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MODERN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

An Investigation of the Disciplinary Expectations of Postgraduate Writing in UK HE:
A Case Study of Applied Linguistics Students' Writing

by

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Abstract

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The literature on academic writing in HE often approaches the issues in the field by focusing on challenges that students face in academic writing based on students' and tutors' perceptions (Shaheen, 2012) or by examining the linguistic, socio-cultural features, or rhetorical moves in students' writing (Gardner and Nesi, 2012, Javadi-Safa, 2018, Hyland, 2016, Matsuda, 2003). Little research examines the use of knowledge forms that relate to integrating theoretical and practical knowledge to achieve knowledge building. This research addresses this problem by examining the valued practices in postgraduate academic writing in a discipline that requires students to relate to theory and practice. The main aim is to find out how students use theoretical and practical knowledge forms in their writing and how their tutors value and assess those practices. The research was more interested in providing an in-depth analysis of tutors' disciplinary expectations of academic writing. Students' perspectives were used for triangulation purposes and were not intended to be examined in-depth. The specific context of the study is an Applied Linguistics and TESOL module from a postgraduate degree programme in the UK. The module is titled Modern Language Teaching Methods (MLTM). The field of Applied Linguistics and TESOL and the MLTM module have been chosen as the context of this study because Applied Linguistics is a field that typically connects theoretical knowledge to practical and personal experiences of teaching and learning a language. To examine the underlying principles that relate to theory and practice in students' texts, I used the theoretical lens of LCT Semantics gravity, which traces the relative strengths of context dependence and context-independence or the use of theoretical and practical knowledge forms in students' texts. I used the same lens to examine tutors' disciplinary expectations of valued knowledge forms and academic practices in students' texts as they relate to theory and practice. Semantic density from LCT, which examines the condensation of meanings was also used to offer insights into the complexity of students' texts and tutors' expectations. ESP genre theory analysis was carried out before conducting an LCT Semantics analysis to gain a better understanding of the genre of students' texts and its social function.

The use of LCT Semantics and especially the tool of semantic gravity allowed me to examine academic writing in HE in the disciplines and offered me a different consciousness about some of the underlying principles of academic writing practices in the discipline of Applied Linguistics. It also offered me a different perspective on actors' semantic codes, or the beliefs actors bring to the field. The use of this tool revealed important information about high-scoring student writing versus low-scoring student writing. A high-scoring text showed a higher semantic range, better semantic flow, more abstractions, successful movement from the theoretical to the practical, and higher epistemological condensation. By analysing assessors' disciplinary perspectives, the tool of semantic gravity and density offered me a different consciousness of the role of assessors' semantic codes in the assessment and evaluation of student's texts. Tutors sometimes appeared to have different semantic codes from one another, which made them evaluate students' texts differently. The students also appeared to have different semantic codes from those of their tutors, which could result in a code clash and learning challenges for tutors and students. Additionally, the findings of this present study showed that semantic profiles of successful students' texts can also differ within the same module and the same writing task. Likewise, tutors' semantic profiles of valued academic writing practices in student texts differ from one another and the same tutor can value more than one semantic profile.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: JABRAH KHALAF ALHARBI

Title of thesis: An Investigation of the Disciplinary Expectations of Postgraduate Writing in UK HE: A Case Study of Applied Linguistics Students' Writing

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
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I dedicate this thesis to my youngest brother, Saleh, with the hope that my journey inspires him to approach life with resilience, patience, and faith.

Definitions and Abbreviations

CLT...................................... Communicative Language Teaching

CT .... Critical thinking

EC .... Epistemological condensation

EE .... External examiners

ESD .... Epistemic-semantic density

ESP...................................... English for Specific Purposes

HE .... Higher Education

LCT...................................... Legitimation Code Theory

L2.. Second language

MLTM .... Modern Language Teaching Methods Module

SD .... Semantic Density from Legitimation Code Theory

SG .... Semantic Gravity from Legitimation Code Theory

TD .... Translation Device

UK....................................... United Kingdom

Stylistic Choices

The purpose of this section is to explain some of the transcription conventions and Legitimation Code Theory Conventions. LCT conventions are adopted from (Maton, 2016)

Transcription Conventions

. ... Leading to the end of an utterance.

" .... Reporting speech or text (e.g. from documents, peers or teachers).

[] .... Clarification by researcher.

[…] .... Parts of transcript removed.

[unclear] .... Voice inaudible.

ESP Genre analysis Conventions

(^) .... the sequence of the stages in academic essays is represented by a caret sign (^) which means 'is followed by'.

Legitimation Code Theory Conventions

+/− .... Refers to stronger/weaker. Denotes Strengths of legitimation code concepts as relative on continua of strengths. They follow concept initials, e.g. SG+, SG-, SD+, SD-.

↑/↓ .... Refers to strengthening/weakening of legitimation code concepts along continua, e.g. SG↑ denotes 'strengthening semantic gravity' and SG↓ means 'weakening semantic gravity'. A movement from the more concrete meaning 'cutting down trees' to the more abstract meaning 'deforestation' is an instance of weakening semantic gravity (SG↓) whereas introducing the more abstract term first and then defining or illustrating it is an instance of strengthening semantic gravity (SG↑).

SG↓↓ .... refers to weaker semantic gravity that has been further weakened.

SG↑↑ .... refers to stronger semantic gravity that has been further strengthened.

SG— — — .... refers to generalization where a student text presents a general observation or draws a generalizing conclusion about the issues discussed.

SG— — .... refers to judgment where a student text goes beyond re-presenting or interpreting information to offer a value judgment or claim.

Stylistic Choices

SG— ....refers to interpretation where a student text explains a statement by interpreting information from the source or adding new information. May include use of other literature or personal experience.

SG+....................................refers to contextualization where a student text seeks to contextualize the discussion of the article, and the principles of communicative language teaching within practical teaching and learning examples in specific contexts and from own personal experience.

SG++....................................refers to summarizing description where a student text presents a descriptive response that summarizes or synthesizes information presented in the source, including re-wording and re-structuring of a number of arguments into one statement. Does not present new information from beyond the source.

SG+++....................................refers to reproductive description where a student text reproduces information directly from the source with no elaboration (i.e. quotations).

Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1   The Research Problem

The present research is driven by a focus on knowledge practices and the underlying principles that structure them. The research often focuses on generic and mental processes of learning that marginalize the differences between forms of knowledge being learnt. Thus, reducing knowledge to a reflection of mental process. Also, research focuses on the effects of power relations of different cultural and social communities on education, hence, reducing knowledge to a reflection of social power. The result is knowledge as an object is being backgrounded (Maton, 2014b, Maton et al., 2016a).

In academic writing, studies of academic writing often focus on linguistic, sociocultural and rhetorical aspects of academic writing (Gardner, 2008, Matsuda, 2003, Hyland, 2016, Javadi-Safa, 2018) or actors' perceptions of academic writing practices (Shaheen, 2012, Lea and Street, 1998). This reflects a tendency in the literature to focus more on 'knowing' and 'knowers' (Maton, 2014c; Szenes et al, 2015), or surface features of academic writing as in examining linguistic features and rhetorical moves. Less research focuses on the underlying principles structuring knowledge practices in student writing as they relate to knowledge itself.

Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) is presented as a theoretical and analytical framework that could offer a different consciousness of the nature of student academic writing. LCT goes beyond examining surface features to looking at the underlying principles of practices in the disciplines. More specifically, I use the dimension of Semantics gravity and density from LCT to examine the underlying principles of successful academic writing in the discipline of Applied Linguistics. This is because LCT Semantics, as an analytical tool, offers a different lens into the nature of knowledge practices of student academic writing by mapping variations in context-dependence (semantic gravity) and complexity (semantic density) in student work and actors' beliefs.

1.2   Research Questions and Aims

The main driving question for an investigation of academic writing practices and disciplinary expectations of tutors and students in Applied Linguistics is:

> How does a high-achieving writing task use meanings in terms of context-dependence, context-independence and condensations of meanings compared to lower-achieving essays in the MLTM module?

How are the disciplinary expectations of postgraduate writing in Applied Linguistics understood by students and lecturers in terms of their context-dependence, context-independence and condensations of meanings?

Other questions that also guided the analysis of the case study include:

What makes a good essay in terms of context-dependence, context-independence and condensation of meanings based on tutors' perspectives?

How do tutors' views of valued academic writing practices compare to those of students in relation to context-dependence and context-independence and condensations of meanings?

This study has three main research aims:

Develop an understanding of what is assessed as valued academic practices in the field of postgraduate academic writing in Applied Linguistics using the lens of LCT Semantics gravity and density.

Explore actors' beliefs of valued academic writing in the field of Applied Linguistics using the lens of LCT Semantics gravity and density.

Explore the pedagogic implications of the findings.

1.3   The Study

In this study, I examine the valued knowledge and academic writing practices in a module from an Applied Linguistics and TESOL Master's degree at a UK University. Applied Linguistics is a field that typically connects theoretical knowledge to practice and personal experiences. This makes it a suitable field in which LCT can be used as a lens to examine how theoretical knowledge and practice are employed in texts.

The research design is a case study in which I looked at students' assessed writing and tutors' disciplinary expectations in a module titled Modern Language Teaching Methods (MLTM). I made use of different research methods such as document analysis, text analysis, interviews, and classroom observations. The main data of the study comprised students' texts, tutors' interviews, and documents. Students' interviews were used for triangulation purposes and were not intended to be analysed in-depth. I conducted a within-case and cross-case analysis between the students' writing and tutors' expectations to arrive at the key findings of the study. The main theoretical and analytical framework used in this study was LCT Semantics. ESP genre theory analysis was conducted as a first step to make sense of the data before conducting an LCT Semantics.

The main contribution of this study is the use of LCT Semantics as a theoretical and analytical lens to examine the academic writing of students in the disciplines as well as the actors' beliefs in the field and the role those beliefs have on the production and assessment of academic writing in the field of Applied Linguistics. By examining both underlying principles of academic practices in terms of context-dependence and context-independence and condensations of meanings as well as actors' beliefs, this research avoids the limitations of previous studies (Lan, 2015, Shaheen, 2016) including studies which used the same theoretical lens of semantic gravity and density as they neglected the effects of actors' beliefs on academic practices (Szenes et al., 2015, Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2017).

Also, no study, up to my knowledge, has investigated the semantic gravity and density of students writing in the field of Applied Linguistics. Studies using the LCT semantic lens have looked at fields such as social work, business, political science, mathematics, physics (Wilmot, 2017, Szenes et al., 2015, Boryczko, 2020, Brooke, 2019, Macnaught, 2021). In this respect, this study joins and contributes to the growing literature that makes use of LCT concepts to study assessment practices (Walton, 2020, Van Heerden et al., 2017, Van Heerden, 2020) especially the assessment of academic writing in HE (Balawanilotu-Roach, 2017, Szenes et al., 2015). That is, the contribution of this study is theoretical, methodological and contextual.

1.4   Thesis Structure

In chapter 2, 'Literature Review', I discuss research streams with relevance to the project. I include details on current approaches to academic writing research and international students' challenges with academic writing, social justice and LCT-informed research on academic writing, which motivated this study. In Chapter 3, 'Theoretical Framework', I begin by explaining the social realist underpinnings of this study and Bernstein's and Bourdieu's foundational work on which LCT was built. I later present a brief explanation of the ESP genre theory and Swales' (1990) rhetorical move-step analysis which is used to make sense of students' texts and their social function. This is followed by Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) as the main explanatory framework for this study. I focus on the concept of semantic gravity and density and provide adapted Translation Devices or a mediating language between theory and data. Chapter 4, 'Research Design and Methodology', includes descriptions of research procedures and the rationale behind them, as well as key details about the setting and participants.

The next two chapters in the thesis present the data analysis and discussion. In Chapter 5, 'Analysis and discussion of student writing: Knowledge-oriented perspectives and enacted practices', I conduct a genre analysis of students' writing tasks followed by an LCT Semantics

gravity and density analysis of student essays. This chapter showcases the analysis of students' texts within the MLTM module. I conduct in-depth analysis of academic practices in students' texts as they appeared in the beginning, middle and end of essays. Chapter 6, 'Analysis and discussion of tutor and student comments: Knower-oriented perspectives and espoused practices', presents an analysis of tutors' and students' expectations of successful academic writing in the MLTM module and students' essays. I used the concepts of semantic gravity and density to explore their expectations. I carried out an in-depth analysis of assessors' expectations of valued practices in students' texts as they appear in the beginning, middle and end of essays. I conduct a within-case analysis of each case followed by a cross-case analysis to reveal the variations among tutors' and students' expectations. In the final Chapter 7, 'Implications and Conclusions', I present the main findings, my interpretation of the findings and their contribution to established research as well as the limitations of the research. I also present the pedagogical implications of the research and future research opportunities. I conclude by providing a summary of key findings.

1.5   Chapter Summary

In this opening chapter, I set out the research context and problem. I explained how an investigation of postgraduate academic writing in an Applied Linguistics module using the lens of LCT Semantics provides important contributions to knowledge. I also provided core details of the study approach and methods. The next chapter discusses the literature, which guided my choice of problem and context of study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review existing research on postgraduate academic writing to contextualise the current study within contemporary approaches to writing and to reveal what is known about the topic, how knowledge has come to be known, and what remains to be addressed in the field.

Academic writing in a second language has been examined through various theories, approaches and methods. These methods and approaches offer us different insights into the nature of academic writing, and each helps provide a piece of the puzzle. However, there seems to be an overfocus on linguistic and socio-cultural aspects of academic writing or actors' perceptions of academic writing practices or 'study skills' as in the academic literacy approaches. That is, there seems to be a focus on 'knowing' and 'knowers' rather than knowledge practices associated with what practitioners in HE judge as successful practices of academic writing (Maton, 2014c; Szenes et al, 2015). When the knowledge practices are examined, they are often examined in terms of surface features such as linguistic or rhetorical aspects. What underlines students' writing in terms of the use of theoretical, practical and complex meanings is not extensively researched.

I review studies that employed LCT Semantics as an analytical tool to examine those underlying principles of academic writing. These studies offer a different lens into the nature of knowledge practices of academic writing by mapping variations in context-dependence (semantic gravity) and complexity (semantic density) in student work. These studies aimed to overcome the limitation of studies on academic writing, which often neglect the nature of knowledge and relations within knowledge in academic writing within the disciplines. Following this approach to academic writing, I identified a need to examine the use of theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge and complex meanings in students' academic texts in Applied Linguistics. Driven by social justice issues in HE, the study aims to inform pedagogic and assessment practices and support student achievement by contributing to research that makes knowledge practices of HE academic writing more explicit.

2.2 Overview of Academic Writing Research in HE

In this section, I briefly review the literature on academic writing in a second language. I explore the theoretical lenses and methods conducted in the field so far, and the main insights and understanding emerging from this work. I also briefly discuss the challenges faced by international

and other students and discuss work that highlights discrepancies between what students and tutors do and expect in academic writing.

Writing is considered an important communication skill in HE. It is essential for academic success since it is the main assessment measure for academics to evaluate their students, and students who have weak writing abilities may be at risk of succeeding academically (Tan, 2011). Over the last two decades, second-language writing has evolved into a well-established field of inquiry characterised by defined areas of research and methods of inquiry (Hyland, 2016, Li, 2021). Topics of second language writing studies encompass diverse issues including literacy development, L2 writing theories, reading-writing connections, ideology and politics, text interactions, research methodology, curriculum design, writing assessment, technology-assisted writing, material design and so on (Fujieda, 2006). These research topics and methods are driven by certain ways of viewing writing. These views are diverse and include viewing writing as a completed activity, writing as a cognitive and process activity, writing as a social activity, and writing as an ideology (Hyland, 2016). These views should not be seen as exclusive but as related and complementary body of research to shaping a comprehensive theory in both L1 and L2 (Javadi-Safa, 2018). I briefly review some of these views and the insights that emerged from them.

Writing as a completed activity

In this view, studies focus on writers' text, that is, the written products they compose. The product approach focused on expository writing, made style the most important component of writing, and postulated that the writing process is linear, specified by writers before they begin to write (Kaplan, 1966 cited in Javadi-Safa, 2018). In this approach, writing is looked at as a system of forms, focusing on grammatical items or patterns to better understand the regularities we find in texts or student errors (Hyland, 2016). In this approach, studies and teaching of L2 writing focused mostly on linguistic knowledge and features of L2 written text such as lexicon, cohesion devices, syntax, vocabulary, sentence-level structure, discourse-level structure, error analysis, and the way L2 student text deviated from the L1 norm or contrastive rhetoric (Matsuda, 2003, Polio, 2003). Most of the research that focuses on writers' text is experimental, correlational and causal-comparative (Polio, 2003)

The main focus of these studies has been predominantly on the syntax area. These studies suggest that syntactic length could be a measure of writing fluency and that writing sentences need to be related to each other (Arefi, 1997). Some researchers have also investigated other issues such as the pragmatics of metadiscourse (Javadi-Safa, 2018). For example, Simin and Tavangar (2009) found a positive correlation between proficiency in a foreign language and the use of metadiscourse. Moreover, examples of studies that focused on writing as a product are

contrastive rhetoric studies which sought to find the cultural differences and variations reflected in students' writing. For example, Hinds (1983 cited in Fujieda, 2006) studied argumentative writing structures between English and Japanese writers and found differences between them. However, contrastive rhetoric studies were criticised for is deterministic, prescriptive, and essentialist orientation and for continuing a negative complex towards L2 writing and privileging the writing of native English speakers (Fujieda, 2006, Alharbi, 2017). Contemporary contrastive rhetoric studies are redefined and attempt to identify problems in writing faced by L2 writers and refer to the rhetorical strategies of the first language to explain them (Connor, 1996 cited in Javadi-Safa, 2018).

Writing as a process

Influenced by cognitive process theories, studies began to focus on the writers' processes, that is, how writers produce their texts (Wilmot, 2019). Writing here is viewed as a dynamic, non-linear, and recursive process of meaning-making and knowledge transformation rather than a product-oriented activity (Li, 2021). The process approach emphasises the activity of writing and the thinking process behind generating texts rather than concentrating on model texts (Wilmot, 2019). The process approach emphasizes several stages of writing such as brainstorming, drafting, revising and editing (Alharbi, 2017). Feedback is important in the process approach since this approach recommends the effectiveness of the intervention at all stages of writing (McDonough and Shaw, 2003 cited in Javadi-Safa, 2018).

Researchers in this approach seek to know what the process is like or ask descriptive questions such as what takes place in a peer review or the effects of some interventions or changes in writers over time (Polio, 2003). Studies that follow this approach examine the entire process and others focus on specific aspects of the process such as revision, fluency, or prewriting process. Other studies look at specific interventions in the writing process such as how students interpret and use teacher feedback while revising (Polio, 2003). The techniques used by these studies differ depending on the focus of the research and include stimulated recall, interviews, text analysis, observation, think-aloud protocols, and self-reports (Polio, 2003, Hyland, 2016).

Research into writing as a process revealed the complexity of planning and editing activities, the influence of different writing tasks, and the value of examining what writers do through a series of writing drafts (Hyland, 2016). Process-oriented studies also found that seventy per cent of the time of writing is spent on pre-writing activities such as reading and planning (Javadi-Safa, 2018). Also, numerous studies in the Arab world (Abdel-Latif, 2009; Al-Hazmi, 2006; Alhosani, 2006; Al-

Sharah, 1997 cited in Alharbi, 2017) confirm the effectiveness of the process approach in improving the EFL writing skills of Arab students.

However, the process approach has been criticized for concentrating only on the writing process and regarding it as the same for all audiences (Alharbi, 2017). The process approach does take into account the content of the text and the cultural and social aspects which influence various types of writing (Alharbi, 2017, Javadi-Safa, 2018). These criticisms of the process approach have contributed to the emergence of the genre approach to writing.

Writing as a social activity

Another influential approach is genre analysis. Drawing on the theory of systemic functional linguistics which explores the relationship between language and its social functions (Halliday and Hasan, 1989 cited in Li, 2021), the genre approach defines writing as a goal-oriented, staged social process (Martin, 1992 cited in Li, 2021). Swales (1990) initially defined the genre as a class of communicative events taken on by members of the discourse community that share some set of communicative purposes. That is, different types of writing are understood to correspond to different social contexts and serve different purposes such as research articles, reports, and sales letters (Flowerdew, 1993 cited in Alharbi, 2017). This approach treats texts as discourse and uses linguistic analysis to describe academic genres, moving from a focus on lexicogrammatical features to rhetorical moves and characteristic features of texts (Li, 2021, Wilmot, 2019). This approach seeks to discover how writers organize language to produce coherent, purposeful prose for particular groups of readers (Hyland, 2016).

Swales (1990) was the first to create the CARS model to analyse the introductions of research articles which inspired more research on genre analysis of research articles and beyond. Also, researchers conducted more genre-analysis studies using corpus linguistics, which refers to the study of language in use through corpora. The method used includes text analysis software such as concordance programs to analyse corpora to discover frequency, phraseology and collocation (Li, 2021). Nesi and Gardner (2012) is an example of these studies which used corpus linguistics combined with interviews to categorise genres of student academic writing in HE.

Because of the increasing awareness of genre, genre-based instruction is known as an important approach in L2 writing classes. For example, educators in EAP classes use genre studies from corpus linguistics to help L2 writers understand characteristics of particular genres through awareness of lexio-grammatical features and rhetorical organisation of genres (Li, 2021). Also, Imtiaz (2014) analysed a corpus of argumentative essays written by Pakistani university students using Hyland's model (1990) to analyse the move-step structure of essays. The study found that

students used some stages suggested by Hyland (1990), but they also included new moves which were not part of the model. His study recommends that teachers use this information to improve their teaching approach and materials for academic writing.

Writing as ideology

This approach also emphasises the importance of social context but stresses that relations of power exist in this context and that there are ideologies that maintain these power relations (Hyland, 2016). Ideology is concerned with how people experience the world and how these experiences are reproduced through their writing (Hyland, 2016). It argues that texts such as academic articles and student essays are ideologically shaped by their institutions and their dominant members (Hyland, 2016). To address the hegemony of English and its current academic writing practices, Suresh Canagarajah (1993 cited in Leki et al., 2008) called for the promotion of local language in the face of the hegemony of L2 academic writing. Studies also found that international postgraduate students who were encouraged by their supervisors to appreciate their own culture, individuality, and style of writing performed better than those who were criticised and were asked to follow the L1 writing norms (Lea and Street, 1998).

It was acknowledged that the teaching of writing and teacher feedback were unavoidably ideological and failing to acknowledge it was taking a political position affirming the status quo. This status quo worked against students' educational and material interests and was characterised by social injustices (Benesch, 1993 cited in Leki et al., 2008). These issues are explored more in critical pedagogy and critical EAP which explore the power dimension inherent in students' academic lives and the possibility of helping students negotiate that power (Bensench, 1999 cited in Leki et al., 2008). Power relations in discourse have been explored most extensively by researchers using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach attempts to unpack the ideologies that underpin discourse which became naturalised over time making people treat them as normal and acceptable features of discourse (Teo, 2006 cited in Hyland, 2016).

This study views writing as an ideological, socially situated practice rather than a set of neutral language skills. Following genre theory approaches, it also supports the view that to challenge dominant practices, we need to understand how they manifest in reality. To achieve this, I conduct textual analysis, however, instead of focusing on writing practices or linguistic features of texts, I consider the knowledge practices enacted in writing. I also combine that with examining the views of the participants both students and tutors.

