

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES: WRITING EXHIBITION REVIEWS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this case study, undergraduate English major students and pre-service teachers were asked to write reviews of two exhibitions they visited as part of a course on multimodality and social semiotics. At the beginning of the course, students struggled to distinguish between and produce this genre, writing personal reflections and failing to connect their experiences with academic knowledge. During the intervention described in this study, scaffolded writing tasks were used as teaching tools, and detailed feedback was given on the students' reviews. The students were introduced to the structure of response genres (Martin & Rose, 2008) and the role of semantic waves (Maton, 2013) in academic writing. Drawing on the concept of semantic gravity within the Semantics dimension of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton, 2013, 2014), student reviews were analyzed to understand how different types of knowledge practices (i.e., disciplinary knowledge versus personal experiences) appear in the reviews. Based on pre- and post-intervention analyses of student texts, this study demonstrates how explicit writing instruction contributed to knowledge-building through written production.

KEYWORDS

Arts integration, museum education, multimodal literacy, genre-based pedagogy, Legitimation Code Theory

1 – Changing perspectives: Writing exhibition reviews in higher education

University students of the arts and humanities are often requested to write a variety of genres, most frequently from the genre families of arguments and text responses. In this process, they are expected to organize their reading, teaching or artistic experiences in the context of a certain disciplinary framework. The completion of such an assignment requires the understanding of academic expectations, and more importantly, the students need to possess the skill of examining an experience through the academic looking-glass. Explicit writing instruction plays a significant part in this work as it can achieve much more than helping students with the creation of a successfully assessed text. Teaching practices which aid writing development can have a positive impact on the students' reasoning skills and knowledge-building within a discipline.

This study shows how two pedagogical approaches were implemented in the context of a university course on multimodal literacy development. The two frameworks are genre-based pedagogy informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Martin & Rose, 2008) and the Semantics dimension of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton, 2013, 2014). Genre-based pedagogy developed by SFL educational linguists informs scaffolding literacy development with a focus on the semiotic features of texts. LCT is a sociological framework for researching and informing educational practice, and it conceptualizes knowledge practices and their organizing principles within social fields of practice. More specifically, the Semantics dimension of LCT conceptualizes organizing principles underlying knowledge practices through their semantic codes. It is important to keep in mind that SFL and LCT are separate theories with 'different insights that are complementary and which together can offer greater explanatory power' (Martin, Maton, & Doran, 2020, p. 26). In the context of this research study, they are brought together to support literacy development mostly by revealing how students can access academic knowledge in the context of a unique artistic experience. However, the two theories offer different aspects on how students represent experiences, insights and knowledge in academic texts, and the text analyses presented here do not aim to prescribe certain knowledge practices to the different stages of their texts.

The study demonstrates how the understanding of genre structures (Martin & Rose, 2008) and insights into the organizing principles of knowledge practices by examining context-dependency as explained in LCT Semantics (Maton, 2014) contributed to changes in the students' written production based on the experiences of visiting art exhibitions during the course.

2 – Working with genres

Resonating with Martin and Rose (2008), in this study genres are viewed as 'staged, goal-oriented social processes. Staged, because it usually takes us more than one step to reach our goals; goal-oriented because we feel frustrated if we don't accomplish the final steps; social because writers shape their texts for readers of particular kinds' (p. 6). These three aspects of genres all have significant pedagogical implications in writing instruction as they provide students with awareness of the context, purpose and audience of their writing.

The aim of SFL-informed genre-based pedagogy (hereafter genre pedagogy) is to reveal the organizing principles of different genres through explicit pedagogy, and Hyland (2007) describes it as 'perhaps the most clearly articulated approach to genre both theoretically and pedagogically' (p. 153). The main advantages of genre pedagogy have been summarized by Hyland (2004, pp. 10–16): explicit, systematic, needs-based, supportive, empowering, critical and consciousness-raising. Not only does SFL-informed genre pedagogy comprise all of these characteristics, it also recognizes the need for an explicit focus on knowledge building to participate in writing (e.g., Martin & Rose, 2012). The scaffolding pedagogical model of genre pedagogy is the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) as presented by Rothery (1994). Among its various adaptations, the most widely used TLC is represented in Figure 1 below, showing the core stages of Deconstruction, Joint Construction and Independent Construction with Field Building and Context Setting throughout the different cycles of learning.

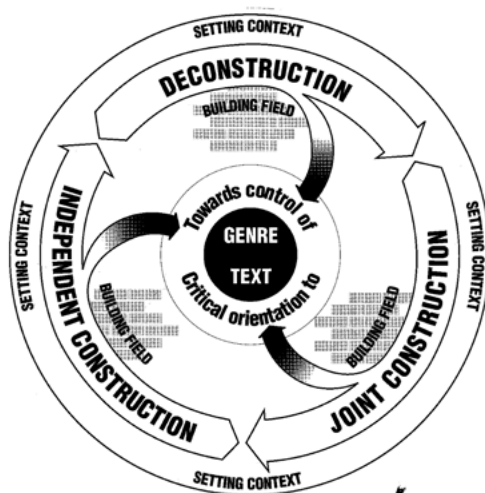


Figure 1 – The teaching learning cycle (Rothery, 1994, p. 8)

The TLC model has also been applied in academic L2 contexts (e.g., the SLATE project, Dreyfus, Humphrey, Mahboob, & Martin, 2016). In her work on text-based syllabus design, Feez (1998) adapted the stages of the TLC for the field of adult second language learners in five stages: Building the context, Modelling and deconstructing the text, Joint construction of the text, Independent construction of the text, and Linking related texts. Hyland (2019) further adapts and details this model with different teacher roles and tasks defined in the context of L2 writing instruction (p. 72).

