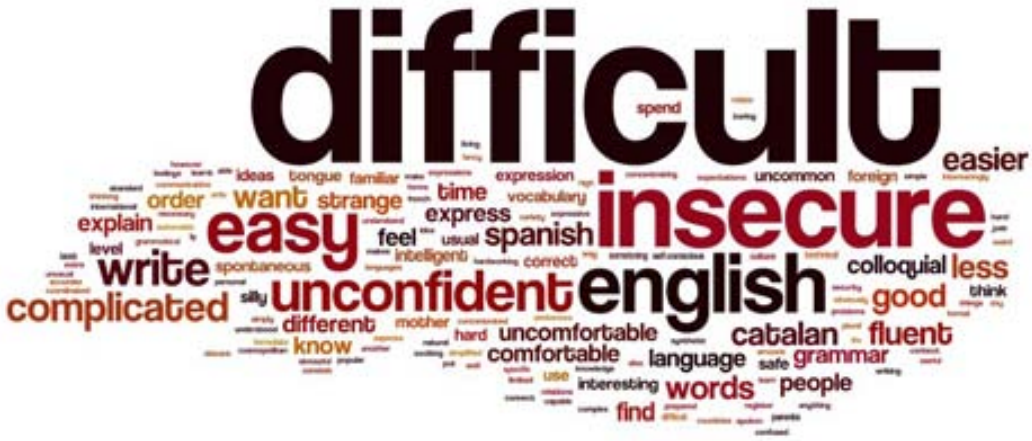
206:03	informating students about new activities or change opinions.	convey important and interesting information to other people.	write it in the easiest possible way.
206:04	increase writing interests and to learn grammar aspects.	people who are interested in writing and reading.	to enjoy my writing and to learn more vocabulary.
206:05	do anything.	explain something: news, ideas, theory...	explain easily and shortly.
206:06	all things.	…	explain my ideas the best i can.
206:07	necessary to have a good grade.	professionals with english studies.	be organised and understandable.
206:08	write papers, essays and theses.	members of the academic community.	use english as correctly as i can.

Wordclouds from seminar 1

Question 1: five words that describe academic writing...

Question 2: the format of academic writing is...

Question 3: the most important thing about academic writing is...



Question 4: in comparison to writing in my mother tongue, writing in english feels more... and less...

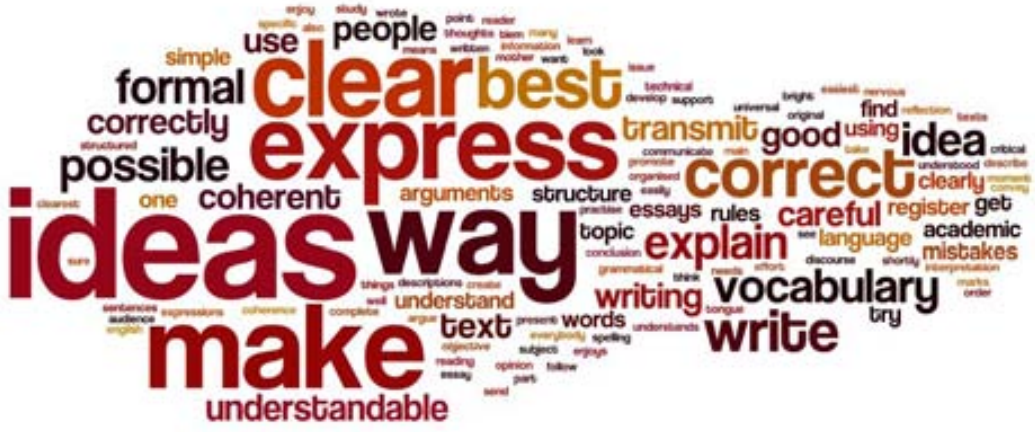
Question 5: as a member of the humanities, i feel...

Question 6: learning to write in the academic community means...

Question 7: my relation to other members of the humanities is...

Question 8: academic writing is used in university to...

Question 9: the target audience for academic papers is...



Question 10: when i write academic essays, i intend to...

Answers to questionnaire from session 8

As for the first seminar questionnaires, we have translated any fragments in Catalan or Spanish , and fixed any language problems that would undermine the representation of any answer.