To summarise, L2 writing has been studied using a wide range of approaches and research methods, each of which offers a different perspective on the study of L2 writing and provides a piece of the puzzle. These approaches and methods have been developed to do certain things and they differ in their capacity to do the same things (Hyland, 2016). We cannot say one method is better than the other in unpacking the intricacies of writing not only because these methods answer different questions, but also because they give us different answers to the same questions (Hyland, 2016).

Regarding academic writing challenges faced by postgraduate students in English-speaking countries, several studies sought to explore these challenges (Alharbi, 2017, Chen, 2003, Burris, 2020, Tang, 2013). Tang (2013) summarised these problems as linguistic problems observable through textual analysis, as well as mental or psychological issues (expectations, attitudes, culturally informed schemas) examined through ethnographic approaches.

Linguistic difficulties include difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, references, sentence construction, difficulties with reporting verbs, cohesive devices, hedging and boosting devices, and uncertainty about textual borrowing or citation practices and the concept of plagiarism (Tang, 2013, Burris, 2020, Al-Zubaidi, 2012). Students lacked academic skills such as summarising and paraphrasing (Al-Zubaidi, 2012) as well as demonstrating critical thinking (Alharbi, 2017). Studies also report on students' difficulties with translating declarative knowledge about academic writing requirements such as 'critically evaluate texts' into actual practice (Tang, 2013) as well as an inadequate understanding of the demands of the genres expected of them at the university (Tang, 2013, Al-Zubaidi, 2012). Other psychological problems include lack of confidence, lack of motivation and fear of being criticized (Alharbi, 2017, Al-Zubaidi, 2012).

Academic writing is also difficult for non-native English-speaking students and academics (Tang, 2013). The literature is abundant with studies on native-English-speaking novice academic writers facing difficulties when writing academically (e.g., Bartholomae, 1985; Ivanic, 1998; Ivanic and Simpson, 1992; Lillis, 2001; Lillis and Turner, 2001; Woodward-Kron, 2004 cited in Tang, 2013). Some of their problems include difficulties with citation, academic conventions, genre expectations, argumentation, word choice, cohesion, sentence structure and writer identity. These problems are not so different from those encountered by international students (Tang, 2013). This is due to the nature of academic writing as a social practice with practices recognised within the academic discourse community. These practices have to be learned, which makes academic discourse a foreign language for any writer (Tang, 2013).

The causes of these problems vary. They could be a matter of linguistic proficiency, but also it could be a result of having to undergo a shift in mindset where students need to move from

reproducing knowledge to critiquing and transforming it. Other causes include a lack of familiarity with discourse conventions or the testing and grading systems of the university (Al-Zubaidi, 2012). Moreover, not being prepared for postgraduate studies in Western education has been identified as one of the major reasons that affect students' ability to perform in tertiary education as they struggle to master the tone, form and content required for academic writing (Burris, 2020, Chen, 2003, Alharbi, 2017). Cultural differences and negative transfer of L1 in L2 writing have been identified as major causes since different academic traditions may value different styles and modes of argumentation (Tang, 2013, Al-Zubaidi, 2012, Chen, 2003, Alharbi, 2017). However, there is an increasing amount of research that challenges the stereotyping of international students and calls for appreciating their writing and what they can bring to the academic discourse (Tang, 2013).

As for tutors' and students' expectations, studies show that students and tutors had different expectations regarding their roles and ways of interaction (Chen, 2003) and academic writing expectations (Alharbi, 2017, Lea and Street, 1998). While students expected their tutors to be authoritative and transmit knowledge, tutors expected students to be responsible for their learning and to think and write critically (Chen, 2003). Tutors viewed British academic culture as 'critical' demanding students to conduct research and produce their own written work and be able to argue and be objective while students felt pressured and unprepared for British academic culture (Chen, 2003). Alharbi (2017) also reported that supervisors in a UK university saw developing arguments and arranging them into logical sentences in English as an area of difficulty for students. They also pointed out that students struggle to achieve a hierarchical organisation of information by developing headings and subheadings and linking ideas (Alharbi, 2017).

Lea and Street (1998) examined the contrasting expectations and interpretations of academic staff and students regarding students' written assignments in HE taking as a case study one new and old university in Southern England. Participants were asked to reflect upon the writing practices of the university, at different levels and in different courses, subject areas and disciplines. Staff and students both agreed that many of the difficulties they experienced with writing arose from the conflicting and contrasting requirements for writing on different courses and from the fact that these requirements were frequently left implicit (Lea and Street, 1998).

More specifically, Lea and Street (1998) found that staff referred to problems in student writing in a more generic sense including attention to syntax, punctuation, structure, argument, and clarity. In truth, staff expressed the epistemological and methodological issues in student writing through surface features and components of writing. Their disciplinary history had a clear influence on their conceptualisation and representation of what were the most important elements to look for

in students' writing. However, when it comes to feedback, tutors often struggled to make this explicit which resulted in vague and generic feedback and the use of familiar descriptive categories such as 'structure and argument', 'clarity', and 'analysis' (Lea and Street, 1998). This causes confusion and leads to difficulties for students who are not versed in that orientation of the discipline and are not yet acquainted with the disciplinary underpinnings of faculty feedback (Lea and Street, 1998).

Moreover, tutors and students had different expectations regarding writing conventions which caused more confusion for students. For example, many different conventions were to be found around the use of first-person pronouns in student writing even among individual tutors from the same course (Lea and Street, 1998). Another area of conflict between different perspectives on the writing process among tutors and students concerns the concept of 'plagiarism'. Lea and Street (1998) found that tutors had an unquestioned assumption that both tutor and student would share the same interpretation and understanding of plagiarism. Students often expressed anxieties about plagiarism in terms of their authority as writers. They were unclear about what constituted plagiarism and were concerned about how to acknowledge the authority of academic texts. They were confused about the conventions for referencing and found it difficult to understand the implicit relationship between acknowledging the source of the text and acknowledging the authority of the text (Lea and Street, 1998).

There is also no doubt that international students and others face challenges as they navigate the demands of academic writing. Students tend to have different interpretations and expectations of the requirements of successful academic writing compared to their tutors. To help those students succeed academically, academic literacy programmes are often designed to help students bridge the gap between their previous education and the demands of HE. In the next section, I provide a critique of academic literacy approaches and argue for a need for a different lens to examine international students' academic writing.

2.3   Academic Literacy Approaches to University Writing

UK higher education prioritize finding ways to support the academic success of postgraduate students especially international students through academic literacy support (Rusznyak, 2021). Interventions abound to support those students, and these include courses in life skills, academic literacy and notetaking are included in some curricula. In environments where class size is increasing and sources are constrained, the use of accessible but generic 'large class pedagogies' is advocated (e.g. Hornsby et al, 2013 cited in Rusznyak, 2021). Smaller-class tutorials are proposed as a means to provide students with social and emotional support (e.g. Underhill and

Mcdonald, 2010 cited in Rusznyak, 2021). While these generic approaches to support may contribute to a supportive learning environment for students, they can be 'knowledge blind' (Maton, 2014, p.7). For instance, they do little to reveal to students how knowledge is structured across different courses, and how knowledge is used to develop a specialist gaze in the field. Knowledge differs vastly over courses. These differences have profound implications for how courses need to be taught, and how achievement is recognised. The differences in knowledge between one course and another and one task and another are not always visible to students. If lecturers want to support the academic success of students, they need to make explicit how knowledge is structured and built into their courses (Rusznyak, 2021).

Brooke (2020) also argues that there appears to be an ongoing trend in language learning focusing on topics such as 'study skills' or a 'learner-centered' or 'inquiry-based' learning approach. These tend to downplay knowledge as the main object of study (Maton & Doran, 2017). They are "knower" rather than "knowledge-oriented" (Maton, 2013, 2014). Brooke (2020) states this is prevalent in much of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) field. Therefore, Macken-Horarik (2011) argues that there is an orientation in EAP towards processes (the "how" of English) rather than towards content (the "what" of English). Similarly, Deng (2018 cited in Brooke, 2020, p.230) recently claimed that "the relative absence of attention to knowledge has something to do with the 'learnification' of educational discourse – the global shift towards talking about learning rather than education" (p.335). These practices of downplaying knowledge have been lamented in studies across faculties (Clarence, 2014a, Clarence and McKenna, 2017, Georgiou et al., 2014, Szenes et al., 2015, Yates and Collins, 2010). As Clarence and McKenna (2017) point out, strategies developed to explain the knowledge that curriculum values need to be clear so that students can be guided to use the knowledge successfully.

International postgraduate students receive a lot of support in terms of academic literacy, however, there is less support in relation to dealing with knowledge in their disciplines (Rusznyak, 2021). Also, dealing with disciplinary knowledge is not part of EAP programmes, which many of these students join before the start of their MA degree. Existing approaches in EAP can help students see linguistic and textual patterns, but they do not offer a means for seeing distinctions in content or knowledge (Kirk, 2017).

One of the writing challenges faced by students in a British master's programme is to close the gap between pre-degree academic literacy courses such as English for Academic Purposes preparatory or pre-sessional programmes, which most British universities offer, and Master's degree programmes. While preparatory EAP is useful preparation for university writing, it does not always engage students in the evaluation of their academic fields' latest research, concepts

and methods. Therefore, students who take EAP training also struggle to assemble texts within their disciplines (Roach, 2017). She further explains that EAP programmes tend to be limited to engaging students with procedural knowledge (knowing how), and propositional knowledge (knowing that) rather than content knowledge (knowing what). However, what knowledge practices are valued in student academic writing remains mostly known only to those who have access to the disciplines (Roach, 2017).

Maton (2014) also notes that knowledge and knowledge practices are at the heart of education and the University. It is what is produced, re-contextualized and reproduced in social fields of practice; thus, what students are asked to think and write critically about, and on which they are assessed. Msusa (2019) adds there is an overfocus on student-centered engagement, learning and teaching methods and the acquisition of academics including writing skills, but at the expense of focusing on knowledge itself, which is the actual subject of the learning. This knowledge is the object that is meant to shape both the learning and the skills that need to be acquired, therefore the lack of a deeper theoretical understanding of how this knowledge is structured may hinder the efforts to support students in their academic writing. Therefore, there is a need to focus on the actual knowledge as an important aspect of understanding student academic writing and the strengths and weaknesses of their writing (Msusa, 2019).

Clarence (2017) adds that writing centers have emancipatory and student-centered goals that are at odds with wider understandings within universities about the nature of academic writing. These centers view writing as a skill that students should either already have or be able to master within an extra-disciplinary space such as a writing center or a writing literacy development course. Grimm captures this well when she argues that writing centers are often seen as "handmaidens of autonomous literacy - a value-free, culturally neutral notion of literacy" (Grimm 1996:524 cited in Clarence, 2017, p.4). Therefore, there are writing centers that tend to try to teach students how to write in ways that construe writing less as a meaning-making, contextualized, value-laden practice that shifts depending on the context that students are writing within and about, and more as a decontextualized set of skills that, if applied well, will lead to success (Clarence, 2017). She further explains that this understanding of writing as a decontextualized, autonomous and value-free process underpins the 'skills discourse' so pervasive in higher education. To help students become more successful writers within their disciplines or fields in the longer term, we need to resist overfocus on writing as a 'skill' (Clarence, 2017).

Writing is infused with certain values and shaped by particular conventions. These values and conventions indicate not only what counts as legitimate knowledge, but also what counts as

legitimate ways of presenting, debating, critiquing and disseminating that knowledge to the discourse communities in which one is working and writing (Lillis and Scott, 2007 cited in Clarence, 2017). This thesis understands writing as a value-laden and a social and rhetorical practice to achieve a certain purpose within the social and academic context rather than a set of decontextualized 'skills'. Therefore, writing needs to be examined within disciplines.

Despite the support academic literacies provide students with, it does not necessarily give us firm practical tools, particularly in relation to thinking about knowledge in the disciplines (Clarence, 2017). Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) can enable a study of the underlying structure of the knowledge itself, offering an insight into what is deemed to be its 'legitimate' indicators for success, status and achievement. By focusing on the structures that lie beneath the surface appearances of knowledge, LCT aims at revealing the tacit principles embodied by these knowledge practices, and may be capable of providing often hidden 'knowledge about knowledge' (Maton and Moore, 2010). Msusa (2019) explains that LCT theorists propose that knowledge itself is an artefact that needs to be given priority in research, which allows an exploration into the characteristics that enable it to be created and developed over time and the modes of its creation and development. Focusing on knowledge structures enables an exploration of their effect on educational policies and practices (Maton & Moore 2010).

This study explores content area literacy and how writing is used as a knowledge-building tool by tutors and students at a postgraduate level in a UK university. I focus on writing within the disciplinary and academic contexts in which meanings and knowledge are produced and debated. The study aims to examine effective and less effective texts produced by students as knowledge-building devices; a purpose often neglected in the research on content area literacy (Martínez et al. 2015; Newell 2006 cited in Svensson, 2019). This study; therefore, does not only inform disciplinary practice but also the field of academic literacies. It could also be useful to guide EAP tutors, disciplinary tutors, and students into understanding the nature of knowledge perceived to be 'valued' or 'unvalued', 'critical' or 'uncritical' in particular modules or tasks in a particular field of study.

2.4   LCT Educational Research and Academic Writing

In this section, I briefly explain Bernstein's (1990, 2000) pedagogic device, which enables us to understand how Legitimation Code Theory was enacted for research and educational practice, I briefly explain LCT and the tools of semantic gravity and density and focus on drawing insights from educational research which employed these tools, especially in relation to the practice of

academic writing in HE. Finally, I draw attention to the focus of this study and how it aims to employ LCT Semantics.

When discussing the literature on Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), it is important to explain Bernstein's (1990, 2000) pedagogic device. The pedagogic device contains the field of production where knowledge is produced (e.g. university research department, the field of recontextualisation, where this knowledge is selectively reshaped to become a pedagogic discourse in curricular material, and the field of reproduction, where these curricular materials are again selectively reshaped to become teaching, learning and assessment practices in the classroom (Kirk, 2018). LCT research exists in the field of production, but there are two types of LCT research. The first type of LCT research aims to help researchers conduct more research using LCT-informed methodologies. Examples of these studies include (Maton and Doran, 2017b, Maton and Doran, 2017a) who combined LCT and Systemic Functional Linguistics to develop a 'translation device' to analyse semantic density in English discourse. Other examples include how to use LCT to develop translation devices in qualitative research (Chen and Maton, 2016) and developing an instrument for enacting LCT concepts in quantitative methods (Howard and Maton, 2016). The second type of LCT research is aimed at improving teaching and learning and addresses issues in the recontextualisation and reproduction field. The studies examined below are examples of this type of research.

Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) extends and integrates Bernstein's (1999, 2000) vertical/horizontal discourses and hierarchical/horizontal knowledge structures to analyse the underlying principles of knowledge practices. LCT conceptualises Bernstein's concepts as semantic gravity and semantic density. First, 'semantic gravity' gives a measure of abstraction and concreteness or context-independent meanings and context-dependent meanings. Weaker semantic gravity indicates a greater abstraction from context and stronger semantic gravity indicates meanings closely tied to a context such as anecdotal writing. O'Sullivan and Ingold (2017, pp.39-40) offer examples of 'this apple' and 'diet' to explain stronger and weaker semantic gravity. 'This apple' refers to a particular piece of fruit, which you need to be here and there to see, and to know exactly what is being talked about. This means it has strong semantic gravity and it is bound to a specific context. However, the meaning of the noun 'diet' is not dependent upon a specific context, and it does not refer to an object in time and space, but to a concept and so has weak semantic gravity. When a text moves constantly between abstract meanings and concrete meanings, the text is described as showing a 'semantic wave'. To visualize abstraction and concreteness in a text and over time, LCT researchers use 'semantic profiles', which are visual representations of how meanings change over text time (Maton, 2014b, Macnaught et al., 2013)

Second, 'semantic density' conceptualizes complexity in terms of the condensation of meanings within practices (symbols, concepts, expressions, gestures, actions, clothing, etc.). The strength of semantic density can vary along a continuum. The stronger the semantic density (SD+), the more meanings are condensed within practices; the weaker the semantic density (SD–), the fewer meanings are condensed. Put another way, semantic density explores the relationality of meanings: the more meanings are related, the stronger the semantic density (Maton, 2014b). O'Sullivan and Ingold (2017, pp.39-40) offer examples of 'this apple' and 'diet' to show examples of stronger and weaker semantic density. Apple refers to a particular piece of fruit and thus shows weak semantic density whereas a lot of meanings are packed into the word 'diet'. It contains the ideas: *food, someone eats* and *regularly*. Thus, the word 'diet' has relatively strong semantic density.

As argued previously in the chapter, the literature on academic writing often focuses on linguistic, socio-cultural, and rhetorical features of academic writing or challenges that students and tutors face with academic writing in HE (Shaheen, 2016). These practices are either knower-focused or address surface issues without examining the underlying principles structuring knowledge practices in student work (Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2021, Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2017). Studies employing LCT Semantics help us understand academic writing since they address the underlying principles of knowledge practices in student writing.

There are several studies which analysed the underlying principles of knowledge-building in various institutions, disciplines and student writing using the tools of semantic gravity and density (Maton, 2009, Maton, 2013, Macnaught et al., 2013). These studies suggest the importance of semantic gravity and density in student work as well as its importance for writing pedagogy (Maton, 2009, Maton, 2013, Macnaught et al., 2013). For example, studies suggest that combinations of strengthening and weakening of semantic gravity and density are rewarded in student work and help to build knowledge in classroom practices (Macnaught et al., 2013, Maton, 2014a, Clarence, 2014a, Matruglio et al., 2013). O'Sullivan and Ingold (2017, p.40), for instance, found that the degree of semantic density and semantic gravity used in students' texts affects the marks they receive. For example, texts that employ vocabulary with a stronger semantic density such as 'diet, nutrients, vitamins, cells, consumptions, maintenance' are judged as better than a text that employs vocabulary with a weaker semantic density such as 'people, food, heart, bones, lose weight, fat, healthy' (O'Sullivan and Ingold, 2017, p.40). Quinn (2021) used LCT Semantics to analyze two student portfolios in the field of academic development and demonstrated that semantic waves, where knowledge is transformed between relatively decontextualized, condensed meanings and context-dependent, simplified meanings are a key characteristic of the kind of cumulative learning that is required for professional learning. Similarly, Svensson (2019)

analysed student texts and revealed that each text had a distinct semantic profile, but also that a number of the texts displayed significant semantic waves of density and gravity, such that these texts would contribute to cumulative knowledge-building. This was primarily true of the texts where the semantic waves exhibited both stronger semantic density such as the use of technical words and nominalisations and weaker semantic gravity where abstract meanings are used.

Moreover, the notion of critical analysis is an important requirement in postgraduate academic writing (Wingate, 2012). Evaluative critique genres such as the writing task examined in this study are assigned to develop students' criticality (Woodward-Kron, 2002, Devira and Westin, 2021). There are studies which examined tutors' and students' perceptions and challenges with critical academic writing practice (Shaheen, 2016, Shaheen, 2012). However, these studies are considered 'knower' focused and leave a methodological gap in the exploration of critical practice by describing what students and tutors think and understand as 'critical practice' in the HE context, rather than focusing on what students demonstrate through their assignments as evidence of critical analysis (Tilakaratna, 2019). Szenes and Tilakaratna (2021) argue that there is a need to move past the focus on the 'perceptions' of what constitutes critical academic writing to examine knowledge practices in successful student texts identified as critical.

LCT literature sought to uncover evidence of critical practice through the analysis of how it is deployed by students through an analysis of discourse (Brooke, 2017, Szenes et al., 2015, Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2017, Kirk, 2017, Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2021). To illustrate, researchers in the LCT domain argue that knowledge across the curricula can be seen to simultaneously comprise both generic and specific attributes (Brooke, 2017; Szenes, Tilakaratna, & Maton, 2015; Maton, 2013). They further explain that regardless of the subject field, the outcome of effective critical writing is manifested by the interaction between different knowledge structures. High-achieving students demonstrate an ability to move from abstract knowledge to contextualised knowledge; that is, from degrees of abstract, context-independent knowledge to degrees of situated empirical context-dependent knowledge and vice-versa, a movement that forms part of semantic waves. These waves can be effectively described and analysed by the process of semantic waving. Research used this technique to analyse papers from differing disciplines which are considered as high-achieving work by lecturers (Szenes, Tilakaratna, & Maton, 2015; Maton, 2013). The findings suggest that the ability to make these transitions is a common achievement goal and could be seen as a generic attribute of student writing. Szenes, Tilakaratna, and Maton (2015) state:

> Mastering semantic gravity to achieve a high range is crucial to achievement across the disciplinary map. […] we are suggesting that waving, weaving, and a high range may also

be generic attributes of knowledge practices associated with demonstrating critical

thinking (p. 588).

Similarly, Szenes et al. (2015) analysed examples of critical reflection texts to illustrate how different forms of knowledge are expressed in those texts in particular discipline areas: business and social work. Using LCT Semantics revealed that successful reflective writing in the tasks examined shows movements between different forms of knowledge, which they refer to as 'semantic waves' in which more context-dependent forms of knowledge such as practice, are interwoven with less context-dependent forms of knowledge such as theories and abstract concepts. Tilakaratna and Maton (2015) suggest that semantic waves are possibly a shared characteristic across the disciplines and this growing field of research is therefore potentially transformative for educational practices from a diverse range of fields. As Szenes, Tilakaratna, and Maton (2015, p. 573) have noted, semantic gravity waves can be seen as a generic attribute of knowledge across curricula. Maton (2014b) argues that mastery of semantic waving represents 'powerful knowledge' (p. 181). Indeed, he (ibid) argues that these shifts in meaning are 'rewarded across subject areas and levels of education' (p. 188). The concept can therefore inform our educational practices in multiple disciplines. An investigation in the field of Applied Linguistics can determine whether this feature is shared in academic writing in this field.

Brooke (2017) states that it is the use of theoretical frameworks as analytical lenses to interpret empirical data and integrate knowledge, which shows effective critical practice. In other words, the interplay between theory and empirical exemplification demonstrates effective critical writing and is manifested in language in observable ways. He stated that when engaged in effective cohesive academic writing, meanings tend to transit from more general, abstract or context-independent to more specific, context-dependent knowledge and back again (Brooke, 2017) Waving can represent effective academic writing. Brooke (2017) explained that students often fail to write a well-thought-out paper because they may not refer to the literature/ known theories, or they may simply list out theories without actually applying them to the context. This may be depicted by low or high flat lines in gravity waving respectively. Low flat lines refer to a text that remains mostly tied to a specific context such as anecdotal writing whereas high flat lines refer to a text that is highly theoretical and abstract and does not connect ideas to examples and specific contexts. How knowledge moves from context-independent to context-dependent meanings needs to become one important way to represent the product of successful academic writing.

In this study, I aim to examine how successful students show the capacity to critically evaluate a research article in a manner that is valued within their disciplinary contexts. By making explicit the academic practices by which these students construct their assignments, this study intends to

contribute to demystifying the knowledge demands of demonstrating critical academic writing in applied disciplines. More specifically, I examine how students move between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge in a way that is valued in their subject areas. I also focus on the similarities and differences in academic practices between high-scoring and lower-scoring assignments as they are deployed by students in the context being studied. I also analyze the nature of the knowledge that tutors assess and identify as valued academic practices to identify 'blind spots' which can only be achieved through different lenses. As Moore and Maton (2001, 154) argue "describing what is obscured by a blind spot is extremely difficult, for what you are trying to point to simply cannot be seen through the current lens."