In L2 academic contexts, genre pedagogy can successfully guide writing instructors as it has already informed second language pedagogy in higher education contexts, showing positive influence on written production. After research studies in L1 contexts in the 1980s, genre pedagogy has been adapted for ESL teaching (e.g., McCabe, Gledhill, & Liu, 2015). Hammond and Derewianka (2001) highlight several implications of the theory for second language teaching contexts, for example the understanding of language as a system for making meaning; the importance of social and cultural contexts of language use; the analysis of the target situation, and the importance of focusing on language at the text level as well as at the sentence level (p. 192).

The positive impact of genre pedagogy has been emphasized in connection with its influence on the development of genre awareness (Yasuda,

2011), with special attention paid to summary writing, (Chen & Su, 2012; Yasuda, 2015), and also in connection with Task-Based Language Teaching (Yasuda, 2017). Chen and Su (2012) argue that genre-based approaches are more beneficial in terms of content development and rhetorical organization rather than linguistic accuracy and lexical diversity. Apart from such positive impact, the necessity of pedagogic metalanguage for teachers has also been discussed as a major factor for the success of the pedagogy (Rose & Martin, 2012).

3 – Response genres: Focus on review writing

Control of reviews within the response genre family (Rose & Martin, 2012) is a key expectation for students especially in arts and humanities courses. In Humphrey's (2016) words, 'response genres are used to appreciate and respond to cultural works in the curriculum area of English and music, drama, film studies and visual arts' (p. 101). Although Humphrey (2016) also reports that media review is more typical in the middle years of schooling, and 'the broad conception of a review in professional and academic life makes it problematic to recontextualize for academic use' (p. 117), it was chosen to serve two academic purposes within the context of the course. First, its staging – Context, Description, Evaluation – provides a framework to evaluate exhibitions. The first two stages followed by Evaluation help students structure their own ideas and describe an experience from an academic perspective. Second, the review is a kind of genre that can be found in students' reading experiences in both everyday (popular journalism) and academic contexts (book and course book reviews). This can make a writing task more accessible with realistic goals. As Christie and Derewianka (2008) argue, 'the typical thematic structure of the review has the merit that it gives direction and order to the manner in which the apprentice writer may go about the writing task' (p. 62).

The definition of genre as 'staged, goal-oriented processes' (Martin & Rose, 2008) contains the important concept of stages, which are instrumental in both writing instruction and data analysis. These stages are defined as 'recurrent local patterns' (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 6) and assist the writer to achieve their goals by completing these stages. These stages

can also become the units of analysis in the data analysis phase of the research.

4 – Different kinds of knowledge

The idea that different kinds of knowledge are woven together in academic discourse have interested linguistic and educational research for decades since Bernstein and Halliday began collaborating in the 1960s (Martin, Maton, & Doran, 2020, p. 10). Both SFL and LCT approaches to knowledge and academic discourse have been informed by Bernstein's (e.g., 2000) characterization of knowledge in terms of common-sense (everyday) and uncommon sense (educational) knowledge that learners encounter as they proceed from primary to secondary and tertiary education (e.g., 1975). Painter (1999, p. 71) as well as Macken-Horarik (1996, p. 236) summarize the differences between common-sense and educational knowledge and highlight their main characteristics and significance in pedagogical practice. Common-sense knowledge is characterized by its relevance to a specific context, shared experiences, and it is based on observation and participation in activities. Educational knowledge is distant from personal experience and is based on semiotic representation that construes abstract and technical meanings. As Painter (1999) points out, conscious, well-planned teaching and written monologic discourse are typical of educational knowledge (p. 70). When preparing students for participation in academic discourse, these various aspects of knowledge need to be taken into consideration. For example, the recurring stages of Field building within the TLC model supports this ongoing focus on building educational knowledge to achieve successful written production.

From a sociological perspective, LCT also investigates the role of knowledge in social practices, and it extends Bernstein's code theory and Bourdieu's field theory (for a detailed account, please see Maton 2014, Chapter 2). Instead of simply showing the presence or absence of knowledge-building, LCT focuses on its basis by conceptualizing the organizing principles underlying knowledge practices (Martin, Maton, & Doran, 2020). This type of analysis reveals the values, dispositions and norms that shape different practices under the visible surface. However, LCT does not see fields in binary

oppositions of common-sense or educational knowledge. Rather, it takes a relational perspective on the sets of practices in different fields.

5 – LCT semantics

While genre pedagogy informed the organizing principles of texts during my teaching and analysis, the concept of semantic gravity within the Semantics dimension of LCT served as a tool to help students see the underlying principles or ‘the rules of the game’ shaping academic discourse and ways of knowing (Chen, Maton, & Bennett, 2011, p. 146). By making valorized knowledge visible, LCT advances social justice: it enables teachers and students to examine educational practices which contribute to building knowledge over the time of lessons and courses.