STUDENTS' CONCEPTION OF AG				
	five words that describe academic writing...	**the format of academic writing is...**	**the most important thing about academic writing is...**	**in comparison to writing in my mother tongue, writing in english feels more... and less...**
105-1	formal, impersonal, main idea, cohesion, coherence.	introduction, argumentation, examples, conclusion.	cohesion.	dificult because i don't know all the grammar and the vocabulary.
105-2	formal, organised, clear, good cohesion, objective.	organised in an introduction, some paragraphs that explain the main idea and, finally, it has a conclusion.	to take care about the use of words and its organisation. the text has to be formal and clear.	it is easier to write in english than in my mother language, because the ideas are clear and short and the english words give us more details than spanish ones / in my case, english gives me less security when i write than spanish
105-3	formal, objective, hard, topic sentence, cohesion.	introduction, argumentation, examples, conclusion.	cohesion, comprehension.	difficult to express our ideas, because we don't have a lot of vocabulary expressions.
105-4	high register, impersonal, coherent, cohesive.	based on short, accurate and illustrative paragraphs.	to write with cohesion and coherence.	unusual and difficult/ expressive or easy.
105-5	high register, cohesion, coherence, understandable.	with short paragraphs.	to write with cohesion and coherence.	difficult, uncomfortable, slow / easy, comfortable, fast.
105-6	coherence, cohesion, organisation, unity, formal.	formal register.	to combine all the necessary factors to make academic writing.	insecure, because you do not know how to use all the resources that you can use in your mother tongue.
201-1	formal, clear, structured, specific.	with a good structure and formal, thinking about the reader.	that you have to convey your ideas to people with good arguments.	careless, incapable (sometimes) / free to write what i want to show, because if i don't know how to say something, i won't say it.
201-2	cohesion, coherence, formal language, thesis, point of view.	a formal format. it must have an introduction, a body and a conclusion.	to convey a clear message and to write in a clear way.	insecure / self-confident.
204-1	coherence, text structure, text well written, comprehension and academic language.	a good understanding and a well-structured format: introduction, and conclusion.	to understand.	more difficulties / less security.