The field of Applied Linguistics and TESOL has been chosen as the context of this study because no study, up to my knowledge, has investigated the semantic gravity and density of students writing in this field. Studies using the LCT semantic lens have looked at fields such as social work, business, political science, mathematics, and physics (Wilmot, 2017, Szenes et al., 2015, Boryczko, 2020, Brooke, 2019). Another reason to examine student essays in the field of Applied Linguistics is because Applied Linguistics is a field that typically connects theoretical knowledge to practice and personal experiences. This makes it a suitable field in which LCT can be a useful lens to examine how theoretical knowledge and practice are employed in texts. With semantic gravity and density, these different knowledge realms (theoretical and practical) and how they interact in student texts can be surfaced. Being able to track movements between concrete and abstract knowledge when engaging in academic writing and making these movements explicit to students is valuable, as research has shown that this is quite hard to do (Wilmot, 2018). In this respect, this study joins the growing literature that engages LCT concepts to study assessment practices in which a successful integration of theory and practice is expected (Walton, 2020, Van Heerden et al., 2017, Van Heerden, 2020).

2.5   Social Justice in Higher Education

This research has been motivated by the need to understand the assessment of academic writing practices of discussion essays specifically to inform evidence-based pedagogy that makes visible those disciplinary practices and expectations to both academic practitioners and students. The literature rarely discusses that the capacity to do so is only accessible to a few students with the right dispositions and education who are capable of tacitly acquiring the valued practices in the field (Szenes and Tilakaratna, 2021).

Moreover, academic literacy can be challenging for postgraduate students, especially for those coming from different educational programmes and who are new to the UK HE system (Szenes et

al., 2017). They may not understand the discourse, practices, and procedures of HE and may not know what standards are expected of them. They may be familiar with personal forms of writing in which incorporation of theory is not required, or they may be familiar with traditional academic essay genres that are heavily theory-driven, with little or no place for either the practical or the personal. However, they may be unfamiliar with the expectations surrounding the combination of theory, practice and evaluation that is often required in postgraduate writing in applied disciplines (Szenes et al., 2017).

Higher education internationally has widened access to a greater number and more diverse cohort of students; therefore, universities are no longer dealing with homogenous groups of students who share the same educational and sociocultural background. The contact time between lecturers/tutors and students is diminishing, given the demands being made on academic staff as universities continue to massify. Also, the mixing of home and international students is becoming increasingly common in UK universities. There is also a recognition that academic discourse is nobody's first language (Bourdieu et al., 1994). As a result of this, not all students will necessarily acquire tacit academic practices in the same manner or at the same speed (Wilmot, 2021).

Postgraduate academic writing is one such practice. Despite research showing that postgraduate academic writing is a social practice that students learn over time through the socialization process, some tutors may assume that academic writing is a skill that students should already possess before commencing their studies (Starke-Meyerring, 2014 cited in Wilmot, 2021). However, we can no longer assume that learning to write through socialization processes will occur in equivalent ways or with similar results given the changes in higher education. What is needed, therefore, is more explicit teaching of academic writing (Wilmot, 2021).

All university teachers are in the business of teaching students who have diverse abilities and whose academic success is more likely when the academic practices are made explicit (Winberg et al., 2021). According to Bernstein (2004 cited in Quinn, 2021), there are two generic types of pedagogy: visible and invisible. In visible pedagogy, the practices for success are explicitly communicated to students, whereas in invisible pedagogy, the required practices are largely implicit. The extent to which students can see the evaluative rules in a learning context is closely related to whether they bring the requisite 'cultural capital' with them into the classroom (Bourdieu, 1986 cited in Quinn, 2021). In the module examined for this study, the students come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and some struggle with the kinds of literacy practices required for the degree. For this reason, we have to continue to strive to make more visible the required writing practices and the evaluative criteria of the courses if we want to level the playing

field. As Morais (2002, p.568) states 'explicating the evaluative criteria is the most crucial aspect of a pedagogic practice to promote higher levels of learning of all students'.

There is a need to increase social justice through making access to academic success in HE. Winberg et al. (2021, p.2) argue that knowledge, more specifically, forms a blind spot which needs to be addressed:

> It has been noted that the concern with how higher education often serves to reproduce social inequalities rather than dismantle them has led to a curious blind spot in much of the research – that of knowledge itself.

UK universities offer academic support to international students; however, there seems to be a 'blind spot' as they have not paid attention to the nature of the knowledge involved in student practice, especially in terms of relations within knowledge. Winberg et al. (2021, p.2) state:

> In looking at how curricula are structured and what happens in our lecture theatres, many studies have failed to consider how it is that certain knowledge is legitimated and others are not, and how it is that each discipline structures its knowledge and determines the kind of knowers who are deemed worthy of disciplinary membership.

There is a need for a better understanding of postgraduate academic writing so that we may begin to find ways to teach it more effectively. This calls for a different way to analyze postgraduate academic writing itself – one that can offer practical insights and tools for lecturers and tutors to use to identify and teach successful features of writing.

LCT Semantics, as a conceptual tool, may be able to make what is often a covert aspect of academic writing more explicit and demonstrable. Furthermore, such analysis may be able to inform more effective pedagogical strategies for postgraduate academic writing in particular and academic writing more generally, which can open access to all students at the postgraduate level. This is an important social justice issue in all higher education contexts (Wilmot, 2017)

Winberg et al. (2021) explain LCT is increasingly used as a primary framework to analyse the legitimation codes that enable or constrain cumulative knowledge-building in educational contexts. Cumulative knowledge building refers to 'knowledge that builds on previous knowledge; knowledge that is coherent, that lays a strong foundation for further knowledge-building and that can be applied in innovative ways in a range of contexts' (Quinn and Vorster, 2016, p.1033). LCT may be able to make the basis of the success of any practice explicit. This is important to achieve in HE as these practices can be taught and learned more explicitly and they can be challenged and changed. Theorizing teaching and learning with LCT concepts could enable university teachers to

develop a deeper understanding of how programmes, teaching and assessment could be better structured to enhance students' knowledge and, ultimately, contribute to their academic success (Winberg et al., 2021). Winberg et al. (2021) also state that LCT can reveal the tacit practices for success for both student development and staff development, as well as pedagogical changes, interventions or strategies that can be designed to achieve the designed changes. More specifically, the semantic gravity tool can be significant by having relevance for all students across the university, something being called for more widely in the literature (Kirk, 2017). Semantic gravity may offer ways to conceptualize and make visible educational knowledge practices for researchers, teachers and learners. (Kirk, 2017).

For example, Grange and Blackie (2021) state that LCT Semantics is useful in several ways. First, it may show us another way of mapping variations in context-dependence (semantic gravity) and complexity (semantic density) in student work. The distinction between complexity and context dependence is very useful as it can reveal blind spots in traditional teaching and assessment. Second, Semantics raises questions at the heart of HE such as how do we evaluate in such a way that we truly open the doors of knowledge to all who desire to enter? And how do we reveal the means through which outsiders have the possibility of becoming true contributors to the field? If teachers fail to do this, educational research becomes another way in which social injustices are continued (Maton, 2014; Grange and Blackie, 2021).

Moreover, Wilmot (2021) explains that profiling of texts using LCT Semantics is an effective modelling tool for students in classrooms, and is argued to be useful to postgraduate writing pedagogy as well. Profiles provide a useful visual of how knowledge is being built in a text and are useful tools for gaining an overall impression of texts as well as comparing the structure of knowledge in different texts. Tracking the movements between concrete and abstract knowledge in postgraduate writing, as well as making these moves explicit to students, is valuable as research shows that this is not an easy aspect of writing (Hammond, 2018). Furthermore, it is an aspect that postgraduate students need to learn as it enables knowledge transfer by gaining insights from one research context and generalizing them across contexts.

While tacit knowledge-building practices in academic writing are often inherently 'known' by masters in the field (Parry, 1998 cited in Wilmot, 2017), they are rarely defined and seldom explicitly taught, which results in students relying on feedback comprising relatively empty descriptors such as 'sophisticated' and 'nuanced' (Wilmot, 2017). Furthermore, Wilmot (2021) states that essential to the development of meaning-making is feedback from those who know disciplinary academic writing practices best – lecturers and tutors in the discipline. Therefore, written feedback and interviews with tutors are important to analyze and understand what is

communicated as valued practices. This is the contribution that this study offers to university teachers and students in Applied Linguistics or EAP programs, who are developing programs, designing teaching and learning materials and activities or inducting students into the valued practices of the profession (Winberg et al., 2021).

In this research, I aim to explore different ways of understanding academic writing in Applied Linguistics to support student achievement by contributing to research that makes knowledge practices more explicit. I show how some challenges in this field in terms of writing assessment, can be addressed through the appropriate use of LCT tools. Since all students need to be able to access what Bernstein (2000 cited in Quinn, 2021) called 'realization rules', that is, they all need to be able to produce what counts as legitimate texts to demonstrate their learning on the course equally well. Using some tools offered by LCT to analyze assessed HE academic writing, I aim to enhance understanding of exactly how, in their writing, some participants, were able to provide successful academic writing practices. Like Winberg et al. (2021) and other studies in the LCT literature, I do not aim to generate 'rules' for academic practice that should be followed per se, but rather to make explicit the often-tacit practices for success on the course, and to inform pedagogic and assessment practices.

2.6   Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored the research landscape and concluded that multiple approaches and methods have been used to study academic writing in HE and how each provide a piece of the puzzle. This study views writing as an ideological, socially situated practice rather than a set of neutral language skills. Following genre theory approaches, it also supports the view that to challenge practices, we need to understand how they manifest in reality. I also reviewed the literature on international and home students' academic writing challenges and the discrepancies between their expectations and their tutors', and showed how tutors often use descriptive categories that are both generic and vague and do not help make the disciplinary academic writing practices more explicit.

I provided a critique of academic literacy approaches and their overfocus on 'study skills' or 'life skills' and social and emotional support, as well as their lack of focus on differences between knowledge practices in the disciplines. I argued that academic writing in disciplines also needs to be studied to overcome the neglect of the nature of knowledge in academic texts within the disciplines. A need was identified, therefore, for a study that investigates the enactment of knowledge practices in students' writing in the disciplines in HE.

I examined how LCT Semantics as an analytical tool can offer a different lens into the nature of knowledge practices of student academic writing by mapping variations in context-dependence (semantic gravity) and complexity (semantic density) in student work. Studies which employed LCT Semantics aimed to overcome the limitation of studies on academic writing, which often neglect the nature of knowledge and relations within knowledge in academic writing within the disciplines and instead focus on surface rhetorical and linguistic aspects of academic writing or actors' perceptions of academic writing practices.

Studies which used LCT Semantics as an analytical tool to examine student work suggest that combinations of strengthening and weakening semantic density are rewarded in student work (Macnaught, 2021). Studies which traced movements in the degrees of context-dependence and condensations of meanings of knowledge within academic writing practice including critical reflection writing suggest that 'semantic waves', where knowledge is transformed between relatively decontextualised, condensed meanings and context-dependent, simplified meanings, are a key characteristic of academic literacy (Szenes et al., 2015, Brooke, 2019, Svensson, 2019).

Researchers also argue that providing students with semantic gravity profiles could enable them to understand relations within knowledge and better understand the essential practice of successful academic writing (Brooke, 2019). They also argue that it is important to make explicit the relations between context-dependent and context-independent knowledge structures to inform educational practice (Clarence, 2017).

Driven by a social justice perspective, I argued that only a few students with the right dispositions and education are capable of tacitly acquiring the valued practices in the field (Szenes and Tilakaratna, 2021). The knowledge practices of academic writing more specifically need to be made explicit to both students and practitioners.

I move now to a discussion of the theoretical and analytical frameworks selected to analyse the knowledge practices in students in texts in a module from an Applied Linguistics MA programme. I introduce the philosophical underpinnings of the study and Legitimation Code Theory, its intellectual origins and how LCT Semantics was employed to analyse the theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge and complex meanings in the module and tasks selected.

Chapter 3   Theoretical Framework

3.1   Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed existing literature on postgraduate academic writing in order to contextualise the current study within contemporary approaches to writing and to reveal what is known about the topic, how this knowledge has come to be known, and what remains to be addressed in the field.

In particular, the apparent overlooking of knowledge itself as an object of inquiry was shown to obscure potentially important differences in how knowledge is being understood and enacted by academic writing students and tutors. Therefore, I identified a need for a study that investigates the disciplinary expectations and enactment of knowledge practice in academic writing in HE. This chapter sets out the conceptual framework that was employed to address this need.

The aim of this study was to make visible the reproduction practices on an Applied Linguistics MA module, so as to better understand the principles guiding the reproduction of academic writing in higher education. This required an approach that could move beyond the descriptive towards the underlying features of the academic writing practices in focus. I chose social realism as a framework and the conceptual toolkit offered by Legitimation Code Theory.

This chapter introduces the ontological and epistemological perspective on which this study was built. This is followed by Swales (1990) rhetorical move-step analysis which was used to make an initial sense of student writing. Subsequent sections introduce a Legitimation Code Theory and explores its intellectual origins. Finally, I explain the 'translation devices' (Chen and Maton, 2016) for moving between the data and theory.

3.2   Social Realism

Research is about constructing new knowledge. When we do research, we make claims to the 'truth' based on our understanding of reality (ontology) as well as of how we gain knowledge of what exists (epistemology). The ontological and epistemological assumptions we make can be seen as ideological positions of the researcher which will have a direct effect on how research is constructed and the claims made as a result.

This research is guided by a social realist theory, especially Basil Bernstein's social realist theory of knowledge, which was later developed into Legitimation Code Theory by Karl Maton. Social realism is also based on the philosophy of critical realism. This section briefly outlines the calls for

a stronger focus on knowledge as an object of study in educational research and subsequent sections outline the theoretical and analytical concepts that are used in this study to analyse knowledge practices in academic writing.

Bernstein has been the primary influence on social realist thinking, but it also draws on the ideas of many others including Bourdieu, Collins, and Bhaskar and linguists such as Halliday and Martin. These researchers come from different disciplines, but what unites them is they put ''knowledge as an object centre-stage in thinking about education' (Maton and Moore, 2010, p.2).

Social realist theory is termed social because it argues that all knowledge is socially produced by communities of knowledge producers and is realist in the sense it argues that knowledge is about an objective world (Giqwa, 2018). This means knowledge exists independently of our social constructions of it and that the world is made up of the social and the natural world. In the educational field, social realism calls particularly for a focus on knowledge as an object of study. Maton and Moore (2010, p.10) state:

> Knowledge is the very basis of education as a social field of practice; it is the production, recontextualization, teaching and learning of knowledge that makes education a distinct field . . . social realism puts knowledge as an object centre-stage in thinking about education.

Why look particularly at knowledge? Social realism is a reaction to dominant approaches to the sociology of education. The empiricist approach, with its realist ontology and objectivist epistemology, views knowledge as being objective, de-contextualised, and certain (Maton, 2014b). The interpretivist approach with its relativist ontology and (social) constructivist epistemology, is associated with academic practices that are concerned with learning processes and view knowledge as individually or socially constructed and are only visible in relation to an individual cognition (Ellery, 2016). In this view, knowledge is reduced to knowing. In both approaches, the intrinsic properties and powers of knowledge itself are ignored (Muller, 2000). This creates what (Maton, 2014b, p.7) calls 'knowledge-blindness'.

Social realism offers a new way of looking at knowledge and overcomes what (Maton, 2014, p.7) calls 'knowledge-blindness'. It recognises the social nature of knowledge production, but also allows for knowledge to have an objective reality and thus cannot be completely reduced to the social. Knowledge viewed in this way allows it to be an object of study that has structures, emergent properties, tendencies and powers of its own, all of which can have consequences for learning (Archer, 1998)

The social realist approach of Maton and Moore (2010) is built on ideas drawn from the philosophy of critical realism. Critical realism with its ontological realism and epistemological

relativism can be described as a 'middle ground' position between idealism and empiricism (Ellery, 2016).

On the one hand, empiricism maintains that there is an objective reality which exists independently of us and that our knowledge of this reality is limited to what we can perceive by our senses. Therefore, empirical confirmation and induction are important because empiricists refuse to acknowledge reality on non-empirical objects (Arbee, 2012). This view has been criticized for neglecting the social and the influence of values. This positivist view focuses on knowledge rather than the knower.

On the other hand, idealism maintains that there is no objective reality or external reality. This means knowledge cannot be limited to what we experience through our senses only. Instead, we can understand reality through deductive reasoning. Moreover, idealism views reality as 'mentally perceived' and is socially constructed, which means there cannot be only one reality (Arbee, 2012). Idealism has been criticized for its relativist approach since understanding of reality depends on individual perspective and consciousness. Idealism collapses knowledge and knower. Therefore, constructivist approaches emphasise the knower rather than the knowledge and tend to focus on power relations (Deetz et al., 2007).

Approaches based on realism emphasise that knowledge is a social product that is fallible, but that an objective reality exists, and that the purpose of knowledge is to understand that objective reality even if our knowledge is always impartial and socially mediated (Wheelahan, 2010). One form of realism is critical realism, which is associated particularly with the work of Roy Bhaskar (1998, 2008). Critical realism, as a depth ontology, considers the world to be stratified and analyses structures and agents. It is based on three principles: 'ontological realism', 'epistemological relativism', and 'judgmental rationality'. Below I provide a brief overview of all three principles or commitments.

Ontological realism

Regarding ontology or the nature of the world, critical realism maintains that there is a real world out there. This real world exists independently of our knowledge or perception of it. Therefore, knowledge is 'about something other than itself' (Maton and Moore, 2010, p.4). Knowledge of reality is not reality itself, but rather only part of it. There are things that exist that we can have no or only partial knowledge of; just because we do not know them does not mean that they are not there (Clarence, 2014a). Reality is understood as stratified and comprises three domains, which cannot be reduced to one another.

- The real – this domain comprises of what exists in the world regardless of our knowledge of it. The domain of the real includes objects, their structures, and their powers and mechanisms (Sayer, 2000). If objects or structures, such as an institutional structure, a language, knowledge, a discourse, and values have causal effects, they are located in the domain of the real. These structures and mechanisms are always present, whether or not they are observed or activated.

- The actual – this domain comprises events and processes that occur even if they are not experienced by human actors. When structures and mechanisms in the real domain are activated, they give rise to events in the domain of the actual.

- The empirical – this domain comprises the world as perceived and experienced by human actors. It is the domain of observed events and experiences.

These domains of reality can be represented in a 'nested' shape which indicates the empirical domain being embedded in the actual domain, both of which are influenced by the real domain (which are the underpinning structures and causal mechanisms). See Figure 3.1.
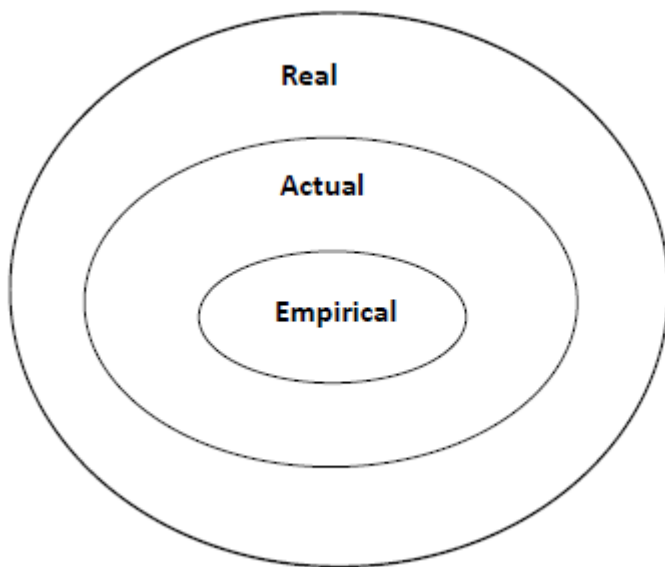
Figure 3.1   Bhaskar's' three ontological domains (1979)

To locate the work in this study in the critical realist frame, the student and tutor experiences operate at the level of the empirical. Curriculum, pedagogic and assessment practices are mostly events that function at the level of the actual. Knowledge, knowledge structures, discourses, and codes, all of which operate at the level of the real and act as mechanisms influencing events and experiences at the level of the actual and the empirical.

Epistemological relativism

This means that we do not make judgments and see the world from a vacuum. We are always socially and historically situated, and our views are always influenced by this situatedness (Clarence, 2014a). Maton and Moore (2010) maintain that we can only know the world in terms of socially produced knowledge which changes over time and across contexts. This means that critical realism adopts a relativist position regarding epistemology.

Critical realism maintains that we experience the sensations and images of things in the real world, but not the things directly. Critical realists believe that there are two steps involved in experiencing the world: (1) the thing itself and the sensations that it conveys and (2) the subsequent mental processing (Arbee, 2012). This positions critical realism between empiricism (we understand the world by experiencing it with our senses) and idealism (we understand the world through mental processing). Because generative mechanisms are hidden and their interaction is complex, Bhaskar argues for abduction, which enables a deeper understanding of phenomena by interpreting the original ideas about the phenomena in the frame of a new set of ideas (Danermark et al, 2002 cited in Arbee, 2012). Abduction involves using concepts and theories (such as LCT in this study) to reinterpret and recontextualise certain empirical data about a phenomenon. This allows us to move from empirical towards a deeper level of reality (Quinn, 2006 cited in Arbee, 2012).

Judgmental rationality

Judgemental rationality holds that actors can use evidence and judgment to decide between competing claims to truth. Not all perspectives are valid and not all knowledge is created equal. While knowledge may be subject to contestation and revision over time, judgmental rationality holds that there are bases for making judgments about the relative validity of claims (Bhaskar, 1993 cited in Kirk, 2018).

In a word, critical realism is a theory committed to seeing through surface appearances to the real structures that lie behind them and recognise that structures are more than the play of social power and vested interests. It is important to give attention to the underlying principles that structure academic writing because, as pointed out earlier, in critical and social realism the primary area of interest is the underlying mechanisms rather than observable events or experiences (Hodgkinson and Starkey, 2011). In this study, LCT is used to identify structures and mechanisms (such as knowledge structures and legitimation codes) that operate at the level of the real. From a critical realist perspective, discourses are viewed as ontological realities or mechanisms with causal powers that shape agents' practices and have effects on social practices and institutions (Quinn, 2006 cited in Arbee, 2012).

The following two sections will turn to the theoretical foundations laid in the work of Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu primarily. The work of these two theorists is subsumed in and extended on in Legitimation Code Theory, which will be discussed in detail as the 'conceptual toolkit' in section 3.6.

3.3 Basil Bernstein: Code Theory and Knowledge Structures

In this section and the next, I provide a broad overview of the concepts from the theories of Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu, which are pertinent to the development of LCT. Maton (2014) integrates the work of these two theorists into the Legitimation Code Theory.

Bernstein considered how knowledge was developed and used by particular social groups (Moore, 2014). Bernstein's framework is a relational theory which moves beyond empiricism and focuses on the organising principles of dispositions, practices and contexts, to explore the mechanisms generating those phenomena (Kajee, 2018).

Maton (2014) and Bernstein are interested in improving education, epistemic access and social justice. They both try to find the underlying structuring principles behind concepts (Kirk, 2018). Their work is underpinned by similar social realist assumptions. They both distinguish knowledge from the knowers who produce it but also understand knowledge as a product of its time and context (Kirk, 2018). In the following sections, I discuss Bernstein's' work on classification, framing and knowledge structures which form the basis of LCT.