Semantics is one of the three elaborated sets of concepts or dimensions of LCT. The other two dimensions explore the different organizing principles underlying practices, dispositions and contexts as a species of legitimation codes: Specialization and, Autonomy as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Four dimensions of Legitimation Code Theory

Dimension	Referent relations	Concept
Specialization	meaning	semantic gravity, semantic density
Semantics	social-symbolic	epistemic relations, social relations
Autonomy	external	positional autonomy, relational autonomy

LCT Semantics both theorizes and makes visible the means by which legitimized practices are enacted in different contexts, for example cultural studies, visual arts, pedagogy, engineering, jazz or dance. This dimension views social fields of practice as *semantic structures* whose organizing principles are conceptualized as *semantic codes* that comprise *semantic gravity* (SG, focusing on context-dependence) and *semantic density* (SD, focusing on complexity) (Maton, 2020, p. 62). The two can be analyzed either together or separately.

Semantic gravity reveals the degree to which meaning relates to its context, and it is always relational. More specifically, context-dependency is described in terms of stronger and weaker semantic gravity, always along a continuum of strengths, and not in terms of dichotomous characterizations such as ‘concrete’ or ‘abstract’ knowledge. In Maton’s (2013) words, semantic gravity is construed as a continuum of strengths with theoretically infinite capacity for gradation and variation (p. 110). Stronger semantic gravity indicates more context-dependency, weaker semantic gravity indicates less context-dependency. Put simply, stronger semantic gravity is associated with more manifest experiences, for example the description of an event or the close analysis of a task, and weaker gravity indicates less focus on these experiences, moving towards generalized and abstract ideas. In this sense, semantic gravity analyzes changes over time: ‘moving from the local particulars of a specific case towards generalizations’ (Maton, 2020, p. 63). These movements result in shifts in semantic gravity, which are profiled both horizontally and vertically as shown in Figure 2. Horizontally, it describes changes over text time. Vertically, it presents the strengths of semantic gravity from stronger to weaker context-dependency.

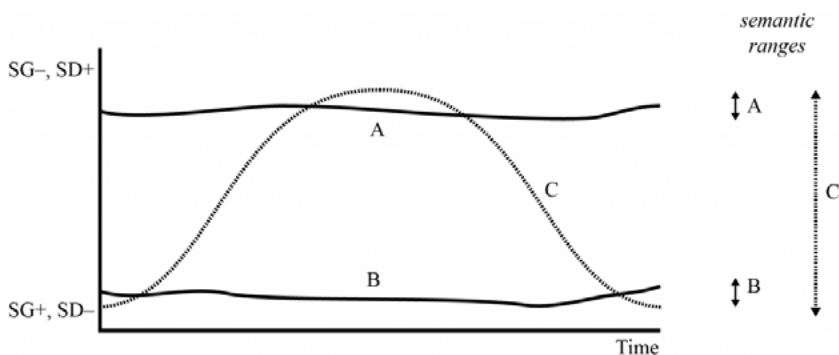


Figure 2 – Three semantic profiles (Maton, 2013, p.13)

The *semantic range* of the text is constituted in these two directions over time. In previous studies presenting analyses of semantic gravity, three typical semantic profiles have been described as seen in Figure 2. The high semantic flatline, Profile A, represents relative context-independent practices, for example theoretical discussions. The low semantic flatline, Profile B, represents practices which remain constrained in their own context,

for example anecdotes. The semantic wave which is depicted in Profile C, represents semantic shifts, indicating movements within the context-dependency of the text, for example a teacher's explanation of the concept of salience in images through visual examples.

Although semantic waves within texts, lessons, courses and curricula may take many forms (Maton, 2020, p. 82), their waving (i.e., changes in the strength of semantic gravity) models how different practices are represented and contribute to building knowledge over time. The infinite possibility of shifts between higher and lower semantic profiles also illustrates how knowledge is built up gradually, and how these movements happen step by step. Long jumps between practices might leave students and readers confused, missing essential steps in the lessons or texts. The waves can be used to visualize these strategies, guide lesson planning and build arguments and reflection both in speaking and writing as they weave different types of knowledge and ways of knowing together.

This study draws on the concept of semantic gravity to explore how different forms of knowledge appear in the students' written assignments. The shifts between different knowledge practices are analyzed and made visible through *semantic waves*, which inform knowledge-building practices within the larger text time of a whole course or a shorter text time of a writing assignment. Research enacting semantic waves has already informed academic writing, for example Clarence (2017) uses semantic waves to analyze peer writing tutorials, and Kirk (2018) uses them to analyze EAP curriculum design. Other LCT research studies have focused on semantic gravity in the context of ethnographic research (Hood, 2016), physics assessment (Georgiou, 2016), the integration of engineering knowledge (Wolff & Luckett, 2013), and knowledge-building in vocational curricula (Shay & Steyn, 2016). These studies point to the crucial role of semantic waves in knowledge-building within educational contexts.

6 – Context of research

Students usually arrive with diverse experiences and knowledge of text types at the English Studies programs at universities. In the Hungarian context, most of the language development courses focus on perfect-

ing students' spoken and written skills for an advanced level (CEFR C1) proficiency exam at the end of the first year. However, there is no uniform understanding regarding what genres are expected from students at different courses and universities as course coordinators create the writing and language development syllabi based on different approaches to genres and writing pedagogy. The most common written tasks are argumentation, interpretation and critical reflection in English Studies programs. In this context, SFL-informed genre pedagogy provides a clear overview of guidance for the writing instructor and the students.