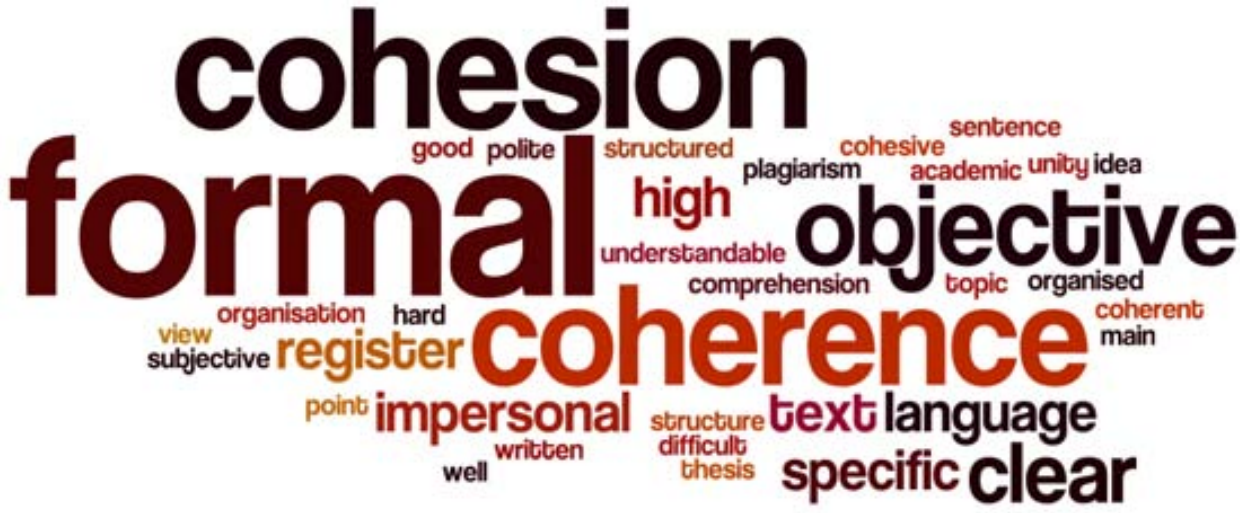
205-1	formal, difficult, polite, objective, subjective.	very formal, needs correct grammar, with coherence and cohesion.	show us a clear idea.	strange, difficult / comfortable, natural.
205-2	no plagiarism, formal, clear, objective, specific.	widely used in universities.	not plagiarising.	comfortable, as i'm more in touch with the roman alphabet than my mother tongue's alphabet / hard as i haven't learnt how to write in my mother tongue at an academic institution.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROCESS OF BECOMING PART OF THE AAS			
	as a member of the humanities, i feel...	**learning to write in the academic community means...**	**my relation to other members of the humanities is...**
105-1	that i have to learn more english	express better one idea.	very good.
105-2	it is very important to learn english because a lot of information about our studies is written in that language. the format is also important because we can use it in other tongues.	that we are prepared to write texts that have coherence, cohesion and a complete, clear sense. it is very important, because in this way we can express our opinion impersonally, and we will be listened to by the world.	quite good.
105-3	like i have to work harder and learn more english. also, i have to work on written texts.	express better our ideas.	good, our relation got better as the course passed.
105-4	like i have a lot of things to learn.	make an effort to express ourselves better.	good enough to feel comfortable while i'm talking in english.
105-5	afraid about what kind of job i will have in the future.	make an effort to write better for all life.	good and sometimes friendly because we have a lot of things in common.
105-6	that i have to write in a suitable register, since writing is our tool as humanities students.	you have to read a lot of books and academic writing, since it is an important way to learn.	constant, because all the members are related, and you have to know them.
201-1	happy with myself because i feel that with my knowledge i can help to grasp literature, art...	to learn to understand everybody, try not to get angry at someone about our ideas.	fine. we try to help each other every time we can.
201-2	very well in this degree. i love literature. outside humanities, i work in a publishing house. i'm writing a book, so i like reading and writing. however, i do it in catalan!	learning to write in a formal way and to summarise in a good way.	good. i'm glad to be with them because they understand me and they make me feel happy. i hope i do it for them too!
204-1	i feel good to learn english because it is necessary, and especially in this degree, but i have insecurities when interacting in english.	take one more step in my learning of english, being able to communicate with more people, especially internationally.	my relationship with the other members of the humanities is good, but still, i have more affinity with some people than with others.
205-1	like a beginner in all the areas, but i have it in my hands the opportunity to discover a lot of ideas.	to be more prepared for the real world, specially for my working life.	fine, i've made a lot of friends.

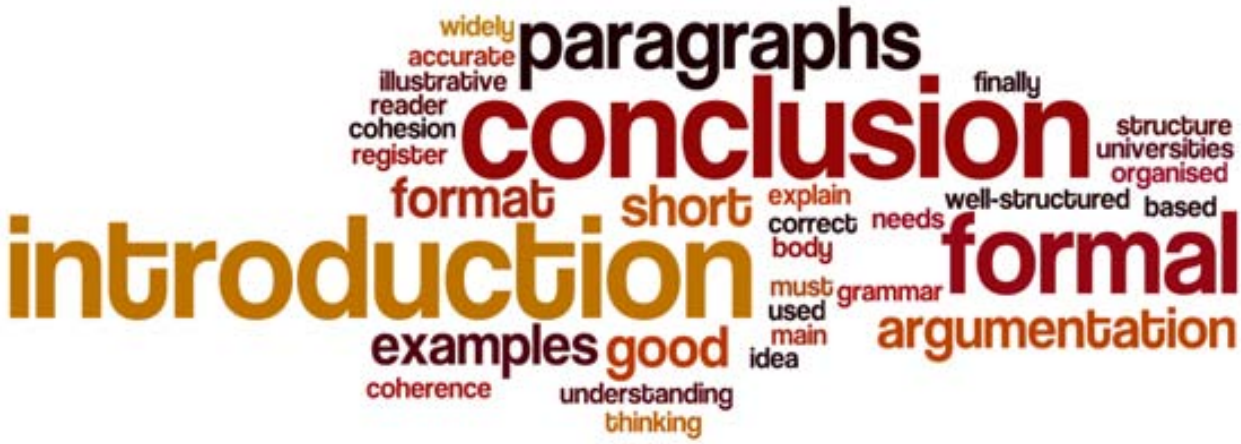
205-2	like i am where i should be.	improving also the way of developing thoughts.	good.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF GENRES IN AAS			
	academic writing is used in university to...	**the target audience for academic papers is...**	**when i write academic essays, i intend to...**
105-1	write all the bits of work.	the teacher and our classmates.	write in a formal register and make the text have cohesion and coherence.
105-2	do some essays and to read a lot of informative texts.	all the people that are interested in it.	follow all the points that i explained before.
105-3	write all the bits of work.	the teacher and our classmates.	put one main idea in one paragraph having to understand the text.
105-4	write formal essays, exams, etc.	…	subordinate too much.
105-5	write formal essays and projects and in classes powerpoints.	write formal essays, projects, exams, etc.	be clear expressing my ideas.
105-6	talk about academic and specialised issues.	…	put it the paper all the aspects that are necessary to make an academic writing.
201-1	help you to write good looking [texts] for the future.	teachers, people who are interested in my work.	explain my thesis in a better way, try to show people who don't know this the benefits of my opinions.
201-2	write paragraphs, compositions, oral presentations, etc.	our teacher. however, sometimes we show our work to friends or family.	be clear and to convey a message in an easy way.
204-1	academic writing is for teachers to evaluate your written expression, among other things.	able to write a good text and choose the most important things in each subject. synthesize.	do better than in the previous test.
205-1	do many essays.	…	…
205-2	write essays and other bits of work.	teachers, in students' case.	develop and connect well the ideas.