3.3.1 Classification and Framing

At the base of Basil Bernstein's theoretical work is 'code'. This concept underpins Bernstein's work on knowledge structures and pedagogy (Clarence, 2014a) This concept is equally essential for Legitimation Code Theory. The term refers to an 'orientation to meaning' (Maton and Muller, 2007, p.16). Bernstein defined code as 'a regulative principle, tacitly acquired, which selects and integrates [meanings, realisations and contexts]' (Bernstein, 1990, p.14 cited in Clarence, 2014a, p.30). Code comprises two component principles: Classification and Framing. These concepts also make the basis of LCT Specialisation codes. Classification and framing are used to analyse issues of power and control in pedagogic settings (Kajee, 2018, Bernstein, 2000).

Classification focuses on the organisation of knowledge and the extent to which a category of knowledge can insulate itself from other categories of knowledge. This means classification has to do with the strength of boundaries between categories of knowledge. Stronger boundaries are depicted with a plus sign (+C) and weaker boundaries with a minus sign (−C) (Bernstein, 2000,

p.6). For example, subjects within the sciences such as Maths and Physics, may not be firmly bounded and insulated from one another because concepts discussed in Math may be useful to understand work in Physics. However, in History, different histories may be tightly bounded and insulated like the history of Native Americans and the history of Mesopotamia, where there would be little connection.

Framing refers to the relative strength of control within categories or contexts. It regulates the how and the transmission of knowledge and content by managing the selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria of the content and knowledge (Clarence, 2014a). For example, a classroom with weaker framing (–F) will allow students to choose the topics of the lesson or how they might do their assignments, whereas a classroom with stronger framing (+F) will allow the teacher to control the lesson and direct students to what they should do and how. Both classification and framing can be referred to as being either relatively strong or relatively weak in relation to one another and in relation to the contents or educational knowledge that is under analysis. Classification strength can influence the framing as well (Clarence, 2014).

The dimension of LCT Specialisation subsumes and incorporates the concepts of Classification and Framing. LCT extends Bernstein's work to include knowers and ways of knowing and extends it as specialisation codes (Maton, 2014b, Kirk, 2018). This development enables theorising both relations to knowledge and relations to knower practices (Kirk, 2018).

3.3.2   Knowledge Structures

Semantics offers concepts to explore the structuring of meanings in educational practices (Maton, 2009). The dimension of LCT Semantics developed out of Bernstein's theorising of vertical and horizontal discourses and hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures (Bernstein, 2000 cited in Kirk, 2018). Bernstein (1999 cited in Aldred, 2018) considered discourses to be of two different types: vertical and horizontal. On the one hand, vertical discourses are specialised language that is not reliant on content. It is associated with academic and formal knowledge with strong distributive rules controlling access, transmission and assessment (Aldred, 2018). On the other hand, horizontal discourse is used in everyday situations and its meanings are dependent on context and cannot be applied elsewhere (Aldred, 2018).

Within vertical discourse, Bernstein differentiates between hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures. A horizontal knowledge structure is defined as 'a series of specialised languages with specialised modes of interrogation and criteria for the construction and circulation of texts' (Bernstein, 1999, p.162 cited in Clarence, 2014, p.35). This knowledge structure is generally found in the humanities and social sciences disciplines. In contrast, a hierarchical knowledge structure is

a hierarchically organised "coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure" (Bernstein, 1999, p. 159 cited in Kajee, 2018, p.159) commonly found in the sciences. Within horizontal knowledge structure, each language may have a strong or weak grammar. Strong grammar uses explicit language and empirical descriptions. However, knowledge structure with weak grammar utilises a language which is not clearly distinguishable and there is no consensus on what is considered legitimate knowledge (Bernstein, 1999 cited in Kajee, 2018).

In developing Bernstein's work, Maton points out that Bernstein does not address how knowledge may develop in disciplines with horizontal structures where knowledge is not always explicit (Maton, 2014b). Kirk (2018) adds that Bernstein's concepts are unable to characterise the form taken by hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures. They are presented dichotomously and are thus not useful for describing what disciplines actually are in practice and how they change over time (Clarence, 2014a). LCT Semantics extends Bernstein's theorising to conceptualise how it is that knowledge builds in different fields of practice and over time (Kirk, 2018). The Semantics toolkit enables making visible variation and change within knowledge practices. Semantics comprises the concepts of semantic gravity and semantic density (Maton, 2014). Semantic gravity and density are construed as a continuum of strengths with a theoretically infinite capacity for gradation and variation (Maton, 2014). Maton's (2014) concepts of semantic gravity and density dissolve the dichotomous thinking inherent in Bernstein's distinctions between vertical/horizontal discourses and hierarchical/horizontal knowledge structures (Kirk, 2018) and extend and develop Bernstein's typologies into topologies (Clarence, 2014a). I expand on the semantic gravity and density concepts in more detail in the coming sections.

3.4   Pierre Bourdieu: Field, Capital, and Habitus

Maton and Muller (2007) noted that what Bernstein created is a theory of knowledge, not a theory of knowers. Maton (2007) argued that Bernstein only focused on knowledge structures, and this does not take into account fields or disciplines where legitimation lies with the knower. He pointed out that Bernstein's educational knowledge codes account for the 'epistemic relation' of knowledge, but not the 'social relation' (p.91). Maton called for an account of knowers as well as knowledge. As a result, Maton integrated ideas from Bourdieu's work to theorise knower practices and how they interact with knowledge practices and to understand the underlying principles of intellectual fields (Clarence, 2014a, Kajee, 2018). Thus, the LCT Specialisation dimension theorises both epistemic relations to knowledge and social relations to knowledge (Kirk, 2018).

Bourdieu argues that to live is to do so relationally (Clarence, 2014a). Three key concepts make up his field approach. These are 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus'. All three concepts go into creating practice. They are important to understand the relationship between social structures such as institutions, discourses, ideologies and fields and the everyday practices of what people do and why they do it (Webb et al., 2002 cited in Kajee, 2018)

Field means to 'think relationally' (Kajee, 2018). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992 cited in Kajee, 2018) proposed that each field has its own 'rules', which are implicit in nature. Agents need to know these rules in order to make informed decisions and to participate successfully in the field. Fields are active and evolving and agents positions within fields vary socially and historically (Kajee, 2018). Fields are not neutral spaces. They are arenas of conflict and struggle between agents as they seek to determine what knowledge and practices are to be regarded as legitimate (Fitz, 1999). Habitus refers to socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour or thinking and shape the choices and decisions agents make about their lives, social class, upbringing, education and all past choices (Kajee, 2018, Clarence, 2014a). Habitus focuses on the 'generative' principles that bring about the different choices and actions of agents. These generative principles are not static and habitus is always evolving (Clarence, 2014a). Habitus exist in a dynamic relationship with capital and field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992 cited in Kajee, 2018).

Linked to the concept of habitus is the concept of capital. Capital is defined as the resources one has and can call on (Bourdieu, 1986 cited in Clarence, 2014). Capital takes different forms: economic capital (one's financial resources), social capital (one's influential social networks), and cultural capital (taste and attributes) (Maton, 2005 cited in Kajee, 2018). Capital is also a dynamic concept and not static and can only be meaningful in relation to habitus and field (Clarence, 2014a). Fields are arenas of 'struggle' in which agents are either concerned with preserving or transforming the status quo of the field with respect to defining what counts as capital in the field (Jenkins, 1992 cited in Clarence, 2014). Practice results from an interplay of these three concepts. Thus, Bourdieu argued that to understand practices, we need to examine the fields within which the social agents are located and also the habitues that they bring into these fields since relational concepts, field and habitus especially cannot be theorised in isolation (Clarence, 2014).

Regarding this research, Bourdieu's ideas resonate with HE academic writing contexts. In an Applied Linguistics MA programme, academics and students are the agents who enter the field with their own forms of capital and historical backgrounds. This makes the field diverse. Academics may privilege certain knowledge and knower practices (Kajee, 2018). International students bring with them different habituses, which include what forms of academic writing practices have status and value. Tutors and lecturers may also have different assumptions about

what is valued in academic writing depending on their position, status, and the cultural and the symbolic capital they can bring to their practices.

3.5   Swales' (1990) Rhetorical Move-Step Analysis

Both English speaking background and non-English speaking background students need to come to terms with the unfamiliar culture of university and the discipline-specific textual practices which are shaped and influenced by the various disciplinary contexts (Bizzell, 1992). English as a second language writers, in particular, face more challenges in recognizing forms of discourse within a communicative context and deploying their linguistic resources to serve that function appropriately (Qina and Uccellib, 2016). Nodoushan and Montazeran (2012) also add that the most nagging problem second language writers often face is their inability to express themselves in well-organized academic writing. These problems not only relate to the deployment of lexical features but also to problems structuring the text (Nodoushan and Montazeran, 2012).

In this study, students are asked to write a journal article review (also called Evaluative Account). Woodward-Kron (2002, 2003) showed that the major problems with students' writing of this genre were misunderstandings about the genre's social purpose. Therefore, as an initial form of data analysis and to make sense of students' essays, I sought to understand the social purpose and global organizational structure of the genre of Evaluative Account following the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach, in particular, Swales (1990) rhetorical move-step analysis. The ESP genre approach is the most widely used approach to genre analysis. It is called 'English for Specific Purposes' because it originated in the need to provide non-native English speakers with writing courses on the use of English in scientific research (Swales, 1990).

Swales (1990, p.58) regards genre as a 'class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains the choice of content and style. Genre analysis in ESP is often associated with the kind of move analysis exemplified by Swales (1990) in his description of the research article introductions. This approach describes the schematic structure of a genre. It involves identifying the series of moves that make up the genre. Each move is a distinctive communicative act designed to achieve one main communicative function and can be further subdivided into several 'steps'. Both moves and steps may be optional, embedded in others, repeated, and have constraints on the sequence in which they generally occur (Hyland, 2004).

The reason for following the ESP approach and move analysis is to reveal the genre type of task being examined, its rhetorical moves and their social and communicative functions. This kind of analysis proved to be extremely useful in L2 writing by raising students' awareness of the ways genres are organised to express certain purposes (Hyland, 2004). The ESP approach also addresses a social justice issue in which academic writing practices need to be made explicit for students (Pho, 2013), which aligns with the main aims of this study.

In this study, I seek to identify the communicative purpose of the genre being examined and its rhetorical moves and whether these moves achieve the communicative purpose of Evaluative Account genre or not. Linguistic features are used as signals to identify moves, but are not analysed in themselves (Fakhruddin and Hassan, 2015) . Using rhetorical move-step analysis (Swales, 1990) and descriptions of the Evaluative Account genre (Woodward-Kron, 2003, Devira and Westin, 2021) and argumentative essays (Hyland, 1990), I developed the adapted framework below to analyse students' texts.

Table 3.1   Schematic structure of Evaluative Account in the MLTM

Moves	Steps
Introduction^[1]	Summary of the article, thesis, [outline of the text]
Analysis of Article^	Positive Critique: Point, Elaboration
Analysis of Article^	Negative Critique: Point, Elaboration
Conclusion^	Summary of key points, [Recommendations]
References	A list of bibliography

The critical review texts were characterised by four moves: Introduction, Analysis of the Article: Positive Critique, Analysis of the Article: Negative Critique, and Conclusion. Each of these moves consisted of steps. The introduction move encompassed three steps: summary of the article, and thesis. These steps were constructed by the writer in order to refer to the reviewed text, direct readers' attention to its main issues, introduce the topic of the reviewed text, summarise its main points, and finally, give the writer's position to be argued.

The next move, Analysis of the Article, is divided into two parts: Positive Critique and Negative Critique. This move consists of two steps: a Point or stance and Elaboration which provides

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[1] The symbol ^ means that the element to the left procedures the following element: square brackets [] indicate an optional stage.

support for the main point. The analysis of the article needs to connect the content of the reviewed text and Brumfit (1984) principles of communicative language teaching, theories of language learning, language teaching and practical teaching and learning examples. The text ended with a Conclusion move, which consisted of a summary of key points and recommendations for future research.

3.6   Introducing Legitimation Code Theory

Legitimation Code Theory (henceforth, LCT) is a sociological framework motivated by issues of social justice and knowledge-building. It was developed by Maton and builds primarily on the sociological frameworks of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein, as well as critical realist philosophy (Winberg et al., 2021). LCT views society as consisting of relatively autonomous fields of practice. Within those practices, actors compete and cooperate for status, resources and legitimacy. These competing claims, or languages of legitimation may be explicit or tacit (Maton, 2014). Kirk (2018) explains that LCT theorises dispositions, practices and social fields as being shaped and enacted in relation to underlying organising principles, or legitimation codes. Control of these legitimation codes affords power and status. He further explains that the ultimate project of LCT is the description of the overarching legitimation device, the principles giving rise to these languages of legitimation (Kirk, 2018). "To analyse legitimation codes is thus to explore what is possible for whom, when, where and how, and who is able to define these possibilities, when, where and how" (Maton, 2014, p. 18).

The framework is multi-dimensional, offering a variety of concepts and tools to analyse practices. It comprises five legitimation dimensions that address specific empirical practices and different organizing principles of practices. Each dimension has its own trajectory of constituent relations for analysis and its code modalities. Each dimension identifies a different aspect of the Legitimation Device, the means whereby these principles are created, maintained transformed and changed. More than one dimension can be utilized in research into a specific object of study. These dimensions are Specializations, Semantics, Autonomy, Temporality and Density.

- Specialisation – which refers to the social and symbolic and has the constituent relations of social and epistemic relations and code modalities ER+/-, SR+/-
- Semantics – which captures meaning through constituent relations of semantic gravity and semantic density and code modalities SG+/-, SD+/-
- Autonomy – which analyses the external through constituent relations of positional and relational autonomy with code modalities PA+/-, RA+/-

- Temporality – which captures time with constituent relations called temporal position and temporal orientation TP+/-, TO+/-

- Density – which looks at the internal through constituent relations of moral density and material density and code modalities MaD+/-, MoD+/-

The goal of the LCT framework as a whole is to offer us a way to see more effectively what we cannot see with a common-sense or everyday set of understandings. It is a specialized theoretical apparatus concerned with exploring meaning-making and knowledge-building with different underpinning organizing principles, or orientations to meanings and knowledge (Clarence, 2021). LCT can be used not only to interpret the world but also to change it since LCT reveals the bases of achievement underlying social fields of practice. These underlying practices are often unwritten and unspoken and are taken for granted. When these bases of achievement are accessible to only actors from specific backgrounds, this generates social inequality (Wilmot, 2015). LCT makes such organizing principles visible; thus, enabling the bases of achievement to become accessible to more actors, which promotes social justice. These organizing principles can be taught, learned or changed (Maton et al, 2016).

3.6.1   Legitimation Code Theory Semantics

In this study, I only use the dimension of Semantics to analyse actors' beliefs and practices. Semantics opens up another dimension to understanding social fields. The conceptual lenses of Semantics focus on practices and their semantic structures. Semantics address organizing principles underlying practices. That is, it investigates the bases of languages of legitimation. The organizing principles of the knowledge practices that the Semantic codes investigate consist of strengths of semantic gravity and semantic density. The Semantic dimension understands fields as consisting of agents of knowledge production, abstract concepts and methods for relating those concepts to the empirical world (Maton, 2013, 2014). This study explores how student writing in the field of reproduction governed by evaluative rules work with the abstract concepts or issues in tasks considered significant in their fields (Maton, 2016). This study mainly explores if students' manipulation of concepts and methods are recognized and legitimated as good academic writing practices by assessors in the field.

A Semantic code or profile may dominate as the (unwritten) 'rules of the game', but may not be transparent, universal or uncontested. Not everyone in the field may be able to recognize and/or realize what is required, there may be more than one code or profile present, and there are likely to be struggles over which code is dominant (Maton, 2014). Thus, we can describe degrees of code match and code clash such as among the stances of actors within a field or between

pedagogic practices and the beliefs of learners (Maton, 2014). Semantics also brings to light another aspect of the social fields of practice. Actors struggle for control of the Semantic Device to maximize the legitimacy of the Semantic codes or profiles characterizing their own stances. Whoever controls this device establishes the Semantic structure of the field. Thus, the Semantic Device is one aspect of what is at stake in struggles among actors (Maton, 2014).

The dimension of Semantics conceptualizes social fields of practice as Semantic structures whose organizing principles are given by semantic gravity and semantic density. These two tools allow us to see knowledge as meanings and represent different trajectories of knowledge. I explain these two tools in more detail in the next two sections.

3.6.1.1   Semantic Gravity

Semantic gravity is defined as 'the extent to which knowledge practices are related to their social or symbolic context of acquisition or use' (Maton, 2014, p. 110). Semantic gravity is one component of Semantics, and this LCT dimension was developed to conceptualize and empirically explore the ways in which knowledge is built by actors in social contexts, and how it may be developed and transformed over time (Maton, 2011; 2014). Semantic gravity is a tool that can identify how forms of knowledge can range from concrete, specific instances to more generalized and abstract forms of knowledge. These different forms that knowledge takes are represented along a continuum of gravity and are understood as relatively stronger (SG+) or weaker (SG−) 'with infinite capacity for gradation' (Maton, 2014, p. 131). The stronger the gravity, the more meaning is dependent on its context; the weaker the gravity, the less dependent meaning is on its context. We can use this continuum to analyze the weakening of semantic gravity (SG$\downarrow$), such as moving from local particulars of a specific case towards generalizations and abstractions whose meanings are less dependent on that context; and strengthening semantic gravity (SG$\uparrow$), such as moving from abstract or generalized ideas towards concrete and delimited cases. Changes in the semantic gravity of an individual item can also be described as processes of gravitation, whereby its meanings become contextually located, and levitation, whereby they are shown free of their contextual moorings (Maton, 2014).

Wilmot (2021, 2018) illustrates an example of doctoral writing where these different strengths are seen in moves between detailed descriptions of specific instances of data from a context of study (stronger semantic gravity) and more general and abstract interpretations of the data (weaker semantic gravity). For instance, moving from a particular experience of one student in one context, 'Being part of the Tuesday reading group helped develop my thinking' (stronger SG) to a more general and abstract interpretation that could account for multiple students across multiple contexts, 'Communities of practice play an important role in students' learning in higher

education' (weaker SG). Kirk (2017) illustrates another example where a mention in a student essay of 'cutting down trees in the Amazon' shows stronger semantic gravity than a mention elsewhere of 'deforestation'. Viewed across the text, a movement from the more concrete ('cutting down trees') to the more abstract ('deforestation') is an example of weakening semantic gravity (SG↓) whereas introducing the more abstract term first and then defining or illustrating it is an example of strengthening semantic gravity (SG↑).

3.6.1.2 Semantic Density

In educational research, the issue of complexity is the subject of a voluminous body of work. Highly valued knowledge practices in education are often described as complex, sophisticated, profound and deep. However, such terms often obscure more than they reveal. Moreover, educational research often views 'complexity' cognitively as a mental attribute and aspects of learning by exploring the cognitive demands of tasks, and so the complexity of knowledge practices themselves remains underexplored (Maton & Doran, 2017). LCT conceptualizes such complexity as 'semantic density', which describes how meanings are condensed and interrelated within knowledge practices.

Semantic density (SD) refers to the degree of condensation of meaning within socio-cultural practices (symbols, terms, concepts, phrases, expressions, gestures, actions, etc.). Semantic density accounts for the complexity of meaning by addressing relationality, differentiation and resonance of meaning (Maton and Doran, 2017b). Relationality refers to the number of connections between units of meaning, differentiation refers to the level of details of meanings that identify them as discrete entities, and resonance refers to the degree to which a unit of meaning resonates outwards to other units of meaning.

Practices may exhibit relatively stronger or weaker semantic density. They are also analysed according to their relative strengths and weaknesses of semantic density. The strength of semantic density can vary along a continuum. The stronger the semantic density (SD+), the more meanings are condensed within practices; the weaker the semantic density (SD—), the fewer the meanings condensed.

The different processes of adding meanings to a concept or practice are called 'condensation'. Condensation takes many forms. It involves epistemological condensation and axiological condensation of meanings. I am concerned in this study with epistemological condensation (EC) of formal definitions and empirical definitions. This is distinguished from axiological condensation of affective, aesthetic, ethical, political or moral stances (Maton,

2014, p. 153-170). For example, describing the concepts and ideas as 'comprehensive' or 'engaging' would offer an example of axiological condensation.

The concept of epistemological condensation (EC) refers to different processes of strengthening epistemic semantic density (ESD). While semantic density refers to a continuum of strengths of complexity that can be either stronger or weaker, epistemological condensation is always adding meanings, the question that epistemological condensation answers is 'how much?'. When I analyse and discuss epistemological condensation in students' texts and tutors' interviews, I discuss them in terms of higher epistemological condensation (EC+) and lower epistemological condensation (EC—). I also use the terms higher (EC+) and lower (EC—) epistemological condensation instead of stronger and weaker which might suggest the removal of meaning. Even though I use a minus sign, lower epistemological condensation also involves addition. (EC—) means 'adding relatively fewer meanings.' See sections 3.7.2 and 4.11.2.2 for more details on how epistemological condensation was analysed in this study.

To visualise epistemological condensation, I use *constellations* as a methodological way to create diagrams showing different forms of epistemological condensation in students' texts and tutors' views. Maton (2014b) explains an epistemological constellation as a metaphor to describe a cluster of ideas that is understood to be associated with one another. The concept of constellations draws an analogy between the grouping of stars into images and groups of ideas that are associated together. Steller constellations are made up of clusters of stars selected from a vast cosmology of possible astronomical objects. Connections have been drawn between clusters of stars to form sets of recognizable images.

Metaphorically, an epistemological constellation is a cluster of objects, ideas, practices and beliefs that are widely accepted as belonging together (Maton, 2014b). They too are clustered and connected from a vast field of possible ideas and objects. Epistemological constellations can be regarded as a network of ideas that offer a coherent way of interpreting an aspect of the social or natural world. The objects and ideas in an epistemological constellation are understood to be connected to form a coherent and internally structured cluster, as seen from a particular stance.

Epistemological constellations reveal a property called semantic density (SD). Each idea located within an epistemological constellation can have a stronger SD (when they have greater degrees of internal complexity with many meanings) or a weaker SD (when they are straightforward, with less internal complexity).

When an object or idea is positioned as part of a constellation, it is brought into relationship with other objects and ideas (Maton, 2014). Semantic density can also be used to describe the complexity of the connections (or relationality) between ideas within an epistemological constellation (Maton & Doran, 2017). A constellation created from associated ideas with a dense network of connections between them therefore has stronger semantic density than simple ideas with few relations between them (Maton, 2013).

The concept of epistemological constellation is useful and can reveal to students how knowledge is structured across tasks and different courses (Rusznyak, 2021). I use the concept of epistemological constellation to visualize the ways students demonstrate epistemological condensations in their writing and the accounts of tutors (see Table 3.4).