In a foreign language learning context, previous experiences with genres in the students' L1 often influence their writing in new educational contexts (e.g., Kang, 2005), and this issue of transfer of L1 writing practices needs to be remembered during writing instruction. Several elements of the Hungarian secondary school exam text types correspond to the taxonomy of school genres described by Rose and Martin (2012). Secondary school exams in Hungarian Language and Literature (Oktatási Hivatal, 2017), require knowledge of genres from the genre families of arguments and text responses: exposition, critical interpretation and comparative critical interpretation of literary works. Control of bureaucratic and rhetorical text types such as complaints, requests, comments, appraisals and letters of reference are also expected by the end of secondary education. However, at secondary school level English, students are not expected to be familiar with academic genres. Instead, the following text types are defined as requirements: at intermediate level (Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR B1) personal communication (e-mail, message, blog, journal entry), invitations, letters; at upper-intermediate level (CEFR B2) letter to the editor and article for a (student) newspaper (Oktatási Hivatal, 2017). This suggests that students need a new introduction to academic genres in English in the context of their university studies.

7 – Research aims and questions

One of the aims of the 'Making Meaning with Visual Narratives' course was to develop the students' multimodal literacy skills and to guide them in gaining control over multimodal resources. However, aiming theoretically too high, or in other words the 'Icarus effect' (Maton, 2013, p. 19) would be

counterproductive in this context. In this respect, knowledge-building during the course was designed with semantic shifts in mind that connect the students' previous experiences and the shared experiences with the abstract concepts and analytical framework of social semiotic multimodality (e.g., Kress, 2010).

Within this context, I formulated three research questions in connection with the students' written responses to two exhibition visits.

1. How does the review writing task contribute to knowledge-building during the course?
2. What knowledge practices are present in the students' reviews?
3. How can genre-based pedagogy contribute to the students' learning?

8 – Participants

In the autumn term of 2018, there were 15 students in the course, and they all completed the review writing tasks. Thirteen students followed the English teacher training program and had another field of study apart from English, one student was in the English Studies program, and one student was a visiting student. The students' level of English was advanced (CEFR C1 and C2), and they were in the fourth year of their studies.

9 – Procedures

A glimpse at the main blocks of the course in Table 2 reveals its organizing principles, informed by the phases of the TLC (Rothery, 1994). During the first, Deconstruction phase, students were introduced to social semiotic multimodal analysis through image and multimodal text discussions and reading tasks. As a special extension, five lessons were dedicated to two museum visits, which are described as the lessons of the intervention, based on a complete TLC specifically designed for the purpose. In the final, Independent Construction phase of the whole course, during the last two seminars, the students presented their research projects inspired by the course.

The written tasks comprised four different types of texts during the course: recounts, descriptions, reviews and a slideshow/poster presenta-

tion. First, students wrote recounts of childhood reading, and then recounts of memorable museum experiences to recall significant events which had shaped their own relationship with reading and museums. During the first lessons, to practice multimodal analysis, students wrote descriptions of images and multimodal texts such as paintings, picture book pages, websites and magazine covers. Then, during the exhibition visits, the students wrote two reviews of two separate exhibition. The final presentation task was the creation of a multimodal text such a presentation (for a full account of the tasks during the course, see Wünsch-Nagy, 2020).

Table 2 – Overview of the course schedule

	Lessons 1-3	Lessons 4-5	Lessons 6-10		Lessons 11-13
Content	Guided text discussions; Theoretical readings	Detailed text discussions, focus on visual grammar, intermodal relations, picture books	Exhibition 1 Pre-visit preparation: speech bubbles and comic books; language and learning in museums; Post-visit discussion	Exhibition 2 Pre-visit preparation: online resources to learn about the exhibition; language and learning in the museum; Post-visit discussion	Students' presentations of their chosen topics on multimodal text analysis
Writing tasks	Picture descriptions, Recounts	Review examples	Exhibition review 1	Exhibition review 2	Slideshow / poster presentation
TLC phases	Deconstruction		Embedded TLC in the context of exhibition visits		Independent Construction

10 – Scaffolding review writing: Lesson steps

The intervention discussed in this study focuses on the specific TLC designed around the two exhibition visits. Preceding and during the exhibition visit block of the seminar, two sessions were dedicated to the discussion of comic books, picture books and illustrated books in class. After the shared reading and analysis of some books, students selected a book and

presented it to their peers. During these oral book presentations, the three main stages of the review genre were introduced. Following this session, the students were encouraged to read reviews in popular magazines and newspapers and also revised the stages of the review genre through model texts (Martin & Rose, 2008). A useful addition to this step was the joint drafting of a review and re-ordering the paragraphs of model reviews.

During the same sessions, the students were also introduced to the LCT Semantics concept of context-dependency with the help of a tutorial video on using semantic gravity in writing (AUT literacy for assessments, 2018) and discussions about semantic gravity in writing and teaching. For easy access and clarity, semantic gravity was illustrated through an overview of linking concrete experiences with generalizations and theories/concepts, which represents a three-level analysis of semantic shifts.