Wordclouds for seminar 8

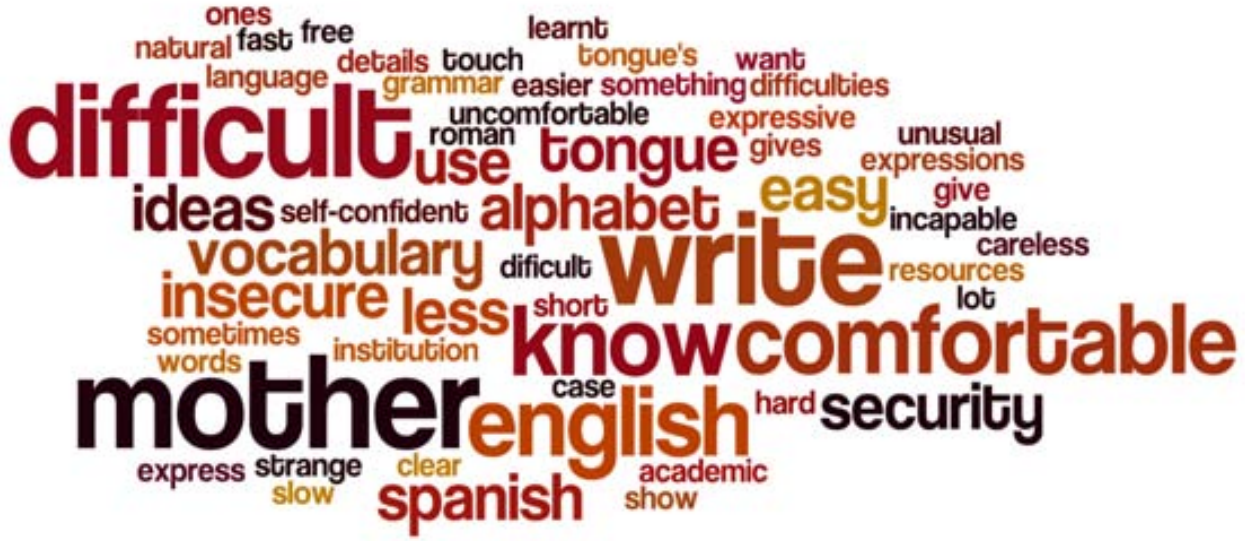


Question 1: five words that describe academic writing...



Question 2: the format of academic writing is...

Question 3: the most important thing about academic writing is...