3.6.1.3   Semantic Profiling and Semantic Waves

Semantic profiles track the shifts in epistemic semantic gravity and epistemic semantic density over time. These shifts are represented on an axis as can be seen in Figure 3.2. In this study, semantic profiles are limited to tracking shifts in epistemic-semantic gravity. They refer to mapping stronger and weaker semantic gravity in students' text on a semantic scale. Semantic profiles are important to consider in analyses because they show how practices are constructed over time, allowing for different profiles to be revealed.
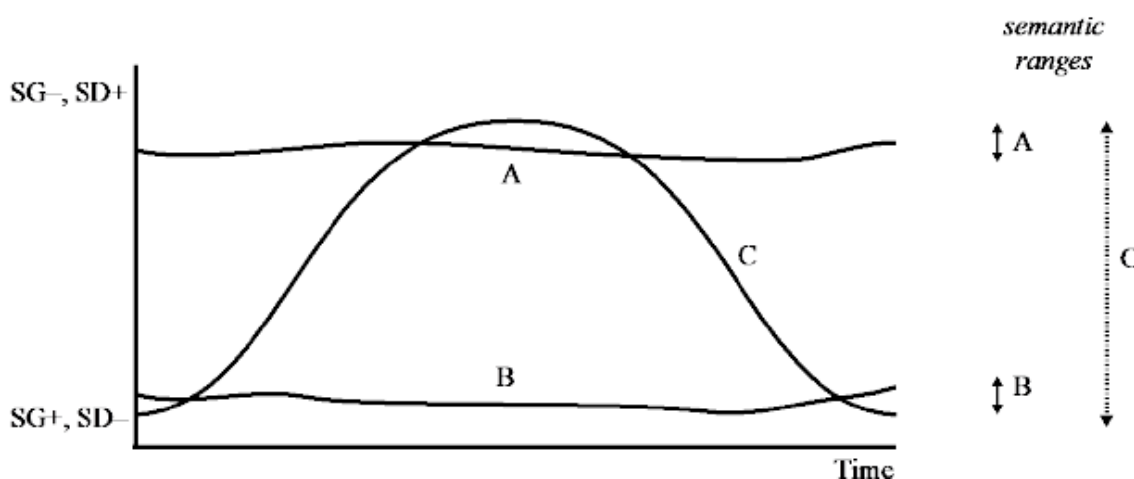
Figure 3.2   Semantic profile (Balawanilotu-Roach, 2017, p.63)

Figure 3.2 shows three different ways that knowledge is enacted over text time: a *high semantic flatline* (A), a *low semantic flatline* (B) and a *semantic wave* (C). Profile A indicates the practices remain within a weaker epistemic semantic gravity and stronger epistemic semantic density range over time. In terms of academic writing, this would mean that knowledge remains at an abstract or technical level. Profile B indicates that practices remain at a stronger epistemic-semantic

gravity and weaker epistemic-semantic density range. In academic writing, this could mean that knowledge is maintained at concrete and context-dependent levels such as summarizing description or quotations. Profile C indicates a 'semantic wave' that can move between the semantic ranges of profiles A and B. This means practices reflect movement from context-dependent and concrete knowledge practices to abstract, generalized or technical knowledge. In academic writing, this could refer to moves between highly descriptive or practical examples that can be 'repacked' over time to abstract and generalizable knowledge and then 'unpacked' back to more simple and concrete examples.

The importance of profiling is illustrated by a growing body of research that reveals certain bases for achievement and cumulative knowledge-building across different kinds of practices (Maton 2013). For example, studies which explored student work products suggest that high-achieving student writing across subject areas and levels of education is structured into such waves of recurrent semantic shifts between more concrete and more abstract meanings (Maton, 2013, 2014b; Wolff and Luckett 2013). In contrast, writing that demonstrates 'flatlines' (by remaining confined to anecdotal examples or abstractions) has been shown not to be rewarded in the same way. Kirk (2017) explains why this is the case. He mentions that identifying skills or insights from personal experience may not be sufficient for obtaining higher grades. Semantic gravity provides an explanation for this. When generalized meanings remain anchored to real-world context, gravity remains relatively stronger. When interpretations are pushed higher than personal experience by engaging with academic theory, students are able to access higher grades in many disciplines. Kirk (2017) suggests that it may be that this higher threshold must be reached for personal change to occur. When students engage with 'uncommensense knowledge' (Bernstein, 2000 cited in Kirk, 2017, p.112), using academic concepts or theory as lenses through which to review and reassess experience, students are able to transform their understanding of practical knowledge, which enables new understanding and reviewed future action (Kirk, 2017).

Examining the semantic range between the highest and lowest strengths may also be important in understanding educational development since particular disciplines or tutors may require that certain semantic thresholds be reached (Maton, 2013). Studies also highlight how semantic waves can vary over time and across subjects. For example, writing in school English literary studies demonstrates changing semantic profiles at different stages of schooling (Maton et al., 2016a).

3.7   Translation Devices

Researchers struggle to bridge the gap between their chosen theory and the data they are working with. They sense a gap between their theory and data but lack the means to create a

dialogue between them (Chen and Maton, 2016). Therefore, research like this present study makes use of translation devices (TD henceforth) to help bridge the gap between theory and data.

The concept of a translation device builds on Bernstein (2000 cited in Chen and Maton, 2016) work in which he distinguishes between the 'internal language of description' or the theory and how the constitutive concepts of the theory relate to each other, and the 'external language of description' or how those concepts relate to referents beyond the theory.

Bernstein (2000 cited in Chen and Maton, 2016, p.29) explains that all research involves a 'discursive gap' between theory and data. Bernstein's notion of 'external language of descriptions' acknowledges the discursive gap and offers criteria for external languages for traversing that gap through dialogue between theory and data. Bernstein's notion of 'external language' has been interpreted differently by researchers resulting in different tools for bridging the gap between theory and data. These tools include data instruments[2], mediating languages[3] and translation devices.

The notion of external languages as translation devices was first exemplified by studies enacting Bernstein's (1977) concepts of 'classification (strength of boundaries between concepts and categories) and 'framing' (strength of control within contexts or categories). These code concepts conceptualize organizing principles of practices, and therefore, operate at a relatively high level of abstraction and condensation. They require external languages to describe how they are realized within any specific study, such as what boundaries 'classification' refers to and what 'strong' or 'weak' classification looks like in the data. In this study, a translation device works as a way of operationalizing semantic gravity in students' texts and interviews.

Translation devices are often presented in the form of a table outlining a concept (e.g. stronger/weaker semantic gravity), indicators of how the concept is realized empirically, criteria against which relations within data can be decided, and examples from the data (see Table 3.3). They are not simply an extension of the internal language of a theory but rather arise from its engagement with the specificities of an object of study. Chen and Maton (2016) explain that the intention is to enable new or unexpected information to emerge from the data that may reshape both the way concepts are enacted and, potentially, the concepts themselves.

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[2] A methodological guide to a project by delineating how concepts suggest foci for data collection and questions for analysis. They concern the process rather than the product of research.

[3] Mediating languages relate concepts to data but aim at embracing all empirical forms of a phenomenon. It embraces a diverse range of empirical realizations of a concept across a broader object of study. They typically have a broader focus than external languages of description. Put simply, a mediating language can be described as a more general translation device and external language as a more specific form of translation devices.

Translation devices are important because they explain the basis of claims. They help clarify, systematize and codify the analysis that generates an explanation of the data. They make explicit the theory used and the principles of its enactment in ways that enable other researchers to recreate the analysis for themselves as well as make the process of analysis more visible and more open to scrutiny by others. Another advantage of using a translation device for this study is that it makes the outcomes of the study more available to other researchers in the field not only to build on the findings and the substantive theory but also the chance to adopt or adapt the external language for their study. Additionally, the use of translation devices is important for bringing together studies of a growing range of problem-situations. They enable a dialogue between theory and data and also between studies of diverse phenomena by translating among different data through theory, which make them central to cumulative knowledge-building.

3.7.1 Maton (2014c) Translation Device

In this section, I explain the rationale for adapting (Maton, 2014c) semantic gravity Translation Device (see Table 3.3) to analyze students' texts and interview transcripts, and how this Translation Device informed the data analysis in the present study.

In his study, Maton (2014c) sought to answer the question of 'how educational knowledge enables and constrains cumulative learning?' Cumulative learning refers to students' ability to transfer knowledge across texts and through time. Cumulative learning occurs when learning activities have positive effects that extend beyond the initial learning. This is opposite to segmentalism, which occurs when knowledge or knowing is so strongly tied to its context that it is only meaningful within that context. In educational fields, segmentalism is reflected in curricula or teaching and learning practices that comprise a series of discrete ideas or skills rather than cumulatively building on previously encountered knowledge. Such segmented learning can constrain students' capacities to extend and integrate their past experiences and apply their understandings to new contexts, such as later studies, everyday lives or future work.

To shed light on the basis of cumulative learning or knowledge-building, (Maton, 2014c) argues that capturing the context-dependence and condensation of meaning is central to cumulative learning or knowledge building and recontextualization of knowledge, which refers to taking knowledge out of one context and placing it in another leading to the transformation and transmission of knowledge. Semantic gravity and density are the two concepts that analyze the underlying practices of context-dependence and condensation of meaning.

To illustrate the role of knowledge practices in cumulative learning, Maton (2014c) used the concepts of semantic gravity, or degrees of context-dependence of meaning to explore two

examples of educational practices from contrasting disciplines and levels of education: an 'authentic learning' environment in professional education at university; and a thematic 'area of study' in English at secondary school. Maton (2014c) claims that both units aim to enable cumulative learning, yet both often result in students' understandings remaining locked within their contexts. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on explaining the case of an 'authentic learning' environment at university and the translation device developed to analyze it (Maton, 2014c). This decision was made as this case relates most to the MLTM case explored in this present study as both target postgraduate level education and both show similarities, which are explored below.

To analyze an example of an 'authentic learning' environment, (Maton, 2014c) drew on data collected for a major study, Bennet (2000 cited in Maton, 2014c), of a Master's degree postgraduate course for training instructional designers (professionals who design learning resources). One aspect of this study explored a task designed according to 'authentic learning' principles that used 'case-based learning'. The unit of study required students to analyze two case studies of real-life instructional design projects, each case comprising approximately 15, 000 words of unedited transcripts of interviews with three people who had worked on the project. The assessment task comprised a series of questions designed to encourage students to think beyond the context, as shown in Table 3.2 (Bennett 2002: 75-76, emphases added).

For example, students were asked to relate the experiences of designers in the case to 'other literature you have read' or 'your own experiences as a designer'. The questions also ask for progressively more generalization and abstraction: they begin by requiring students to describe key issues in the cases and end by asking what general issues they have learned. These two features highlight the aim of weakening the semantic gravity of knowledge by encouraging students to make meanings that reach beyond the learning context. The questions focused on eliciting from students 'your own experiences as a designer' rather than relating the cases to explicit principles of instructional design.

Table 3.2   Bennet (2002) Task questions

1.	Describe the major stages and decision points in the process of developing the product. What are the major issues at each stage?

2.	How do the experience of the designers in this case relate to:
	   a. Other *literature you have read* about multimedia design and development or
	   b. *Your own experiences as a designer* (for example in your work or for EDG1913 [an earlier subject in the course))?

3.	Choose a particular feature of the product which is discussed in the case.
	   a. Describe *how you think* it relates to the original concept and goals of the project.
	   b. From the information in the case *what do you think* were the major design issues in developing this feature?
	   c. *Do thou think* the feature is effective? Explain your reasoning.

4.	What are the major project management issues in developing a multimedia CD-ROM that are highlighted by this case? (use example situations from the case to support your ideas)
5.	What are the main things that *you think you learnt* form studying this case?

This writing task for the Master's degree course in instructional design (Maton, 2014c) shares a number of similarities with the MLTM writing task explored in this study. Both tasks ask students to refer to other literature and make generalizations, and both aim to enable cumulative learning by asking students to transfer knowledge from one context to another. However, unlike the instructional design task which focused on eliciting from students 'your own experiences as a designer' rather than relating the cases to explicit principles of instructional design, the MLTM task asked students to relate the literature and the principles of communicative language teaching to their own teaching and learning experiences and vice versa. Thus, (Maton, 2014c) translation device was modified and an additional level called 'contextualization' was added to the semantic gravity device. This level refers to contextualization of the article being reviewed and communicative language teaching principles and the wider English language teaching and learning literature to practical teaching and learning contexts and students' own learning and teaching experiences. In terms of the semantic gravity scale, this level is relatively stronger and considered more context-dependent (see Table 3.3). More importantly, the genre analyzed in the MLTM is a journal article review or Evaluative Account. In this genre, the student summarises the main points of the article and critique the reviewed text in relation to other literature. This means that the Translation Device relates to the relationship between the student's writing and the source texts they draw upon.

From left to right, the columns of Table 3.3 outline the relative strengths of semantic gravity; the coding scheme used to analyze students' work products; a description of each coding, and examples of each coding drawn from student answers. Using this external language, one can read from theory to data (left to right) and from data to theory (right to left). In terms of the coding scheme, 'reproductive description' (e.g., direct quotation from the cases) embodies the strongest semantic gravity because meanings remain locked into the context of the case from which the quote is taken, and 'generalization' embodies the weakest semantic gravity, as meanings are decontextualized from a specific context to draw generalizing conclusions for use in a range of potential contexts.

It is important to note that this semantic gravity translation device is neither a definition of 'semantic gravity' nor the only way to enact the concept in empirical research. Each object of study requires its translation device and other studies have developed different external languages or adapted already developed TD in the light of their data. It simply offers a way of translating between 'semantic gravity' and the data of this specific research project, which is

student postgraduate writing in Applied Linguistics in UK HE. It, therefore, does not account for the phenomena of student academic writing in other contexts. It may, however, give an indication of student writing choices and tutors' expectations in similar contexts.

Table 3.3   Maton (2014c) adapted Translation Device of Semantic Gravity

Coding of responses	Form taken by student responses	Example quote from student answers
Generalization SG— — —	Presents a general observation or draws a generalizing conclusion about the issues discussed.	Based on the CLT features, although drama as a teaching approach fit some principles, it is still not a typical and actual example of CLT.
Judgement SG— —	Goes beyond re-presenting or interpreting information to offer a value judgment or claim.	Moreover, [by reading from a script. Students] are trying to be another person in role-play. (Miccoli, 2003) So students may not understand the nature of the interaction. They speak in class, but that is not authentic "speaking".
Interpretation SG—	Seeks to explain a statement by interpreting information from the source or adding new information. May include the use of other literature or personal experience.	However, the assessment criteria have not changed accordingly, which causes 'Washback Effect'. 'Washback effect' refers to the influence that language testing has on curriculum design, teaching practices, and learning behaviours (McKinley & Thompson, 2018).
Contextualizing SG+	Seeks to contextualize the: 1. discussion of the article, and 2. the principles of communicative language teaching within practical teaching and learning examples in specific contexts and from students' own personal experiences.	For those students who focus more on test skills, the communicative activities in class can be regarded as a 'waste of time' and might cause a lack of interest among them. Also, there are some learners who are already in employment and might not have enough time to engage in a long language training course.
Summarizing description SG++	Descriptive response that summarizes or synthesizes information presented in the source, including re-wording and re-structuring of a number of arguments into one statement. Does not present new information from beyond the source.	Miccoli (2003), in this paper, investigates the value of bringing drama into a Brazilian university classroom by introducing the structure and procedures of classes and giving the result. Her research is based on a case study which she applied the form of drama to her classes with 37 participants over 15 weeks.
Reproductive description SG+++	Reproduces information directly from the source with no elaboration (i.e., quotations).	It is still a hard thing to see what Bax said: "Novice teachers, as we have seen, fight against context when they should be working with it." (Bax, 2003, p286)

3.7.2 Semantic Density Translation Device

In this section, I explain the rationale for developing a Translation Device for epistemological condensation to analyze students' texts and interview transcripts, and how this Translation Device informed the data analysis in the present study.

LCT conceptualises complexity as 'semantic density'. Semantic density refers to the degree of condensation of meaning. The different processes of adding meanings to a concept or practice are called 'condensation'. The concept of epistemological condensation (EC) refers to different processes of strengthening epistemic semantic density (ESD). While semantic density refers to a continuum of strengths of complexity that can be either stronger or weaker, epistemological condensation is always adding meanings, the question that epistemological condensation answers is 'how much?'. When I analyse and discuss epistemological condensation in students' texts and tutors' interviews, I discuss them in terms of higher epistemological condensation (EC+) and lower epistemological condensation (EC—). Even though I use a minus sign, lower epistemological condensation also involves addition. The minus (EC—) means 'adding relatively fewer meanings.'

Inspired by Maton and Doran (2017a) Translation Device for Semantic Density in academic discourse and Lambrinos (2019) use of constellations to visualise complexity, I developed a translation device to make sense of the different ways students enact epistemological condensation in their writing and the levels of epistemological condensation tutors expect to see in student writing in the MLTM. Maton and Doran (2017a) developed a clausing tool that explores English discourse for signs of the complexity of the knowledge expressed at the clause level. I used the translation device to name the different levels and strengths of epistemological condensation as they appeared in students' texts and tutors' interviews. There were strong similarities between the types that emerged from the data and the groupings in (Maton and Doran, 2017a) device, but this study involved its own device, namely using the groupings to analyse longer stretches of text instead of clause level.

EC	Type	Subtype
+ ↑ ↓ −	connecting	taxonomizing
		coordinating
	augmenting	characterizing
		establishing

Figure 3.3   Maton and Doran (2017) adapted Translation Device of epistemological condensation

The translation device offers two levels of complexity: types, and subtypes. These categories manifest varying degrees of increasing complexity. The translation device offers two levels of delicacy: connecting and augmenting:

Connecting (EC+) refers to relating terms, concepts and ideas to epistemological constellations.

Augmenting (EC—) refers to adding meanings to terms themselves without relating them to such constellations.

Each of these two types can be distinguished further into 'subtypes' to show finer delicacy. These types and subtypes emerge from the nature of complexity in students' texts and as expected by tutors and are not definitive or universal characteristics of complexity.

Connecting is distinguished into taxonomizing and coordinating. On the one hand, taxonomizing refers to connecting different epistemological constellations such as 'part-whole relationship' or 'part-part relationship'. Part-whole relationships exist when students connect a specific argument to various arguments within the wider field of language teaching and learning or when they provide more support for a specific argument by connecting it to other arguments from the field. On the other hand, coordinating refers to connecting epistemological constellations such as ideas and concepts by expressing differences. In this study, students achieve *coordinating* by relating a concept or argument to other different perspectives.
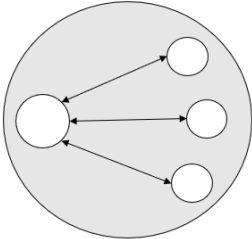
Taxonomizing shows more epistemological condensation (EC++) than coordinating (EC+) because in taxonomizing students relate more similar meanings to the same idea or concept; thus, increasing the internal complexity of the original concept or idea. In coordinating (EC+), students relate a concept or idea to other different concepts or ideas. While coordinating (EC+) increases complexity, the ideas and concepts remain discrete from each other and the original concept.

Augmenting is distinguished into characterizing and establishing. Characterising (EC—) refers to augmenting concepts by showing qualities and properties. In this study, it refers to adding more details to show the factors and various aspects that characterise a specific teaching and learning practice. Establishing (EC ——) refers to augmenting the writer's position by introducing new ideas and arguments that contain fewer relations with other ideas. Augmenting involves epistemological condensation, but it is lower than connecting because it involves adding meanings to ideas but with fewer relations to other ideas.

The development of the translation device for epistemological condensation in student writing and tutors' views involved multiple moves backs and forth between theoretical concepts and empirical data. The translation device comprises different levels and strengths of epistemological condensation or strengthening of ESD by combining meanings through different processes. The translation device presents each of these levels of epistemological condensation alongside a description, examples from students' texts and how it is visualized in terms of constellation. *Constellations* are used as a methodological way to create diagrams showing different forms of epistemological condensation in students' texts and tutors' views (see section 3.6.1.2 for more on constellations). The empirical examples are understood to 'likely', 'often' or 'typically' belong to a specific category of complexity and are not exact or definitive.

Table 3.4   Translation Device of Epistemological Condensation

Subtype	Description	Examples	Constellation visualization
Taxonomizing (EC + +)	Connecting different epistemological constellations such as 'Part-part relationship' by connecting multiple ideas to build a specific idea or argument.	There are some alignments with the development of students' metacognition in CLT on account of its features of learner autonomy (Brumfit, 1984) as well as integrated skills (Whong, 2013). As Cross and Paris (1988:131) noted that metacognition is to control learners to learn and think by themselves. Generally, it argued that one of characteristics of CLT is promotion of learner autonomy, which help students to develop the students' metacognition (Xiao, 2015:53).	

Coordinating (EC +)	Connecting epistemological constellations such as ideas and concepts by expressing differences such as showing different perspectives or different understandings of contested concepts.	Locating CLT in the centre of language teaching practice generates an unfortunate attitude—the CLT attitude. However, when we look at the studies and research on applying CLT, it seems that CLT takes contexts into consideration. As a result, I would like to explore the research about CLT and contexts along with further discussion of the negative effects of CLT attitude to language teaching and learning.	
Characterizing (EC–)	Augmenting concepts and practices by showing qualities and properties. For example, discussing the various factors and aspects that explain the complexity of a specific teaching and learning context.	Student needs should be [prioritised] when teaching an activity […] Learners, who want to [study] abroad, are likely to [focus on] overall language skills instead of [exams]. […] Students who appreciate CLT might have more engagement in CLT class. [However,] not all learners could [appreciate] the approaches [used in] a CLT class. Those students who focus more on test skills could regard communicative activities in class […] as a 'waste of time' […]. Also, there are some learners [who are working and] might not have enough time to engage in a long language course. So short-term language training courses which focus on test skills might be better for [them].	
Establishing (EC – –)	Augmenting the writer's position by introducing new ideas and arguments that demonstrate fewer relations with other ideas.	However, to some extent, the issues with contextual influence in Chinese English classes are due to *large-size classes, teachers' lack of professional training and the traditional way of correction.*	

3.8   Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored the philosophical basis for this study which is social realism and a focus on knowledge. Social realism is based on critical realist philosophy, which is a theory committed to seeing through surface appearances to the real structures that lie behind them and recognise that structures are more than the play of social power and vested interests.

I explained that I sought to examine the underlying principles that structure academic writing because, in critical and social realism, the primary area of interest is the underlying mechanisms rather than observable events or experiences (Hodgkinson and Starkey, 2011). LCT is used to

identify structures and mechanisms in student writing that operate at the level of the real. I also explored the theoretical foundations laid in the work of Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu primarily, which is subsumed in, and extended on in Legitimation Code Theory.

In order to bridge the gap between theory and data, I used Maton's (2014) Translation Device of semantic gravity and adapted it to the present study to examine the movement between abstract ideas and context-bound ideas. Also, a four-level semantic density Translation Device was developed to examine epistemological condensation in student text, and I used the concept of constellations to visualise semantic density in student writing. ESP genre theory and Swales' (1990) rhetorical move-step analysis were merely used as an organizing framework for the student essays and to understand the genre of discussion essays prior to conducting the main analysis using LCT Semantics.

This study asks 'What are the underlying principles or bases of achievement in successful academic writing in the field of Applied Linguistics in terms of context-dependence and condensation of meanings? And what are the actors' beliefs regarding these underlying principles?'

The next chapter presents the research design and fieldwork carried out to answer the previous research questions. The next chapter explains the choice of methods and process of data collection carried out to arrive at those answers.

Chapter 4   Research Design and Methodology

4.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced this study's theoretical foundations, explanatory framework, and the central concepts underpinning and guiding the selected conceptual lenses. This chapter aims to show how those theoretical concepts are drawn into this study's methodological and analytical approaches.

This study aims to develop an understanding of students' academic writing practices using a different theoretical and analytical lens to overcome the limitations of previous studies on academic writing. I also reflect on the evolvement of this research in terms of its focus and design. I explain the reasons for shifting the focus from exploring criticality in students' texts to a focus on academic practices that relate to theoretical and practical knowledge forms and the complexity of meanings.