The first exhibition visit took place in a small gallery near the university. The title of the exhibition was *Kids'n'Comics*, and the exhibits were artworks of contemporary Hungarian graphic artists. The exhibition was organized to guide the visitor through stories of growing up. This small exhibition space created opportunities for collaborative group dialogues before, during and after the exhibition. The second exhibition visit happened at the *Bacon, Freud and the Painting of the School of London* exhibition at the Hungarian National Gallery. This famous and popular exhibition displayed almost ninety paintings on two floors and several rooms. The students received a list of questions organized around the topics of multimodality, learning and language in the exhibition.

During the exhibition visits, further scaffolding was provided through a list of viewing questions, directing the students' attention to the presence of semiotic resources and the learning opportunities they offered. The reviews were written after a short class discussion that followed the exhibition visits. Students received feedback both in terms of the structure and the logical development of the review. In the case of reviews that presented strong context-dependency or no semantic shifts, the feedback included comments on semantic waves in the paragraphs.

After the second visit, students prepared another review based on the instructions in Table 3. The reviews were assessed with a focus on the structure and the organization of ideas in the texts. In both writing tasks, students were asked to take on the role of a language teacher who writes

for fellow teachers about the exhibition in an English language teaching journal.

Table 3 – The second review writing task

Write a review about the ‘Bacon, Freud and the Painting of the London School’ exhibition. In your review, discuss the following topics.

Context

1. What is this exhibition about?
 - Description
2. Describe the use of language and the interplay of semiotic resources at the exhibition.
3. Evaluation
 - Evaluate the use of written text in the exhibition.

Write your review in 600–800 words.

11 – Data collection and analysis

The two sets of exhibition reviews written by the 15 students were collected, resulting in 30 reviews with each review between 600 and 900 words. These texts were analyzed in three cycles. The first reading of the texts happened during the course, when feedback was given to the students, focusing on the review stages and semantic waves. Then, the second and third readings provided more in-depth analysis of the texts with the same focus points. First, I examined the students’ understanding of the review genre in the two sets of texts. Second, I looked at the context-dependency of the reviews, coding the texts based on meaningful units, which were sentences or clauses in some cases.

To guide the analysis and make the coding decisions transparent, a translation device was developed based on other research studies enacting LCT semantic gravity. Three translation devices (Maton, 2014; Georgiou, 2016; Kirk, 2018) were studied in detail. The basic principle of creating a translation device or external language of description (Maton, 2016) is the same across all translation devices enacting semantic gravity, that is that they represent LCT concepts and connect them with the description of the coded content and examples from the data. This way, these translation devices can be read from left to right and vice versa, making the analysis explicit and transparent. The translation device for this particular study is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 – Translation device for the semantic gravity analysis of students’ exhibition reviews

Semantic gravity	Coding categories	Coding of responses	Description of coded content	Example quote from student reviews
Weaker ↑	SG--	Enacting theories	Student refers to a theoretical principle, specialized or abstract knowledge without reference to the exhibition	‘As Gunther Kress expresses particular perceptions can be conveyed by different semiotic modes.’ (C3_S5_R2)
	SG-	Generalization	Student makes generalized comments about the exhibition while explicitly providing some references to multimodal perspectives	‘Last but not least, size is also a means of meaning-making.’ (C3_S5_R2) ‘Besides language and the paintings, as semiotic resources, other signs of meaning-making are present in this exhibition.’ (C3_S5_R2)
	SGØ	Summary	Student summarizes the exhibition experience	“photographs have a quite important role in some artists’ work” (C3_S5_R2) ‘Visualizing the exhibition as a timeline enables us to discover the incredible dialogues between artists.’ (C3_S5_R2)
	SG+	Description	Student describes the exhibition space and objects with concrete examples	‘The exhibition presents almost ninety paintings from painters of the London School (Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, and Leon Kossoff), and also from contemporary artists who have been inspired by their figurative work of art (Cecily Brown, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye).’ (C3_S5_R2) ‘Francis Newton Souza is playing with light in “Two Saints in a Landscape, a completely black painting’ (C3_S5_R2)
Stronger ↓	SG++	Personal response	Student reflects on personal engagement, opinions and emotions during the exhibition experience	‘I was a bit disappointed, but fortunately I was able to find some quite interesting comics’ (C3_S5_R1) ‘I also liked that both the drawings and the texts had a big enough size to read and look at.’ (C3_S5_R1)

During the analysis and coding of the reviews, the first readings determined the strengths of context dependency that could be observed. This is how five levels of semantic gravity were defined for the analysis of the student texts based on the variety of the knowledge practices they exhibited in the reviews as can be read in the ‘Description of coded content’ column. In the teaching practice, these were reduced to the three levels of concrete experiences, generalized ideas and theories. For example, if the content contained expressions such as ‘I was a bit disappointed’ or ‘I also liked that’, the response was coded as [SG++], functioning as the students’ self-reflection. Such a perspective gives insights into the student’s personal reactions and emotional engagement. The next level coded as [SG+], contained detailed descriptions of the exhibition space and objects such as ‘Francis Newton Souza is playing with light in *‘Two Saints in a Landscape’*, a completely black painting.’ This describes a concrete example from the exhibition, informing the reader about the context of the event. Descriptions which summarize the exhibition experience, for example, ‘photographs have a quite important role in some artists’ work’ were coded as [SGØ]. When students described the exhibition space while explicitly providing some references to multi-modal perspectives, their responses were coded as [SG-], for example ‘size is also a means of making meaning.’ The weakest level of semantic gravity was coded as [SG--], representing abstract and specialized knowledge, often referencing academic work. For example, the response ‘Kress argues that particular perceptions can be conveyed by different semiotic modes’ introduces a theoretical approach without any references to the exhibition space.