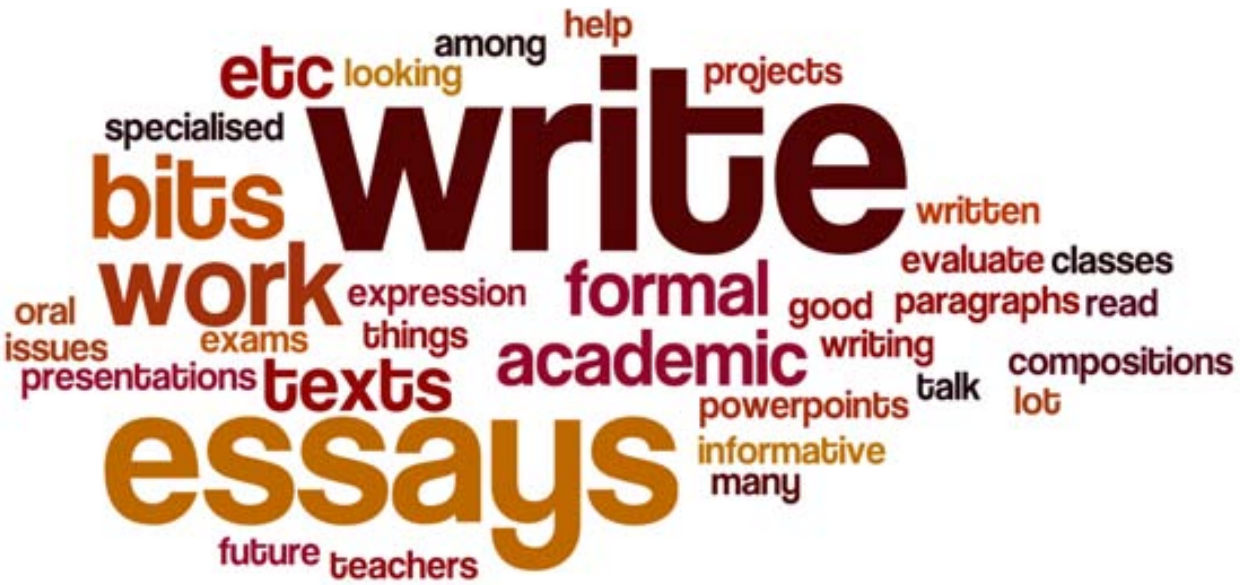


Question 4: in comparison to writing in my mother tongue, writing in english feels more... and less...

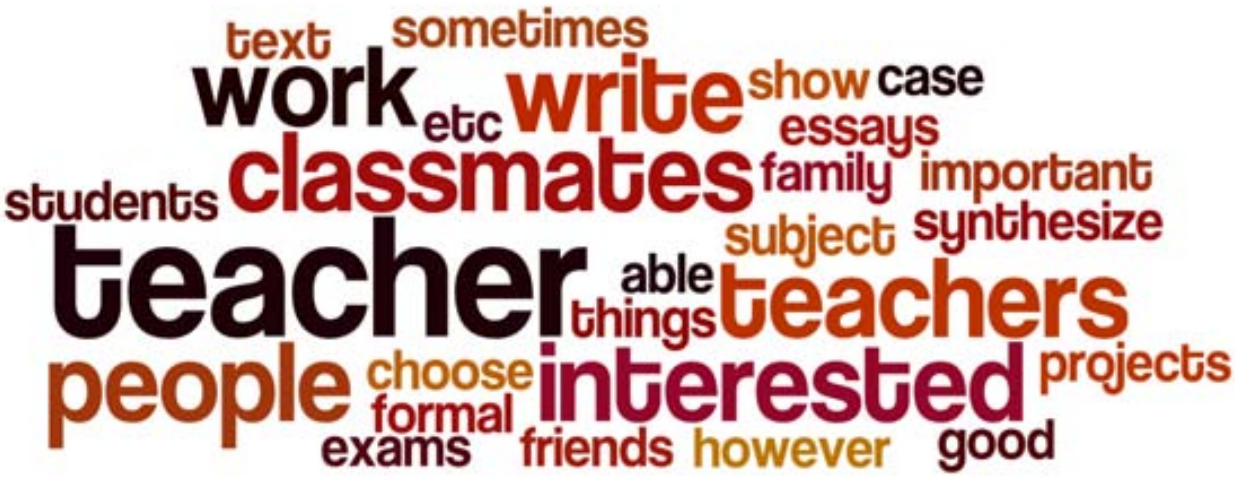
Question 5: as a member of the humanities, i feel...

Question 6: learning to write in the academic community means...

Question 7: my relation to other members of the humanities is...



Question 8: academic writing is used in university to...



Question 9: the target audience for academic papers is...

Question 10: When I wrtie academic essays, I intend to...