The main aims of the research, which informed the research design, are:

> Develop an understanding of what is assessed as valued practices in postgraduate academic writing in Applied Linguistics using the lens of LCT Semantics gravity.
> Explore actors' beliefs of valued academic writing practices in Applied Linguistics using the lens of LCT Semantics gravity.
> Explore the pedagogical implications of the findings.

In this chapter, I explain the choice of methods, participants, procedures, and instruments or lenses used in the analysis. I also consider my presence as the researcher and my role as a knower in the research and its consequences on how it was conducted. Ethical considerations of doing the research were also considered. This chapter explains the details of these choices and the rationale for the case study approach.

4.2   Case Study Approach

The most appropriate methodological approach for this study, which meets the study's aims, is a qualitative case study approach. The reason for adopting a qualitative case study approach to investigation and design is because what is considered good or valued academic writing practices in assessed student writing is subjective, ambiguous and contested where other variables are not controlled.

A case study approach is defined by Maxwell (2012) as 'an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context' (p.22). Case studies have the strength of allowing for a focus on variables affecting the case and how these variables interconnect and influence one another (Punch, 2005). They also highlight the 'bounded', singular nature of the cases studied, the importance of the context, the use of multiple sources of information, perspectives and observation, and the in-depth nature of the analysis (Punch, 2005). The present study is considered a single case study with an embedded unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). It is a single case because I examined one module in the field of Applied Linguistics, and it is embedded because it explores tutors' and students' disciplinary expectations, students' writing, and module documents within the case.

The research design is also an ongoing, interactive process rather than models that rely on fixed categories of designs or a linear sequence of activities. Maxwell (2012, p.75) states, 'Attempting to implement a previously designed plan for your research may lead to a disaster if you are not aware of and responsive to how the research context is altering the actual design of the study'. Considering Maxwell's (2012) argument, I viewed this qualitative research as inductive in its design, which means that the research plan constantly changes in response to new information or changing circumstances. I was attentive to what was happening in the research and adjusted my actions to make the design more relevant and productive. For example, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the nature of data has changed from face-to-face classes and discussions to virtual interactions among tutors and students, and data gathering has been conducted virtually.

Additionally, as I was analysing the data, I found that the writing tasks offered limited capacity to understand the notion of criticality. This is because these tasks were not explicitly designed to elicit critical thinking. Therefore, I focused on examining the valued academic practices in students' texts regarding context-dependence and context-independence and condensations of meanings using a theoretical and analytical lens explicitly designed to explore these knowledge forms. The lens is called LCT Semantics. This theoretical and analytical lens does not capture the knowledge practices associated with criticality. LCT Semantics does not have the capacity to determine whether assignments demonstrate criticality or other cognitive processes that are 'critical'. Instead, the aim of using LCT Semantics gravity and density is to illustrate how these concepts help us explore the nature of what has been judged by teaching professionals in HE to demonstrate valued academic writing practices in the disciplines in terms of context-dependence and condensations of meanings. I hope to illustrate how this approach can offer insights into the nature of valued academic practices in this field by exploring and making explicit their context-dependence and condensation of meanings.

4.3   Context of the Study

In this study, I examine valued practices in postgraduate academic writing in the disciplines. My main interest is to find out how students use theoretical and practical knowledge forms in their writing and how their tutors value and assess those practices. The study's context is a module from an Applied Linguistics and TESOL Master's degree programme at a UK university. In this degree programme, the students study several modules, including:

1. Dissertations
2. Research skills
3. Research and Enquiry in Applied Linguistics
4. Second Language Learning
5. Assessment of Language Proficiency
6. Autonomy and Individualisation in Language Learning
7. Critical Appraisal of Language Teaching Methodologies
8. Current Issues in Language Teaching Methodology
9. Digital Education and English Language Teaching
10. English as a World Language
11. English as a Medium of Instruction in Global Education
12. Language and Intercultural Communication
13. Language Ideologies in a Globalising World
14. Language in Society
15. Teaching Foreign Languages to Younger Learners
16. Writing and Written Language
17. Modern Language Teaching Methods

Regarding the demographics of students in this degree programme, most of the students were female Chinese students in their twenties, a small number of male and female students from Saudi Arabia and quite a few home and European students. The overall number of students in this program in 2020-2021 was approximately over 100 students.

Applied Linguistics and TESOL have been chosen as the context of this study because Applied Linguistics is a field that typically connects theoretical knowledge to practice and personal experiences of teaching and learning a language. This makes it a suitable field in which LCT Semantics can be used to examine how theoretical and practical knowledge are employed in texts. Using the concepts of semantic gravity and density from LCT, these knowledge realms (theoretical and practical) and how they interact in student texts can be surfaced.

Also, no study has investigated the semantic gravity and density of students' writing in Applied Linguistics. Studies using the LCT Semantic lens have looked at fields such as social work, business, political science, mathematics, and physics (Wilmot, 2017, Szenes et al., 2015, Boryczko, 2020, Brooke, 2019, Macnaught, 2021). In this respect, this study joins and contributes to the growing literature that makes use of LCT concepts to study assessment practices (Walton, 2020, Van Heerden et al., 2017, Van Heerden, 2020), especially the assessment of academic writing in HE (Balawanilotu-Roach, 2017, Szenes et al., 2015).

From this Master's degree in Applied Linguistics and TESOL, I selected and examined students' writing and tutors' perspectives in a module called Modern Language Teaching Methods (MLTM henceforth). This module was chosen because of its suitability for the research aims of this study. First, in this module, students were expected to link theory to practice through writing assessments and classroom practice. Second, the module had an extensive teaching staff at the time of data collection, hence, more data on the disciplinary expectations of tutors as they assess students' academic writing in the discipline. Third, it is the first module for most students doing a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics and TESOL. It is a helpful module to examine students' challenges as they integrate theory and practice in assessed writing tasks.

The module overview and aims outlined six broad areas, as shown in Table 4.1. Regarding the module's learning aims, essential skills include a critical understanding of principles, issues and activities of the communicative language teaching approach and developing the ability to reflect on theoretical aspects of teaching as well as developing the ability to examine and critique a range of pedagogical activities and considering the contextual effectiveness.

Table 4.1   MLTM module overview and learning outcomes

	Module Overview and Aims:
1	This course is for *inexperienced* language teachers, i.e. teachers or intending teachers with less than two years of classroom teaching experience.
2	The course aims to give you a critical understanding of the principles, issues and activities involved in the communicative approach to teaching language, particularly in teaching English.
3	While the main focus of the course will be on the practical, pedagogical and theoretical principles of CLT, we will also consider broader underlying issues.
4	An integral part of this module involves (peer) micro-teaching activities and analysing teaching practices with different purposes and perspectives in mind.
5	This course aims to develop the ability to reflect on theoretical aspects of teaching practice, and you will be required to examine and critique a wide range of pedagogical activities and consider their contextual effectiveness.
6	Individual sessions will combine presentations from the tutor and input from students on diverse tasks based on readings and engagement with micro-teaching. Students will also be involved in discussions and active peer teaching.

The MLTM module has two assessment tasks: (1) a theoretical task in which students provide a critique or review of an academic article in the field, and (2) a practical task in which students are asked to design a lesson plan and provide a rationale. The writing task I selected for in-depth analysis is the theoretical task. Task 1 asks students to write a 2000-word discussion of an academic journal article, which accounts for 50% of the final mark. The students were assigned several research articles to select from (see Table 4.2). In this task, students examine an article and relate it to theories of language teaching and learning and personal and practical teaching and learning experiences. This writing task is typical in Applied Linguistics.

Table 4.2   List of assigned articles for Task 1 in the MLTM

Assigned articles	Student
1. Bax, S. 2003. The end of CLT: a context approach to language teaching. *ELT Journal*, 57, 278-287.	Chen
2. Liao, X. 2004. The need for Communicative Language Teaching in China. *ELT Journal*, 58, 270-273.	Yara Zoe

The articles address a topic related to the course, exploring an area of research into the theory and practice of communicative language teaching. In the assignment guidelines, students are instructed to focus on any areas of the paper and relevant topics of teaching language communicatively. However, students must link discussion of contextual teaching practices with discussions of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching as proposed by (Brumfit, 2001) and other authors on the topic. Students are also advised to discuss the article from a particular perspective and compare the article with other studies and writers' ideas. The students are asked to discuss its relevance to theoretical notions and practical language teaching applications and reflect on how theory and practice interrelate.

Reasons for selecting theoretical tasks over practical tasks include: (1) I had to select one type of assignment due to the interview time limit offered by tutors and lecturers, who offered me an avenge of one hour and a half, and I needed to discuss at least two assignments which received different scores; (2) theoretical tasks require students to engage more with theoretical constructs and present a strong voice whereas practical tasks involved the design of a teaching lesson plan in which students rely on their personal or imaginary experience of being a teacher with less emphasis on marshalling a solid argument based on the literature, and (3) linking theory to practice is less evident in theoretical tasks compared to practical tasks which make it essential to make those practices explicit for teaching and learning purposes.

4.4   Generalisability in Case Study Approach

Regarding case studies and generalizability, there is a dichotomy of cases' ability to either focus on the particular (e.g. Stake, 2000, Merriam, 1998) or generalise to other cases (Stake, 2005). Scholars who view the strength of cases as the ability to focus on the particular include (Merriam, 1998p.208), who defines a case study as "a single case or non-random sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in-depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many". Likewise, Stake (2000, p.439) states that 'the research for particularity competes with the search for generalisability'. Other scholars argue that cases could be employed in ways which allow it to generalise to contexts beyond itself (Duff, 2008).

Stake (2005, p.445) describes this dichotomy in terms of what he calls 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' case studies. Intrinsic case study, on the one hand, is undertaken to understand a particular case better and not because the case represents other cases or illustrates a specific trait or problem, but because it is of interest in all its peculiarity and ordinariness and not to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon or theory-building. On the other hand, instrumental case studies aim to provide insight into an issue and draw a generalisation in which the case plays a secondary role and facilitates an understanding of something else. The case here is still in-depth, and its context and activities are scrutinised and detailed, but all because it helps the researcher pursue an external interest.

Others, such as Maxwell (2012, p.142), refer to this dichotomy in terms of 'internal generalisability' as opposed to 'external generalisability'. The former aims to generalise within the setting, group, or institution studied to persons, events, and settings that were not directly observed or interviewed. In contrast, the latter refers to generalising to other settings, groups, and institutions. Maxwell (2012) explains that internal generalisability is more critical for most qualitative researchers than external generalizability and that qualitative researchers rarely make explicit claims about the external generalisability of their accounts. Maxwell (2012) argues that 'the value of a qualitative study may depend on its lack of external generalizability in a statistical sense; it may provide an account of a setting or population that is illuminating as an extreme case or ideal type' (142). Likewise, Freidson (1975, p.272 cited in Maxwell, 2012, p.142) states, 'there is more to truth or validity than statistical representativeness'.

In this study, I stress the power of case studies in their ability to focus on the particular (Merriam, 1998). The main aim of this study was to understand in-depth the valued academic practices in Applied Linguistics in terms of their relative strength of context-dependence and context-independence rather than find out whether those underlying principles are generally true in similar writing tasks, modules, or disciplines.

However, there may be some level of generalizability for the findings of this study because of the 'thick description' of the nature of academic writing practices in the case examined. Concentrating on one module in Applied Linguistics allowed me to conduct an in-depth analysis, or what researchers call a 'thick' or 'rich' description of the cases. Gall et al. (2003, p.466) suggest that a thick description of research participants and sites allows 'readers of a case study report to determine the generalizability of findings to their specific situation or other situations'. This 'thick description' is also achieved by involving primary data such as interview transcripts, task worksheets, module outlines and assessment documents, and student writing samples (Duff, 2008). I aimed to meaningfully condense, interpret, and present these large quantities of data to allow readers of this study to get to know the cases well and consider counterexamples in their contexts and disciplines.

Also, using theories to interpret data helps the researcher generalise results to other studies. LCT enables a form of theorising that goes beyond individual cases to organising principles that have wider resonance. Yin (2003, p.5) states that theory in case studies can help in 'generalising the results to other cases'. Although this research did not aim to produce generalisations, it may offer some elements of generalizability to other similar cases. It may also help us understand the nature of valued academic practices in Applied Linguistics by comparing the findings of this research to further LCT and academic writing research.

4.5   Triangulations of Methods

Triangulation is defined by Duff (2008) as 'drawing upon various kinds and sources of information for analysis… [for example] data, methods, perspectives, theories, and even researchers can be triangulated to produce either converging or diverging observations and interpretations.' (p.30) Stake (2005) adds that multiple sources of information are employed to ascertain multiple forms of interpretation to 'clarify meaning by identifying different ways the case is being seen' (p.454).

Data triangulation is understood to be very important in qualitative research in general and in case studies more specifically. Stake (2000, p.449) asserts that 'seen from different worldviews and in different situations, the 'same' case is different'. Therefore, to investigate the research problem from different perspectives and provide more complex and more valid insights into valued academic practices in student writing, triangulation in this study is achieved using multiple data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, students' writing assignments and course outlines and documents.

Triangulation of data collection techniques has been used in this study as a strategy to, first, reduce the risk of drawing biased conclusions due to the limitations of a specific source and

method and, second, to allow for a broader and more secure understanding of academic practices in student writing (Maxwell, 2012). The triangulation of data collection methods provided a more accurate account of academic writing practices, thus increasing the internal validity and stability of the findings in this study (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 2012).

Finally, the tools of LCT Semantic gravity and density allowed me to examine academic writing practices through a different theoretical lens and perspective. Duff (2008, p.143) notes that 'theory may be triangulated when the same phenomenon is examined through different theoretical lenses and from the standpoint of researchers in different fields.' Likewise, Greene (2007, p.98-104) states that using different theories and methods reveals different aspects of a single complex phenomenon, investigates different phenomena that interact and need to be understood jointly, creates divergent interpretations, generates fresh insights as well as force the researcher to seek a deeper and more complex understanding.

More importantly, two theories were used in this study to avoid distorting the conceptions of valued academic writing practices and to increase the validity of the findings. It is understood that no conceptual framework, model, or theory can capture everything about the phenomena being studied. Maxwell (2012, p.86) holds that 'every theory is a lens for making sense of the world, and every theory reveals some aspects of that reality and distorts or conceals other aspects'. Maxwell (2012) holds that since no theory or model can provide a complete picture of what exists, multiple theories may be desirable or beneficial, helping us understand some aspect of the phenomena being studied. Using a single dominant theory can distort one's conceptions of things being studied and lead the researcher to overlook things that do not fit this theory or alternative ways of making sense of one's data.

4.6   Phases of the Fieldwork

The fieldwork involved three main phases. Phase one consists of the piloting of interviews with students. The second phase involved several activities. The first activity is inviting participants and selecting modules and assessors. The second activity is procuring essays and selections of essays to be analysed. Phase three involves semi-structured interviews with assessors and students. Two main questions guide these activities. For tutors, 'What are the valued academic writing practices in the assigned writing task?'. For students, 'What is expected from you to produce successful academic writing for this task?'.

4.6.1   Phase One

Phase one of fieldwork was carried out in 2018 and involved looking at student handbooks to locate marking criteria and examine how successful academic writing was framed, as well as module outlines and assignment descriptions to see how successful academic writing was conceptualised in learning outcomes and assessment documents. The writing task descriptions were read at this stage, and their weighting in assessment was identified. In the MLTM module, the selected writing assignment accounted for 50% of the overall evaluation.

4.6.2   Phase Two

The second phase involved piloting the interview questions with students. The pilot study was conducted in 2019 and reflected the focus of the research at that time, which was criticality in student writing. Although the research has evolved significantly since then, the pilot study helped me structure my interview questions better.

In March 2019, I conducted a pilot study to test the interview questions with five students to test and design better interview questions. The students were selected based on voluntary participation. They had taken modules in Applied Linguistics and TESOL as part of an MA degree or an integrated PhD programme in the same UK University. I asked students to bring two assignments they had written for this degree: a high-scoring assignment and another low-scoring assignment. The students' assignments were read carefully, and I asked them questions about criticality, academic writing, and their written assignments. See Appendix B for more details on the participants, the assignments they had written, and the questions they were asked. The questions I asked students during the pilot study include:

> What is your understanding of the concept of critical thinking?
> What does academic writing mean to you?
> How important is criticality in academic writing?
> What suggestions would you give to improve students' critical thinking in their writing?
> What is this writing task asking you to do?
> What is criticality in this assignment?
> In this assignment, they are asking you to link theory to practice. Do you want to comment on this?

The pilot study showed me that I was asking students questions beyond the scope of the present research or questions that students could not answer. Examples of these questions are asking students to define criticality in Applied Linguistics or questions relating to their pre-sessional

experience. As the present study evolved, and so did my understanding of the context and the theoretical lens, I found that questions that relate to critical thinking became less valuable to the study. I mainly relied on questions relating to the assignment writing or their reactions to the feedback they received on their writing, which later revealed the code clashes between them and their tutors regarding valued academic writing practices.

Based on the pilot study, I modified some of the interview questions. For example, instead of asking students questions about defining criticality in their writing, I asked them what they could have done to improve their writing. I found this question helpful in eliciting their disciplinary expectations of what a successful academic text in a module and writing task looked like. I also avoided asking direct questions about criticality, which could have forced specific answers from students. I also used follow-up questions to elicit more information from students indirectly. For instance, if a student informed me that they expected a successful piece of writing to show more 'analysis', I followed up by asking the student to elaborate on what they understood as 'analysis' in the writing task.

The pilot interview also showed me that a few other questions needed to be asked to elicit more information from students regarding their writing of the assignments. I started to ask students questions relating to their experience before the task's actual writing, such as whether they had looked at the guidelines or the marking criteria before the actual writing of the assignment or how long they had spent on writing the assignment. These questions were beneficial when I began the data analysis as they showed the effects of time or familiarity with the assignment guidelines on students' level of engagement with theory and practice.

As for piloting the interview questions with tutors', I found it very hard to arrange for pilot interviews with tutors in the discipline due to their busy schedules and the fact that I was an outsider. However, during my data collection in early 2020, I managed to interview one tutor from the MLTM module. Unfortunately, the first pandemic lockdown prevented me from conducting the rest of the interviews with tutors. However, the single tutor interview I collected in early 2020 was a pilot study of tutors' interviews for this module. When I finally collected the rest of the interviews in early 2021, I had a chance to interview the same tutor for a second interview and collect the remainder of the interviews from assessors in the field. I learned from the first interview and used it to ask better questions more directly linked to the knowledge forms in students' writing.

4.6.3 Phase Three

Phase three covered the actual data collection on modules from an MA in Applied Linguistics. This stage involved several activities.

The first activity involved sending invitations to lecturers teaching at the MA programme in Applied Linguistics. I sent individual invitations by email to fifteen lecturers teaching fourteen different modules. The study was introduced, ethical assurances were given, and requests for participation were made. Only four module leads agreed to take part in the study. One of these modules was a Theoretical Linguistics module, but the assigned tasks were not writing tasks. Therefore, this module was considered unsuitable for this study. The other three modules were the Modern Language Teaching Methods module, Technology Enhanced Teaching module, and Learner Autonomy Module. Accessing the data at this stage was not straightforward because of the sensitivity of the topic of assessment and the fact that I was considered an outsider. I did not have close professional and social contact with lecturers teaching the MA degrees.

The second activity was attending all three modules and introducing myself to the participants. After introducing myself and my research, students were handed a piece of paper and asked to provide their email addresses if they wished to participate in the study. I conducted classroom observations during this stage and took notes for the entire module. I examined and gathered module documents, including module descriptions, assessment guidelines, PowerPoint presentations and assigned reading lists for all three modules. I attended and made classroom observations of three modules, collected 30 student essays, and interviewed 30 students and eight tutors. Only the Modern Language Teaching Methods (MLTM) module was selected for the study analysis due to the time and word limit on this thesis and the suitability of this module to the study's aims. The analysis in the following chapters is conducted on three essays, three student interviews, and three tutor interviews from the MLTM.

The third activity occurred at the end of module teaching and after students received marks on their writing tasks. This stage involved sending invitations to students by email and procuring student essays. The study was introduced, ethical assurances were given, and requests for participation were made. Students were then asked to read and sign the ethics form and return it with electronic scans of their essays. The essays procured for this study after they had been given marks for their courses. All essays were accepted at this stage regardless of whether they were high-achieving or low-achieving. All students were thanked and encouraged, including those who failed the assignment.

The fourth activity involved interviews with students and tutors. Before the interviews were conducted, specific procedures had to be implemented. First, students' essays were read roughly to understand them. Then, I interviewed students about their assignments and asked them to reflect on their experiences of writing the essays and the feedback they received on their texts.

Second, I designed tutor interview questions about the content presented in those essays and the in-text feedback. The interview questions and the marked essays were delivered to the tutors in addition to the ethics forms. Tutors signed the ethics forms and returned the student texts. The student essays and the in-text feedback became the talking points in the interviews. The broad question that drove the interviews was, 'How did the student meet the requirements of successful academic writing in this task?'.

During this stage, I faced significant challenges and severe delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. When the first lockdown started in the UK in March 2020, I lost contact with tutors from the MLTM module. The tutors eventually responded to my emails, and interviews were conducted after nearly 11 months of delay.

Table 4.3 below is a summary of the phases and timeline of fieldwork.

Table 4.3   Phases of Fieldwork

Phase one	Phase two	Phase three
2018-2019 -examining successful academic writing in university documents -examining successful academic writing within module aims, marking criteria	2019-2020 -piloting of student interviews	2020-2021 -Sending invitation for participation -Selection of module and assessors -classroom observations - obtaining module documents -Inviting participation -procurement of student essays -Interviews with students - piloting of lecturers' interviews 2021-2022 -Interview with lecturers - analysis of interview transcripts, lecturers' written feedback and student essays

4.7   Research Methods

Given the complexity of academic writing and assessment of academic writing, it is essential to use different research methods to study it. Johnson (1992) writes that 'the purpose [of case study] is to understand the complexity and dynamic nature of the particular entity and to discover

systematic connections among experiences, behaviours, and relevant features of the context' (p.84).

The present case study used multiple research methods, including classroom observations, module documents, interviews with tutors and students and actual students' writing. Classroom observations and module documents provided the first step, which gave me a general understanding of the nature of academic writing expectations as they relate to theory and practice. Interviews with tutors and students' essays and in-text feedback comprised the primary data in this study. Students' essays provided the second step in understanding how students' writing moves from abstraction to concreteness and how meanings are condensed. Finally, tutors' interviews and in-text feedback provided essential data for understanding tutors' disciplinary academic writing expectations relating to abstraction, concreteness and condensations of meanings in a specific task, module and discipline. Students' interviews were used for triangulation purposes and to compare tutors' and students' understanding as they relate to theory, practice and condensations of meanings. Using multiple research methods also ensures the triangulation of methods, a more accurate and in-depth account of academic writing, and increases the study's internal validity (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 2012). Table 4.4 below is a summary of the database for the MLTM module.