12 – Results and discussion

In the following section, I will answer each research question (RQ) by first presenting the results of the analysis, and then interpreting and discussing them. One pair of reviews by the same student is used to illustrate the findings. This pair of reviews, as also explained in the results of the RQ2 is representative of the whole group in terms of the changes in students’ semantic profiles.

RQ1: How does the review writing task contribute to knowledge-building during the course?

Results

This research question aimed at understanding how review writing tasks shaped the students' museum visit experience in the context of the course. As introduced in the overview of the context of this research, the students' writing was supported by the scaffolding tasks which helped with the different genre stages as described by Martin and Rose (2008). Reading the texts in three cycles during the data analysis, eclectic writing practices were found in all of the students' first reviews. Most typically, the students' initial reviews contained elements of a variety of genres such as recounts, personal responses and critical interpretations with elements of descriptions.

Table 5 – Genre structures in a first review

Paragraph	Expected genre stage	Observed stages: genres	Example from data (C3_S5_R1)	
1	Context	Record of events: recount Reaction: personal response	'I visited the exhibition mostly because it was a group activity and I have an interest in the topic.'	
2	Description	Description: review Record of events: recount	'When I saw the first scene I immediately felt the connection; it drew my attention.'	
3		Background: historical	'To be honest, this realization I encountered made me feel good in a way that I could finally benefit from my history courses at university. On top of that, I was working in a summer camp for children, where we dealt with the Roman Empire, and I was so proud of my little brother, who also took part, that he had learnt the name of the roman sword, whereas a lot of people do not know.'	
4		Evaluation: review	'This shows the numerous adaptability of comics.'	
5		Evaluation: personal response	'As a reflection on the visit itself I could start with the relevance to the course.'	
6		Reaction: personal response	'Personally, I felt empowered by the little knowledge I gained so far.'	
7		Evaluation	Reaction: personal response	'Finally, I would like to add that this kind of group activity fulfils my requirements for an open-minded educational setting.'

Table 5 shows a set of examples of the different elements detected in a typical Review 1. This text was also used to illustrate the semantic gravity analysis in RQ 2. Different texts showed different combinations of stages from different genres.

After the feedback given on the first reviews and the discussion of the aim of each stage, the second set of reviews showed more control of the review structure, with a growing tendency to include interpretative and analytical comments instead of personal comments about the exhibition details during the Description stage. There were only four students who produced a review based on the task instructions. Eight students followed the expected three stages but they included some analysis, evaluations or personal responses in the descriptive paragraphs. Three students' texts strongly combined personal responses, recounts and descriptions all through their texts. An interesting change after the first reviews was the students' tendency to include multimodal analysis based on the newly studied theoretical concepts. Except for the three cases of strongly mixed texts, personal remarks were shared in the Evaluation stage, taking the role of the language teacher, not the everyday museum visitor.

The skill of writing in a particular genre is necessary for teachers and professional writers, as they are often assigned to teach or write based on precise guidelines. Implicitly, students are expected to possess these skills by their secondary school exams. In the first reviews, students based their observations on their personal preferences, feelings and opinions, and less on objective descriptions, analysis and evaluation. The reasons for the initial writing challenges can be the result of the transfer of writing attitudes acquired in the students' L1 writing education and the lack of clear instructions in their writing experiences. These interpretations can be further investigated with the help of interviews. The shift in the students' positions is also seen a result of the activation of their freshly encountered knowledge and the introduction of explicit genre pedagogy.

The most significant observation regarding writing tasks is the need for clear specifications about the function of the stages in the genre, and making the students understand that good observational skills manifest in written descriptions, which are necessary for further analysis and evaluation. When students become confident about writing various text types for specific audiences, they can organize their own observations and ideas in

a meaningful way, and they can be prepared for critical interpretation and reflection. This way a review writing task is an important step in building knowledge about a certain topic such as the pedagogical value of exhibition visits.

RQ 2: What knowledge practices are present in students' reviews?

Results

As discussed above, this study draws on the LCT concept of semantic gravity to understand the different knowledge practices demonstrated by the students. The specifications of the multimodal social semiotic disciplinary context of the course resulted in clear expectations regarding what knowledge practices needed to be demonstrated in the texts, and a wide semantic range was estimated in the reviews. Writing about an exhibition visit implies the necessity of context-dependency, with exact details of the exhibition space and objects. Since the students were assigned the role of an expert teacher who prepared the review with knowledge of the pedagogical and multimodal meaning-making potential of museums, they were also expected to demonstrate insights from such perspectives.

As described in the previous section on the genre specifications, the first set of texts mostly contained elements of personal responses and recounts. From the perspective of semantic gravity analysis, such elements in the students' texts resulted in strong semantic gravity within the writer's personal context, instead of the expected description of the museum space or summary of the experience. This is the main reason for the introduction of the coding level SG++, which indicates the strongest level of context-dependency, representing opinions and observations strictly from the viewer's own perspective, locked in the immediate context of the self.