Table 4.4   Summary of Database of the MLTM Module

Data type	Research phase obtained	Data source	Total length
Three students' essays and accompanying lecturer feedback	Phase 3	Students	Words per essay (2112 approximately) Words in total (about 6,337)
• Course description • Module outlines • Handout for activities • Marking criteria • Student handbook	Phase 3	Lecturer and student handbooks	Number of pages per module (43)
Three interviews	Phase 3	Students	• Audiotaped and transcribed interviews (10) • Number of students (10) • Average 50 minutes each (500 minutes approximately)
Three interviews	Phase 3	Lecturers	• Audiotaped and transcribed interviews (4) • Number of lecturers (3) and hours • Average 1. hours each (240 approximately)

4.8 Sampling and Data Collection

As a qualitative study, the guiding principle for selecting settings and participants is not to ensure representativeness or compatibility but to identify groups and settings that best exhibit the characteristics of the phenomena under investigation. Thus, I used the first sampling strategy for this study based on what Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.176) called 'theoretical sampling'. This sampling strategy involves selecting participants, activities, or incidents based on their relevance to the theory, which is LCT Semantics. This theory traces the movement of abstraction and concreteness of concepts or theoretical and applied concepts. The case selected is an Applied Linguistics module, which requires students to link theory to actual teaching and learning practices in classroom discussions and writing tasks.

Secondly, to select the settings and individuals that are most accessible and conducive to gaining an understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Maxwell, 2012). This sampling is often labelled 'convenience sampling', the second sampling strategy for selecting the setting and participants in this study. This sample is often negatively contrasted with probability and purposeful sampling (Patton, 2001). However, it is essential to take the realities of access, cost, time and difficulty and its influence on every decision about the settings and participants included in a study. Maxwell (2012) argues that dismissing these considerations as 'unrigorous' is to ignore the actual conditions that influence how data can be collected and the ability of these data to answer one's research questions. Palys (2008, p.697) stated that 'there is no one best sampling strategy because which is best depends on the context in which researchers are working and the nature of the research objectives'.

4.8.1 Interviews

In 2020 and early 2021, I interviewed students and assessors. At this stage, the research focused on understanding criticality in student texts, and the interview questions still reflected this approach. Students were interviewed regarding their experience of assignment writing for the modules, their understanding of criticality, and valued practices in those assignments and the modules in general. Participants were asked open-ended questions, and topics included their coursework and educational experiences. I also asked them about their reactions and thoughts on the feedback they received from their tutors on their marked essays. See Appendix C for the complete interview guide.

Examples of questions from the interview guide with students include:

Tell me about your educational background. How were you taught and assessed on academic writing previously?

What is the question in this writing task asking you to do?

What is criticality in this task?

Why do you think the assignment was evaluated the way it was?

What could you have done to improve your writing in this task?

What challenges did you face when writing this assignment?

Three assessors from the Modern Language Teaching Methods were interviewed. These were in-depth interviews loosely structured around the broad question – 'What are the successful academic writing practices in this task? This open-ended question allowed me to probe further when needed (Cohen et al., 2007, p.416). A focus on criticality still influenced some of the interview questions with assessors. Interviews were close to one hour long each. They were audio recorded with consent, transcribed, and then coded manually.

The questions structured interviews with assessors include:

What does this writing task ask students to do?

What is critical thinking in this assignment?

What did you assess as good or weak academic practices in this essay?

What is strong and weak about the introduction?

How could this paragraph or argument be improved?

How could the student improve this essay and score higher?

What is strong and weak about the conclusion?

What is a good introduction, conclusion, and argument in this assignment?

How do you evaluate their use of teaching and learning examples?

How did the students meet the requirements of successful academic writing in this task?

4.8.2   Participants

The participants in this study were tutors and students. The total number of tutors in the MLTM module was four. This included the module lead and three more academic tutors. All four tutors were teaching and assessing students' texts within the MLTM module, with the module lead doing most of the teaching. Only the module lead and two other tutors agreed to participate in this study. The tutors are identified in this study as Tutor 1 or sometimes Assessor 1 for the module lead, Tutor 2, or Assessor 2 for the second academic tutor, and Tutor 3 or Assessor 3 for the last academic tutor. The actual names of the tutors were changed, and their qualifications and areas of expertise were withheld to protect their identities.

Chapter 4

The student participants from the MLTM comprised ten students and ten essays. However, I only list the participants whose tasks were examined in this study. The list consists of three students and three essays. First, I read all tasks to gain an overall understanding of the valued academic practices in task 1, and later, I examined three essays in depth. Table 4.5 below includes the names of the participants, the marks they received on their writing tasks, their gender, and their country of origin. The participants' real names were changed to protect their identities.

Table 4.5   MLTM Participants Information List

	Pseudonym	Gender	Marks received for essay	Task writing time	BA degree	IELTS Score	Pre-sessional or In-sessional experience	Prior teaching experience	Country of origin
Essay 1	Zoe	F	57	Five days	English Language	Overall score, 5.5 and 5.5 in writing	11-week pre-sessional course	Taught English to middle school students for two months	China
Essay 2	Yara	F	68	Two to three weeks	English Translation	Overall score, 7 and 6 in writing	No pre-sessional course	No teaching experience	China
Essay 3	Chen	F	58	One week	Education	Overall score, 6.5 and 6 in writing	No pre-sessional course	No teaching experience	China

4.9   Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Southampton ethics committee. Consent forms were e-mailed to participants along with the introduction, explanation, and request for participation in the study. Students were invited to read and sign the consent forms and send them back along with electronic copies of their marked essays and copies of the in-text feedback they received on their marked essays. Tutors were also given the consent form, which they signed and returned.

Qualitative case studies can pose a challenge in protecting the anonymity and privacy of the participants. Duff (2008) states that one of the challenges in conducting case studies, mainly when they include considerable detail and contextualisation about the person and site, is the difficulty in protecting the identity of the participants, even when pseudonyms are used. As a solution to this issue, Duff (2008) suggests changing or withholding biographical or contextual formation that

might compromise the confidentiality of the case. For these reasons, the name of the university where the study was conducted has been withheld; instead, the name 'UK University' has been used throughout the thesis.

The names of the modules have been changed to protect the identities of the cases. The module name is replaced with 'Modern Language Teaching Methods'. Biographical information about the tutors was withheld to protect their identities. The gender of the tutors was altered, and the real names of participants were also consistently substituted with pseudonyms in reports and transcripts to protect the identity of the participants.

4.10   Researcher Positionality

Positionality 'reflects the position the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study' (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p.71). Holmes (2020) states that very little research in the social and educational field is or can be value-free. Instead of trying to eliminate their effects, researchers need to acknowledge and disclose themselves in their work to understand their influence on the research process. In this section, I explain my positionality by locating myself in three areas: (1) the subject under investigation, (2) the research participants, and (3) the research context and process, as well as the interpretation of the outcomes.

When I first approached the subject under investigation, I had some pre-study beliefs on how things are and what should be investigated. At the start of my research, I viewed the field from a positivist perspective of objective reality. I assumed that each discipline had fixed rules of criticality and good academic writing practices, which needed to be revealed to students and tutors and generalised to similar contexts. However, the researcher's positionality or 'situatedness' changes over time. (Rowe, 2014). Positionality is never fixed and is always situation and context-dependent. As I developed as a researcher through reading and constant feedback from my supervisors, I began to see the subjective nature of academic writing and assessment. I began to understand that there are no fixed rules of good academic writing among academics. It is worth exploring the subjective nature of academic writing practices and the differences among tutors regarding their academic writing teaching and assessment practices.

I also now recognise that my positionality affects the totality of the research process. As a researcher, I am part of the social world I am researching. I am not separate from the social processes I am studying, and my social, historical, and political location influences the totality of the research.

For example, my motivation to study this research problem was sparked by my professional and personal experience. As an international postgraduate student in UK HE, I faced challenges and witnessed my international classmates face similar challenges with understanding the requirements of good academic writing practices and producing writing that meets those requirements. Professionally, I worked as a teaching assistant in Saudi Arabia and realised that academic writing in HE poses a challenge to students who often need help to understand what is required to write successfully. This personal and professional experience influenced my choice of the research problem, context, and participants. Due to this experience, I chose to study postgraduate academic writing in HE among participants mainly speaking English as a second language.

My political views also influenced the choice of the research problem and the context of the study. I believe in promoting social justice in Higher Education, which led me to choose the context of postgraduate academic writing in UK HE. While academic language is nobody's mother tongue (Bourdieu et al., 1994), many postgraduate students in UK HE are international students who may not be adequately socialised in UK HE systems and may not be as familiar with the requirements of successful academic writing within the disciplines as their native counterparts. International postgraduate students often receive academic support from EAP courses and writing centres within UK universities (Clarence and McKenna, 2017). However, this kind of support often targets academic writing in general rather than academic writing in the disciplines (Clarence and McKenna, 2017). It is, therefore, essential to shed light on the disciplinary writing expectations in UK HE to promote social justice and equality among students. This belief in the importance of fostering social justice led me to choose this research problem in the hope of making the semantic requirements in successful academic writing in the discipline more explicit and accessible to all students from all backgrounds, especially those who are not socialised in successful academic writing in the UK.

As for my positionality towards the research participants, my position did not fall into the dichotomy of either an outsider or an insider. I was simultaneously an insider and an outsider, constantly moving back and forth between both positions depending on the context and the participants. As a mature female Saudi PhD student studying postgraduate academic writing, I was seen as an insider by being a student. However, as a doctoral student, I was considered an outsider to postgraduate master's level students. I was probably also regarded as more of an insider to the Saudi participants than other participants from other countries. Equally, I was perhaps seen as more of an insider by the female students than the male students, an insider to mature students, and an outsider to the younger students. I also spent much time with students

and interacted with them during classroom observation. Due to this familiarity, they probably saw me as an insider.

Being an insider gave me the advantage of understanding the experiences of those inside the culture. It also gave me more access to the culture being studied, and I was mostly regarded as being 'one of us.' Being closer to research participants in age and status as postgraduate students made it easier to develop rapport and put them at ease, greatly facilitating the data collection process. It also gave me the ability to ask more meaningful and insightful questions. I was also more trusted, so it is possible that I secured more honest answers. As an insider, I believe I was able to produce a more truthful, authentic description and understanding of the culture. However, being an insider could also have disadvantages for my research, such as being unknowingly biased or sympathetic to the culture.

As for the tutors, I was not a full-staff member. The teaching staff saw me as a researcher or a PhD student, which positioned me as an 'outsider'. It is also possible that they saw me as another student occasionally. This is because I participated in the classroom discussion and interacted with students. This somehow helped me as a researcher by immersing myself in the classroom experience and helped me make both the students and staff comfortable around me. Later, I sought staff feedback to understand how they viewed my participation. All tutors mentioned that I had a positive effect on students' participation and had a role in facilitating discussion. One tutor said I did not come across as someone with a hidden agenda. By gaining their trust and acceptance, I could access the course materials, assessment materials and their insights into writing, assessment, learning and teaching in this module.

Since the tutors mainly viewed me as an outsider, I gained adequate distance and the ability to sufficiently detach myself from the culture to study it with less bias. I was also not as close or familiar with the culture or bound by customs and codes as the tutors were, giving me more freedom to ask questions. As an outsider and knowing they may not have any future contact with me, most tutors were willing to reveal sensitive information they would not to an insider. Being an outsider allowed me to create a distance between myself and the participants and ask questions that an insider may be unable to ask. It also enabled me to bring an external perspective to the process.

Regarding data analysis and outcomes, I recognise that language is a human construct. Experiences and interpretations of language are individually constructed, and meanings of words are individually and subjectively constructed (von-Glaserfield, 1988 cited in Holmes, 2020). Therefore, despite my attempts to revisit the coding and interpretations and several attempts to increase accuracy and reduce bias, there will always be some form of bias and subjectivity.

In summary, I strived to avoid obvious, conscious, or systematic bias and tried to be as neutral as possible in collecting, interpreting and presenting the data. However, I also recognise that this aspiration may not have been fully attained, that I influence the research, and that there is no complete 'neutral' or 'objective' knowledge. We can never objectively describe something as it is (Holmes, 2020).

4.11 Data Analysis: Stages for bringing academic writing practices into view

Data analysis was the most challenging part of the fieldwork as it involved bringing together the analytical tool of rhetorical move-step analysis, semantic gravity, and semantic density with raw data from tutors' and students' interview transcripts, student essays and curriculum documents.

As I worked with the data, I needed to bridge the gap between data and theory, which involved constant negotiation between theory and data using 'external languages of descriptions' or 'translation devices' (Chen and Maton, 2016). This reiterative data analysis process and moving between theory and data and vice versa involved several stages. The primary data sets for this study included tutors' and students' interviews and essays. I will start by explaining the data analysis stages, which involved working with students' essays and tutors' interview transcripts and finish by explaining the final stage of working with students' interview transcripts.

4.11.1 Stage One: Working with essays and tutors' interviews using Swales' (1990) Rhetorical Move-Step Analysis

To make an initial sense of the data, I sought to understand the genre of Task 1 in the MLTM, its social purpose, the rhetorical moves in students' texts and whether they fulfil the social purpose of the task.

The assignment question of Task 1 in the MLTM required students to select a journal article on teaching and learning, summarise the main points, and then critically analyse the text in relation to Brumfit (1984) principles of communicative language teaching, theories of language, and language teaching and learning contexts. Since the task involved reporting the content of another text, making connections with related theories and practices as well as evaluating the implications of the research, the genre is referred to in this study as an Evaluative Account.

In this stage, I conducted genre analysis based on the English for Specific Purposes approach and more specifically Swales' (1990) Rhetorical Move-Step analysis. This was an iterative process and involved visiting the data multiple times and adjusting the framework. The process of identifying

the move structure of students' essays involves careful reading of all students' essays and identifying recurring rhetorical actions that may coalesce into moves and steps through careful examination of content, and structural and linguistic cues.

The study used two types of instrumentations: The AntMover software. *AntMover* is an automatic text structure analyser program which is available on the Internet. Once a text file is opened in *AntMover*, it is imported into the program for analysis.

The second instrument was a manual analysis of the move structures of the Evaluative Account based on the description of the schematic structure of the journal article review genre by Woodward-Kron (2003), Devira and Westin (2021), and description of argumentative essays by Hyland (1990). In addition, tutors' commentary on students' texts, interview data with tutors, and writing guidelines in the students' course outline provided valuable insights for identifying the genre's social purpose and schematic stages. See Table 3.1 for a description of the Evaluative Account genre in this study.

Table 3.1   Schematic structure of Evaluative Account in the MLTM

Moves	Steps
Introduction^	Summary of the article, thesis, [outline of the text]
Analysis of Article^	Positive Critique: Point, Elaboration
Analysis of Article^	Negative Critique: Point, Elaboration
Conclusion^	Summary of key points, [Recommendations]
References	A list of bibliography

The critical review texts were characterised by four moves: Introduction, Analysis of the Article: Positive Critique, Analysis of the Article: Negative Critique, and Conclusion. Each of these moves consisted of steps. The introduction move encompassed three steps: summary of the article, and thesis. These steps were constructed by the writer in order to refer to the review article, to direct readers' attention to the main issue, to introduce the topic of reviewed text and to summarise its main points, and finally, to give the writer's critique of the text.

In the next move, the Analysis of the Article was divided into two parts: Positive Critique and Negative Critique. This move consists of two steps: a Point or stance and Elaboration which provides support for the main point. The analysis of the article needs to build a relation between the content of the reviewed text and Brumfit (1984) principles of communicative language

teaching, theories of language and language teaching and learning contexts. The text ended with a Conclusion move, which consisted of a summary of key points and recommendations for future research.

4.11.2   Stage Two: Working with essays and tutors' interviews using Translation Devices

In this stage and after identifying the essay genre and stages of students' texts, I worked with tutors' interviews. First, I transcribed them from the audio on MS Word and read them thoroughly to familiarize myself with the data. After transcribing all the interviews, I conducted coding to aid qualitative data analysis. Coding is a name or label given to a piece of text or different kinds of data. These data can be coded into a word or abbreviation that resembles the original data so that the researcher can understand what it means immediately and retrieve the data conveniently (Cohen et al., 2011).

The coding was conducted manually. Manual coding is more challenging and time-consuming, but it allowed me to immerse myself in the data. After familiarizing myself with the data, I coded interviews by reading through the data and identifying initial codes in the form of short words and phrases that captured key concepts or ideas. I highlighted these words and phrases in the texts. I focused more on recurring elements and generated a list of codes representing different aspects of the data. These codes were descriptive and captured the essence of the content. After codes emerged, I created mind maps to help categorise the codes under common themes. Codes that shared similar themes were grouped and those that indicated different themes were separated from each other (see Appendix E)

The data was coded and categorised based on 'deductive' and 'inductive' approaches. The deductive code relates to the research question, 'What is understood as good academic writing practices?'.' In contrast, the inductive code considers the themes that existed and emerged from the coding of the data. At this stage, I coded the interview transcripts without theory to understand the language of the data itself.

4.11.2.1   Semantic Gravity Translation Device

After coding the transcripts with their language, I used the lens of semantic gravity to analyse them. When applying the conceptual lens of semantic gravity to analyse the data, I asked, 'What is the semantic requirement?' and followed two procedures of data analysis.

First, I worked with tutors' interview transcripts using Maton's 7G (see Appendix J), which I used as a heuristic to see the different aspects of a semantic gravity profile for each tutor's expectations. I found that tutors differ in their requirements, which helped me see similarities

and differences in tutors' expectations and informed the data analysis of students' texts. See Appendix J for more details on these specific expectations.

Second, to bridge the gap between data and the theoretical lens of semantic gravity, I analyzed the data using an external language of descriptions or translation devices. First, I used Kirk's semantic gravity translation device to view the data and apply it to a small section of students' texts and tutors' interviews (see Figure 4.1). This translation device proved to be a beneficial step in examining semantic gravity in students' texts and tutors' interviews; however, students' texts and tutors' interviews showed various degrees of relative strengths of semantic gravity or context-dependence.
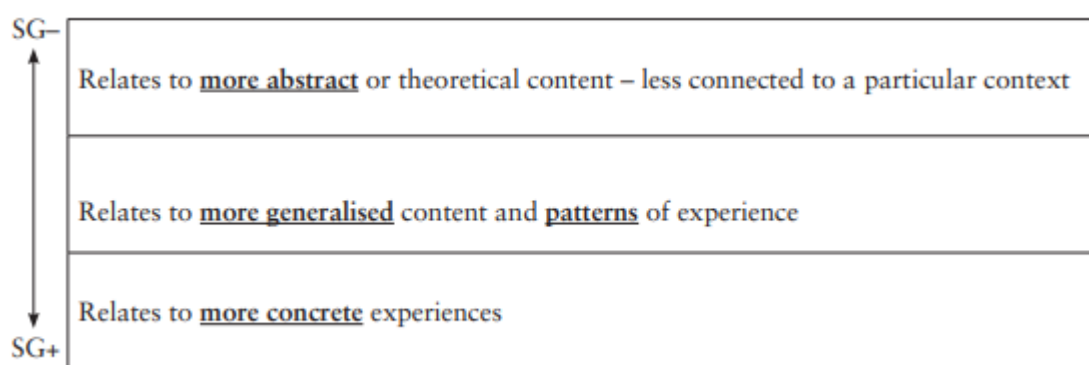
Figure 4.1   Steve Kirk (2017) Semantic Gravity Translation Device

Therefore, a more nuanced translation device developed by Maton (2014c) was adapted to code and analyse texts and interviews. This translation device was constantly modified based on the context of this data and the specific problem situation of this project.

Maton (2014c) devised a translation device to analyse students' work products by examining whether meaning remains within its acquisition context or extends beyond its context. The Translation device developed by Maton (2014c) lists a gradual movement from the particular and contextual and slowly to more abstract ideas that are more distanced from a specific context. The MLTM Task 1 also asks students to move back and forth between the contextual to the more abstract. That is, from the text being reviewed and practical teaching and learning examples to the broader literature in CLT and language teaching and learning.

The nature of the particular and contextual in Maton's (2014c) TD differs from the contextual and specific in the MLTM task. For example, on the one hand, the strongest semantic gravity in Maton (2014c) TD refers to the reproduction of information directly from an 'instructional design case' with no elaboration. In the present study, I use it to refer to the reproduction of text or

quotations without elaboration. This is because, in the MLTM, the students examine an article and its arguments.

On the other hand, the two weakest points of semantic gravity in Maton's (2014c) TD refer to abstraction and generalisation. Abstraction refers to presenting a general principle or procedure that moves beyond the cases to address broader or future practice. Generalisation refers to giving a general observation or drawing a generalising conclusion about issues and events in the case. In MLTM task 1, the weakest point of semantic gravity in students' texts appeared as 'generalisation', where students present a general observation or draw a generalising conclusion.

Unlike the instructional design task, which focused on eliciting from students 'your own experiences as a designer' rather than relating the cases to explicit principles of instructional design, the MLTM task asked students to connect the literature and the principles of communicative language teaching to their own teaching and learning experiences and vice versa. Thus, the translation device (Maton, 2014) was modified, and an additional level called 'contextualisation' was added to the semantic gravity device. This level refers to the contextualisation of the article being reviewed, communicative language teaching principles, the wider English language teaching and learning literature, practical teaching and learning contexts, and students' own learning and teaching experiences. Regarding the semantic gravity scale, this level is relatively stronger and considered more context-dependent (see Table 3.3).

I used Maton's adapted translation device to trace the strengthening and weakening of semantic gravity in tutors' interviews and students' texts in two stages. First, I examined the codes generated from tutors' interviews and viewed them through the lens of semantic gravity using Maton's (2014) adapted translation device. For example, when coding tutors' expectations for essay discussions, one of the codes that appeared is 'providing explanations' as in:

> For me, I think the keyword that comes up repeatedly is explain. I think there's a tendency of this student, either not to explain, particularly why or what so that I think they have a lot of statements… that if they identify something, but they don't explain how that exists, why that exists. And you know, how we can understand that it's full of lots of descriptive statements. So, I think explanation is key. [Tutor 1]

These codes and extracts were later put under the analytical lens of semantic gravity and interpreted as an expectation for weakening semantic gravity by producing more interpretations and explanations based on Maton's (2014) adapted translation devices.

Second, I examined students' texts. Students' texts were broken down into individual 'units of meaning' (sentences conveying a single coherent meaning), and each unit was coded using the scheme. The study comprised three students whose work products contained approximately 6,337 words. The tutors' interview transcripts were read simultaneously with students' texts,

further informing the analysis. After reading what tutors highlighted as good academic writing practices through a semantic gravity lens, I would visit students' texts and view them using the tutor's expectations and the semantic gravity analysis generated from tutors' interviews. In-text written feedback was also used to inform the semantic gravity analysis of students' texts.

4.11.2.2   Semantic Density Translation Device

After coding the transcripts with their language, I used the lens of epistemological condensation to analyse the complexity in students' texts and tutors' expectations. When applying the lens of epistemological condensation to analyse the data, I asked:

> How do students build complexity in their essays?

> How do tutors view complexity in students' essays and how do their views compare with students' views?

First, I worked with tutors' interview transcripts to understand how they conceptualise complexity. After examining tutors' expectations, I began reading students' texts to understand the complexity in their writing.

To bridge the gap between the data and the theoretical lens of semantic density, I analysed the data using an external language of description or a translation device. I used Maton and Doran (2017a) clausing tool that explores English discourse for signs of the complexity of the knowledge being expressed at the clause level. I used the translation device to name the different levels and strengths of epistemological condensation as they appeared in students' texts and tutors' interviews (see Figure 3.3). There were strong similarities between the types that emerged from the data and the groupings in (Maton and Doran, 2017a) device, but this study involved its own device, namely using the groupings to analyse longer stretches of text instead of clause level.