The semantic profiles presented below in Figures 3 and 4 are show tendencies of the changes in the most typical students' semantic profiles in Review 1 and 2, who followed the review structure but still combined different genre elements in them. Figure 3 presents one detailed semantic gravity analysis of a typical first review, based on clause and sentence level analysis of the students' text already featured in Tables 4 and 5. Examples from the student's text are added to the semantic profile, and the complete translation device used for the analysis can be consulted in Table 4.

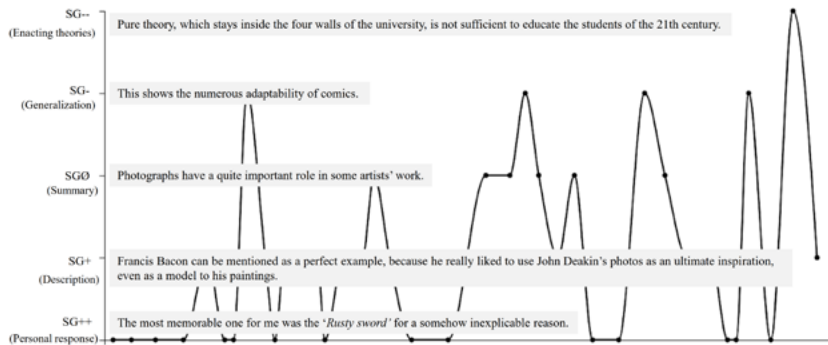


Figure 3 – Semantic gravity analysis of the first exhibition review (C3_S5_R1)

The sentences at the beginning of the text (the first four black dots) show strong semantic gravity which reflect a series of personal comments about the students’ feelings at the exhibition, for example:

I visited the exhibition mostly because it was a group activity and I have an interest in the topic. [SG++] I have tried to use comics in my English lessons, but I have not exposed myself to them enough yet. [SG++]

This example from the second paragraph of this review shows how the students shift between description, personal response, generalized ideas and multimodal perspectives:

The most memorable one for me was the ‘*Rusty sword*’ for a somehow inexplicable reason. [SG++] When I saw the first scene, I immediately felt the connection; it drew my attention. [SG++] I fell in love with [SG++] the concept of a tricolour comic, especially the concept of adding a third emphasizing colour to the black and white ‘background’. [SGØ]

In this first text, the student shared details of the exhibit, but it was presented from an extremely personal perspective, almost as if this piece of text was part of a letter to the friend. After the feedback given on this first review, the students’ second writing showed less focus on the personal feelings, and more on the exhibition itself. As a comparison, Figure 4 presents the semantic gravity analysis of the same student’s second exhibition review.

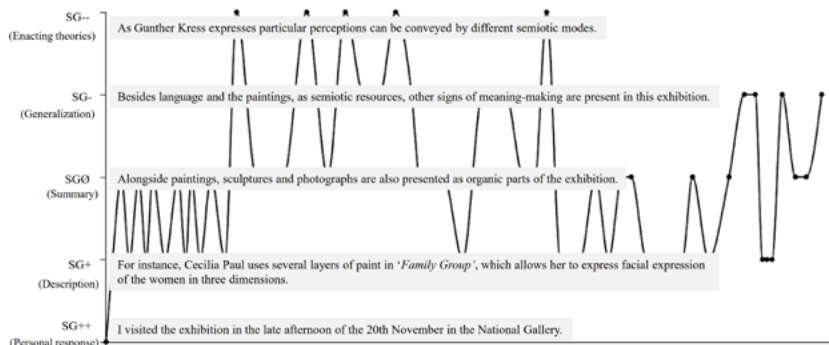


Figure 4 – Semantic gravity analysis of the second exhibition review (C3_S5_R2)

In the second review, the semantic threshold has clearly moved up a level, which, consulting the translation device created for the study, shows the point of reference, the concrete examples were based on the exhibition space and not on the student's own personal experience. This profile also shows a typical writing strategy of introducing highly valued expert voices as introductions to observations, thus structuring the descriptions through multimodal theories, which is not necessarily typical in entertainment reviews:

Alongside paintings, sculptures and photographs are also presented as organic parts of the exhibition. [SGØ] Alberto Giacometti's figurative sculptures can be seen as the adaptation of the paintings; as the characters would come alive. [SG+] This serves a complementary role in meaning-making, as a film adaptation to a book. [SGØ] Photographs have a quite important role in some artists' work. [SGØ] Francis Bacon can be mentioned as a perfect example, because he really liked to use John Deakin's photos as an ultimate inspiration, even as a model to his paintings. [SG+]

In this second example, the student provides a summary of the exhibition, and at the same time gives insights into observations techniques, and illustrates the commentary with concrete artistic examples.

The most significant result is that the students' point of reference became the exhibition itself instead of their own personal memories and feelings induced by the exhibition. Similar changes can be seen in 12 reviews,

but three of these concentrated their personal reflections in the evaluation which means stronger semantic gravity [SG++] in the Evaluation of the exhibition. 12 students kept a raised semantic profile at the level of [SG+], which indicates a focus on the museum as a source of examples. Three students kept the subjective, personal engagement in the second review, showing signs of knowledge-based observations, but still seen through a lens of personal beliefs, opinions and feelings all through the description.

After the feedback on the first reviews, students gained understanding of the different knowledge practices, achieving a wider semantic range with the introduction of multimodal viewpoints through descriptions and illustrative details from the exhibitions. Another course with similar writing practice would most certainly help students with more confident control of their knowledge practices in different interactions and writing tasks.

Semantic gravity waves and knowledge-building

The semantic gravity analysis indicates that the move away from a strong reliance on their personal perspectives was the first major shift the students performed. The distancing objectivity of descriptions is what prepares students for forming an evaluation, and then for the analysis and critical interpretation of texts and events. Creating these shifts and weaving the experiences with viewpoints demonstrating specialized knowledge are essential practices for taking part in well-informed and knowledge-powered dialogues in the classroom or any discourse community. Responding to the everyday experience enacting academic, expert roles demanded a shift in the students' way of thinking. Changing their social role in the context of the visit also meant changing the knowledge practices they enacted in the reviews. This conceptual development is related to a higher level of semiotic mediation, described as metasemiotic mediation (Coffin & Donohue, 2014, p. 117). Apart from the metalanguage of genre pedagogy, the metalanguage of semiotic resources also gave access to more meanings within this academic discourse.

Based on these results, semantic gravity analysis can be used as a teaching and feedback tool to help students make visible these shifts between their knowledge practices, and as an analytical tool as well. An important step in the analytical process is the creation of the translation device presented earlier in this paper, which can be adapted for different research contexts.

RQ3: How can genre-based pedagogy contribute to the students' learning?

The discussion of this research question is based on the insights provided by the intervention procedures and the analysis presented above. The development observed in the students' review writing can be interpreted as the result of explicit genre-based pedagogy implemented not only in the intervention phase, but all through the course design. Students were asked to write different genres for different pedagogical purposes all through the course. First, the recount of a memorable experience activated their own memories of museum visits. Then, the picture descriptions prepared them for the objective description of multimodal texts. The multimodal text analysis enacting theories helped them enact new concepts of social semiotic multimodality which they relied on in the final presentations. The reviews discussed here as part of the intervention had the greatest impact on the students' understanding of the social and pedagogical role of different texts not only in education, but in other aspects of their lives.

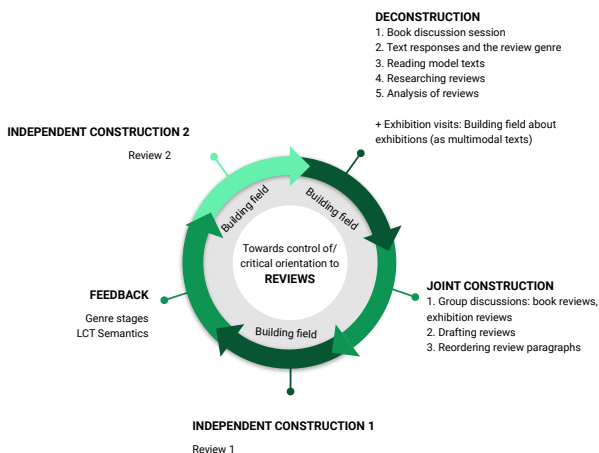


Figure 5 – The teaching learning cycle adapted for review writing during the course

During the intervention stage built around the exhibition visits, the stages adapted from the scaffolding model of the TLC provided a clear pedagogical approach to guide students in this writing development as presented in Figure 5: Deconstruction of model texts, Joint Construction based on group discussions and writing tasks, Independent Construction 1, Feed-

back 1, Independent Construction 2, Feedback 2. Repeating the Independent Construction twice, based on explicit prompts and feedback helped students concentrate on their exhibition experiences instead of having to guess the expectations of the course tutor.

The integration of the TLC aimed to illustrate how the model can be adapted to guide students towards control of different genres. However, the text production outcome of the TLC was only one of its benefits during the course. The process of arriving at the Independent Construction stage created a rich learning experience which included a variety of speaking and writing activities both individually and as a group. During this course, the TLC provided an empowering pedagogical model with the possibility of shaping it to the students' needs and the objectives of the course.

13 – Conclusion

This small-scale qualitative study focused on specialized knowledge-building within a course on multimodal social semiotics with English language teacher trainees, who were asked to write exhibition reviews among other text types. The several readings and the analysis of the data show that making expectations within a writing task explicit and realistic is key to successful writing development. Not only were the expected stages modeled and practiced before writing, the students also received further scaffolding through feedback enacting the LCT concept of semantic gravity, visualizing and analyzing the context-dependency of their writing. These findings indicate that the more explicit scaffolding and feedback are, the more controlled and informative the students' writing can become. Presenting the writing task with a focus on the relevance of context, target audience and organizing principles of writing contributed to the students' learning. Apart from receiving an introduction to review writing, the students also practiced organizing their ideas with the help of the LCT Semantics concept of semantic gravity. Semantic gravity contributed to this process as a teaching, assessment and analytical tool, informing both the teacher and the students about the knowledge practices enacted in exhibition review writing in terms of their relative context-dependency.

These exhibition visits created memorable learning experiences and formed the basis of further knowledge-building. However, such experiences without the collaborative discussion of multimodal analytical perspectives and the individual writing tasks would have remained only positive memories. In this learning process, the genre-based approach to writing instruction has proven to be time-saving and empowering both for the students and their tutor.

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