EC	Type	Subtype
+ ↑	connecting	taxonomizing
		coordinating
↓ −	augmenting	characterizing
		establishing

Figure 3.3   Maton and Doran (2017) adapted Translation Device of epistemological condensation

The translation device comprises different levels and strengths of epistemological condensation or strengthening of ESD by combining meanings through different processes. Connecting (EC+) refers to relating terms, concepts and ideas to epistemological constellations. Augmenting (EC—) refers to adding meanings to terms themselves without relating them to such constellations. Each of these two types can be distinguished further into 'subtypes' to show finer delicacy. (See section 3.7.2 for more on the epistemological condensation Translation Device)

I used the translation device to trace higher and lower epistemological condensation in tutors' interviews and students' texts in two stages. First, I examined the codes generated from tutors' interviews and viewed them through the lens of the epistemological condensation translation device. For example, one of the codes that appeared is 'providing explanations' for theoretical terms such as 'autonomy' and 'authenticity' as in:

> I think they are on for this module; they are key concepts. And they are debated concepts with different usages really. And so, I think that needed explaining. And it's an example of where the student could show their voice by saying, in this context, my understanding of 'authentic' is x y, z. However, it has also been interpreted in other senses. And the same with autonomy. I thought that was a kind of opportunity missed by the student to develop those ideas. [Tutor 3]

These codes and extracts were later put under the analytical lens of epistemological condensation and interpreted as an expectation for coordinating (EC+) by creating relations between the concepts and other different meanings and perspectives, thus increasing the complexity of the term.

Second, I examined students' texts. Students' texts were broken down into individual 'units of meaning' (sentences conveying a single coherent meaning), and each unit was coded using the scheme. The tutors' interview transcripts were read simultaneously with students' texts, further informing the analysis. After reading what tutors highlighted as good academic writing practices through an epistemological condensation lens, I would visit students' texts and view them using the tutor's expectations and the semantic gravity analysis generated from tutors' interviews. In-text written feedback was also used to inform the epistemological condensation analysis of students' texts.

4.11.3 Stage Three: Working with essays and tutors' interviews using a zooming in/out analysis strategy

I examined students' texts and tutors' interviews in this stage using Maton's adapted translation device (see Table 3.3). As I worked with this device and the data, I adopted a practical research strategy called *zooming,* which helped me negotiate relations between theory and data and bring them together.

'Zooming' describes movements in either direction between wide-angle analysis of the bigger picture and telephoto analysis of a more limited phenomenon, such as a specific instance. This project began with a more wide-angle analysis of the essay. I used a wide-angle analysis of the essay to give a big picture of tutors' expectations of student essay writing. Such wide-angle analyses helped reveal the relative strengths of the semantic gravity of student essay writing, which could have remained concealed if the focus had been solely on selected sections. Returning to a bigger picture ensured the analysis was not limited to segmented fragments of the whole problem situation. I then zoomed into the 'telephoto analyses' of selected essay sections, such as some sections from the essay discussion, to reveal more detailed explorations of tutors' expectations and students' writing practices.

This strategy helped me balance too much and too little distance between theory and data. Too much distance between theory and data creates a disconnect, while too little distance can lead to theoretical imposition (Maton et al., 2016b).

4.11.4 Stage Four: Working with essays and tutors' interviews and drawing semantic profiles

Stage four involved drawing semantic profiles. After describing the strengthening and weakening of semantic gravity in students' texts and tutors' interviews, they were plotted on a semantic scale to show the shape of the semantic gravity waves generated by the analyses. The semantic wave heuristically traces how a student has moved knowledge across text time. See Figure 5.1 for an example of a semantic wave enacted by Zoe.

As shown in the interviews and in-text feedback, tutors' expectations were plotted on a semantic scale to reveal the shape and requirements of tutors' expectations in semantic profiles. These tutors' profiles can be compared to the semantic profiles of students' texts to show matches and mismatches between them. See Figure 6.3 for an example of a semantic profile of what Assessor 1 expects to see as good academic writing practices in the essay introduction.

4.11.5   Stage Five: Working with students' interviews

The five stages of data analysis involved coding students' interview transcripts. First, I transcribed students' interviews from the audio on MS Word. Since I had ten students' interview transcripts, I first used NVivo to organise student interviews and generate common codes, which proved a handy tool given the large amount of data obtained from student interviews. However, I found it more beneficial to continue coding the interviews manually to familiarize myself with the data. I read the interviews and highlighted interesting sentences and words to create initial codes. The questions I asked of the data are 'What do students view as good academic writing practices' and 'What are students' habits in producing their academic writing?'. After I created the initial codes, I looked for similar codes in the interviews and grouped them to generate themes (see Appendix E)

Later, I analysed the codes and data using LCT Semantics and compared the students' expectations to their tutors'. For example, under the code 'contextualisation', Zoe explained that her use of teaching and learning examples needs to be very specific to show more authenticity:

> The teacher said I'm not write some knowledge more general. To pose my idea [I think] is the more certainly [the specific] makes the real thing. Maybe I something said something more certainly and need to use cautious word. [Zoe's interview]

When I probed further to understand more clearly why she produced very specific examples, she explained that her examples were not specific and had to be written in a story-like manner to show they were practical examples, and, following the assessor's feedback, she was not sure whether this choice is considered an acceptable academic practice or not:

> Very specific no. Because if I give the very specific, maybe I will write down some, you know, like the article, not like the academics do academic work because I will say something like a story or some give some story to explain this, the maybe that it's not like an academic. [Zoe's interview]

By viewing the quotes through the lens of LCT Semantic gravity, it appeared that Zoe's examples were much stronger in semantic gravity, which was criticised by Tutor 1, resulting in writing that seems segmented and lacks semantic flow. Also, she appears to expect the teaching examples to be much stronger in semantic gravity than her tutor.

It is important to note that student interviews are used as a triangulation method of the data since the study's main aim is to understand the disciplinary expectations of assessors in the field and what they value as successful academic writing practices.

4.11.6   Stage Six: A cross-case analysis

After conducting a within-case analysis of tutors' expectations and students' texts in the MLTM module to understand each case's specificities, I ran a cross-case analysis to compare the findings of each. As Larsen-Freeman (1997, p.157) explains, 'In complex nonlinear systems, the behaviour of the whole emerges from the interaction of its parts. Studying the parts individually will tell us about each, but not how they interact'. Therefore, I decided that conducting a cross-case analysis was essential to shed light on the variations between tutors' expectations and students' written products. This formed the last stage of data analysis.

4.12   Interrater Reliability

The marking criteria provided by the university for an MA programme in TESOL and Linguistics generally need to be followed by all modules within MA programmes for both essays and dissertations, and it is specifically used to assess students' essays for the Modern Language Teaching Methods module. This marking criterion is used to evaluate student essays across various indicators, including: 'originality', 'command of relevant literature', 'coherence of argument', 'clarity of expression', and 'adherence to appropriate bibliographic standards'. It is stated in the student handbook that higher standards in one or more of these indicators may, to some extent, compensate for lower standards in others, with the balance between them varying from one submission to another. This indicates that some assignments with low levels in one indicator could still receive a higher mark if other indicators are met with higher standards. However, students' grades could still go down if they do not meet the expectations for one indicator. It is also possible for students to demonstrate good arguments without a good writing style and formalities. Table 4.6 shows descriptors in these categories for distinction, merit, and pass and fail essays where all students in this course were awarded marks.

A close reading of the indicators shows the overlap between concepts like 'information', 'knowledge', and 'grasp of materials'. Likewise, writing structure and clarity use overlapping terms such as 'clarity and coherence of argumentation,' 'logical structure', and 'adequate presentation'. This raises the difficulty of understanding what is assessed as good academic writing based on student marks alone, as they are often marked on several overlapping criteria. Interviews with assessors and their in-text feedback, as provided in the marked academic essays, offer insights into what assessors look for and mark as good or weak academic writing in the MLTM modules.

Table 4.6   Modern Languages and Linguistics MA Marking Criteria

Distinction 80 and above	Exceptional work surpassing that associated with the 70–79 level in terms of originality, subtlety of interpretation, or mastery of a significant body of data. A dissertation gaining this mark will unambiguously demonstrate the ability to pursue doctoral-level research and may present possibilities for publication in an academic journal.
70 -79	High-quality, consistent work displaying all (rather than merely some) of the attributes of work associated with the 60–69 level. Suggest definite potential for pursuing research at the doctoral level.
Merit 60-69	It contains all the qualities of work in the 50–59 range. However, it surpasses at least one of the following: information deployed (typically going beyond reliance on standard secondary sources), clarity and coherence of argumentation, or critical and analytical insight. Suggest at least some possibility of pursuing research at doctoral level.
Pass 50-59	Demonstrates reasonable grasp of all the principal materials relevant to the subject and links them into an at least partly sustained argument from premises to conclusions, resulting in an overall structure which is logical if not fully thought through. Displays some evidence of analytical or critical ability in the handling of sources and evidence. Adequate presentation (no obvious faults).
Fail 40-49	Contains most of the basic materials necessary for a satisfactory treatment of the topic but fails to marshal them effectively in terms of overall structure or sustained argument. Demonstrates some acquaintance with key literature but is unsophisticated in the employment of it. Presentation is marred by easily rectifiable defects (e.g. bibliographical incompleteness or inconsistency)
30-39	Presents some material relevant to the subject but is significantly incomplete or unbalanced; failure to structure the work through argument from premises to conclusions; relies too heavily on secondary sources, contains partially garbled information, or presents statements of opinion inadequately supported by evidence. Scrappy presentation with inadequate citation.
29 and below	Displays minimal knowledge of the subject, with major errors or omissions, or substantially irrelevant material; lack of overall structure, characterized by unsupported assertion rather than argumentation; absence of critical appraisal of material, verging at worst on plagiarism. Expression may be in part unintelligible, and sources are unacknowledged.

It is essential to note that the marking of students' essays was negotiated between the assessors during the moderation process. During the analysis, it became clear that the marking criteria were not set in stone, and every assessor understood and applied them differently. Assessors have to discuss grades and thus come to an interrater reliability. The discussion between the assessors served to calibrate the whole team of assessors so that similar grades were given to all similar assignments.

This study reveals variations in tutors' assessment expectations regarding expected valued academic writing practices. The university examined for this study provides a mechanism of collective operation which ensures fair assessment. This is achieved through two methods. The first is moderation. There are always differences among individual assessors in how they interpret

the marking criteria; however, it is through moderation and extra moderation that assessors agree about the students' marks.

The second method is through external examiners. The University in question has exam boards where grades are ratified and approved. Until then, grades remain 'provisional' – subject to change. It is rare, but possible, that marks change as part of an external recommendation. 'External examiners' are academics from different universities, and there is one for each subject area. Ahead of this board, EEs will scrutinise student work samples and sample markings from each module to check that the university's modules and assessment practices align with those of other UK universities. EEs might make recommendations that the University implement.

4.13   Chapter Summary

This chapter described and explained how the theoretical concepts from the previous chapter were drawn into the methodological and analytical approaches to this study.

In this chapter, I reflected on the evolvement of this research in its focus and design. I explained the reasons for moving the focus from criticality in students' texts to a focus on the knowledge forms and academic practices that relate to context dependence, context independence, and condensation of meanings.

A case study approach to investigation and design was selected to examine academic writing practices due to this phenomenon's subjective, complex, and contested nature and to provide an in-depth description of valued academic writing practices in the disciplines.

The main analytical framework for this study is LCT Semantics gravity, which was used to analyse context-dependence and context-independence in students' texts and tutors' and students' interviews. This conceptual tool enabled me to examine the movement between theoretical and practical knowledge in students' texts. I also used LCT semantic density to investigate the condensation of meanings in students' texts and tutors' disciplinary expectations of valued academic writing practices to gain an overall understanding of the complexity of students' texts. Before conducting an LCT Semantics analysis, I used Swales (1990) Rhetorical Move-Step analysis as an initial analysis to make sense of the data and identify the genre of the essays and its social function and whether students fulfilled the social function of the task.

Different research methods were also used for triangulation and to increase the study's internal validity. Students' texts and tutors' interviews formed the primary data set of the study. Students' interviews were not intended to be explored in depth and were used for triangulation. As for the study's ability to generalise findings beyond its context, I explained that the study did not aim to

generalise findings beyond the context of the study; however, the study has the potential for generalizability of findings due to the use of multiple research methods and Translation Devices.

I stress that the university being examined ensures interrater reliability through moderation and extra moderation to ensure a fair assessment. I referenced examples of this moderation as appeared in the data analysis.

The following chapters present an in-depth analysis of the data. First, I present an analysis of students' texts in Chapter 5, followed by an in-depth analysis of tutors' and students' academic writing expectations in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5   Analysis and discussion of student writing Knowledge-oriented perspectives and enacted practices

5.1   Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the question, 'How does a high-achieving writing task use meanings in terms of context-dependence and context-independence and complexity or epistemological condensations of meanings compared to lower-achieving essays in the MLTM module? I aim to answer this question in light of Maton's (2014) adapted semantic gravity Translation Device (see Table 3.3) and epistemological condensations Translation Device (see Table 3.4).

This chapter reports on the analysis of three students' essays. First, I used a zooming-out strategy to examine students' essays overall. I conducted a within-case analysis of the overall essays and a cross-case analysis to compare the findings. Second, I used a zooming-in strategy to examine the essays more thoroughly. To achieve this, I subdivided the analysis of students' essays to follow the chronological order of reading a student's essay: 'academic writing in essay introductions, 'academic writing in essay body', and 'academic writing in essay conclusions'. In these subheadings, I report on findings from the essays as they appeared in essay introductions, essay body and essay conclusions.

At the end of these sub-headings, I carry a cross-case analysis in which I compare students' academic writing in terms of the underlying context-dependence, context-independence, and epistemological condensation of meanings structuring their writing essays.

A summary is provided at the end of the chapter, which describes the chapter's main findings, how they answer the research question, and why they are important.

5.2   Academic Writing in Overall Essays

In this section, I analyse students' overall writing for writing task 1 in the MLTM module. I first analyse Zoe's essay, followed by Yara's, and I finish with Chen's. I begin each analysis by using a

zooming-out strategy[4] to examine and provide an overview of the essay arguments and the awarded mark on each essay. I use Maton's (2014) adapted Translation Device to trace the strengthening and weakening of semantic gravity in students' texts. Students writing texts were broken down into individual 'units of meaning' (sentences conveying a single coherent meaning), and each unit was coded using the scheme.

I also use the epistemological condensations Translation Device to examine the complexity of students' texts. This section will give the reader an overall understanding of students' writing and how LCT Semantics theory was used to analyse the texts.

5.2.1   Zoe's Overall Essay

Zoe's academic essay is a critique of an academic article written by Liao (2004) titled The Need for Communicative Language Teaching in China, in which the author argues that CLT is the best teaching and learning approach for Chinese English classrooms.

Zoe scored 57 out of 100 for her academic essay. In her academic essay, she attempted to take the middle way by showing the weaknesses of Liao's proposal and the strengths of the CLT approach. Zoe first argued against Liao's (2003) position. Second, she explained the strengths of CLT and its role of CLT in developing students' cognition and metacognition, and finally, she discussed more contextual issues when applying CLT in China. See Appendix G for Zoe's entire essay.

Using a rhetorical-move step analysis of the genre of Evaluative Critique, Table 5.1 below shows the rhetorical moves and steps which Zoe employed in her essay.

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[4] Zooming is a strategy, which is used to negotiate relations between theory and data and bring them together. 'Zooming' describes movements in either direction between wide-angle analysis of the bigger picture and telephoto analysis of a more limited phenomenon such as a specific instance. I used wide-angle analysis of the entire essay marked by each tutor to give a big picture of tutors' expectations of student essay writing. I then zoomed into 'telephoto analyses of selected essay sections such as essay introduction, some sections from essay body and conclusions to reveal more detailed explorations of tutors' expectations and students writing practices.

Table 5.1   Rhetorical Move-Step analysis of Zoe's essay

Move	Step	Description	Examples
Introduction^5	Summary of research	A summary of the academic article and its main claims	Introduction Liao (2004), in this research paper, states that CLT is the best for China because the government supports to implement CLT, applying CLT will have a good impact on English teaching as well as learning and the contextual approach is unpractical in China.
Introduction^	Thesis	Introduces the proposition to be argued	As a matter of fact, CLT is not only benefit to English teaching and learning, but also it is conducive to the development of student's cognition and metacognition because of paying more attention to the needs of students as well as its features of learner autonomy and integrated skills. However, to some extent, the issues with contextual influence in Chinese English classes are due to large - size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction.
Analysis of the article^	Point/Elaboration	A positive critique of the CLT approach	There are some alignments with the development of students' metacognition in CLT on account of its features of learner autonomy (Brumfit, 1984) as well as integrated skills (Whong, 2013). Generally, it argued that one of characteristics of CLT is promotion of learner autonomy, which help students to develop the students' metacognition (Xiao, 2015: 53).
Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	A negative critique of applying the CLT approach in Chinese classrooms	Some issues with contextual influences (large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction) To begin with, issues with contextual influences also present a problem with large-size classes in China.
Conclusion^	Summary of key points	A summary of key points raised in the essay	To sum up, this essay focus on discussing CLT is advantage to the development of student's cognition and metacognition from two aspects. […]. However, this article also reveals that some issues are about contextual influences in Chinese English classes […].
	[Recommendations]	Recommendations and suggestions for future research	As a matter of fact, in this essay, the authors should design some questionnaires or interviews with Chinese teachers from different regions and educators, who could know their views about CLT to support the argument of the article. In the future, CLT should be researched by more experts since it plays a significant role in teaching and learning.
References	A list of references is presented.		

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[5] The symbol ^ means that the element to the left precedes the following element: square brackets [] indicate optional stage.

In terms of the social function of essay introduction in Evaluative Critique, Zoe achieved the social function of essay introduction by providing a summary and a position towards the reviewed text. Zoe's essay introduction is a combination of summaries of Liao's (2004) article, generalising statements in which she claimed that CLT is beneficial for students' cognition and metacognition, some contextual issues that make the application of CLT in China difficult, such as classroom size, lack of teacher training, and traditional assessment method. This formed the student's position as in the extract below:

> (5) As a matter of fact, CLT is not only beneficial to English teaching and learning but also is conducive to the development of students' cognition and metacognition because it pays more attention to the needs of students as well as its features of learner autonomy and integrated skills. (6) However, to some extent, the issues with contextual influence in Chinese English classes are due to large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction. [Zoe's writing extract]

Using the LCT Semantics tools, the student essay introduction starts with summaries of the article. Summaries are concrete meanings that relate to a specific context, the article being reviewed. Summaries are stronger in semantic gravity (SG++). By making a general statement that CLT develops students' cognition and metacognition, Zoe moved beyond a specific context and made an abstract idea that applies to various contexts. Generalising statements are weaker in semantic gravity (SG— — —).

To take a position towards the article, Zoe stated that although CLT is beneficial for developing students' cognition and metacognition, contextual issues, such as classroom size, lack of teacher training, and traditional assessment methods, make CLT difficult in Chinese classrooms. The connection between CLT's ability to develop students' cognition and metacognition and the contextual issues in the Chinese classroom environment is not well connected. This creates a jump or a break in the student's writing. This is called a break in the semantic flow or producing writing with low semantic flow. (See section 5.3.1 for a more detailed analysis of Zoe's essay introduction).

In the essay body, Zoe started the discussion by showing the weaknesses of Liao's proposal that CLT is the best teaching approach to apply across all Chinese English classrooms. Then, she explained the strengths of CLT and its role in developing students' cognition and metacognition, and finally, she discussed more contextual issues when applying CLT in China.

The choice to argue against Liao's claims that CLT is best for China, followed by the advantages of CLT and finishing by discussing more issues with applying CLT in the Chinese context, produces themes that are not well connected and do not build on one another. This creates breaks in the semantic flow at the macro level of the essay, which can be seen in the semantic profile of Zoe's essay discussion (see Figure 5.1).

Regarding the use of examples, Zoe used teaching and learning examples that go into specific details, as in the extract below:

> (19) An example can be seen that, in CLT classes with food topics, when the teacher asks their students "What is your favourite food", the students' answer is "My favourite food is tomatoes/sandwiches". Then, the teacher will recast this sentence "Your favourite food is tomatoes/sandwiches". Only are they corrected by their teacher; they can recognize that the plural form of those words should turn "s" into "es" in the end. [Zoe's writing extract]

The example shown in sentence 19 is very specific and goes into detail about teaching and learning practices. Since teaching and learning examples relate to a specific context, they are stronger in semantic gravity. However, these examples show much stronger semantic gravity than what is possibly required, which makes Zoe's use of examples go very down on the semantic scale (see Figure 5.1).

Moreover, Zoe's writing is characterised by a lack of explanations. She made claims about teachers' incompetence to apply CLT and produce authentic materials based on their location 'coming from the countryside' without explaining what is unique about CLT or rural tutors. When students produce an explanation, their writing moves from concreteness to more abstractness. This is described as a weakening of semantic gravity. Zoe's writing lacks a weakening of semantic gravity in the form of explanations (SG↓).

Another feature of Zoe's essay discussion is its lack of support from the literature. The student tended to present claims or examples lacking literature support. In the extract below, the student claims that CLT improves students' metacognition but does not cite sources that support her claim:

> Generally, <u>it argued that one of the characteristics of CLT is the promotion of learner autonomy, which helps students to develop the students' metacognition</u> (Xiao, 2015:53). For example, in CLT classes, sometimes, the teachers will set up a task that is authentic material for their students and then clarify what should they do before the task. Then, they need to finish this task by themselves or in groups. Engaging with this task, the students are encouraged to autonomously use previous knowledge to learn new knowledge and achieve the goal. That is the reason why CLT is advantageous to the development of learners' metacognitive. [Zoe's academic writing]

When students present a claim, as in the sentence above, their writing moves away from a specific context to make claims about wider contexts. That is why claims are described as having weaker semantic gravity (SG— —). Because the student tended to present claims (SG— —) without enough explanations or support from the literature and very specific examples or summaries which are stronger in semantic gravity (SG+), this resulted in writing that mostly moved between either much weaker semantic gravity in terms of judgments and claims (SG− −) or much stronger semantic gravity in terms of summaries (SG++) or too specific examples than is required with fewer interpretations and explanations for the claims made. (See Figure 5.1 for a

semantic profile of Zoe's overall essay, and section 5.4.1 for a detailed analysis of Zoe's essay body).

Moreover, in terms of genre analysis, Zoe did not achieve the social function of the 'analysis of article' move due to unclear arguments, illogical conclusions, and the use of very specific examples. Also, Zoe diverted from the task by discussing concepts per se without relating them to the task and the reviewed text.

Moving to Zoe's essay conclusion, the student writing summarises key points: CLT is important for developing students' cognition and metacognition by giving attention to students' needs, learner autonomy, and use of integrated skills. However, the essay's conclusion presents two new ideas that were not discussed previously in the essay. She claimed that Liao (2004) should have designed a questionnaire to ask Chinese tutors from different regions about their views of CLT to support her arguments and a generalising statement that CLT needs to be researched by more experts as it plays a significant role in teaching and learning. This means that the student writing moved from stronger semantic gravity in the form of summaries to weaker semantic gravity in the form of claims (SG— —) and generalisations (SG— — —). However, since the last two sentences are new and not discussed previously in the essay, they created breaks in the student's writing as they do not build on previous ideas. This is described as breaks in the semantic flow (see Figure 5.1 for a semantic profile of Zoe's overall essay and section 5.5.1 for a detailed analysis of Zoe's essay conclusion). From a genre analysis perspective, Zoe did not successfully develop the conclusion move because she made some recommendations and suggestions that were not discussed previously in her essay.
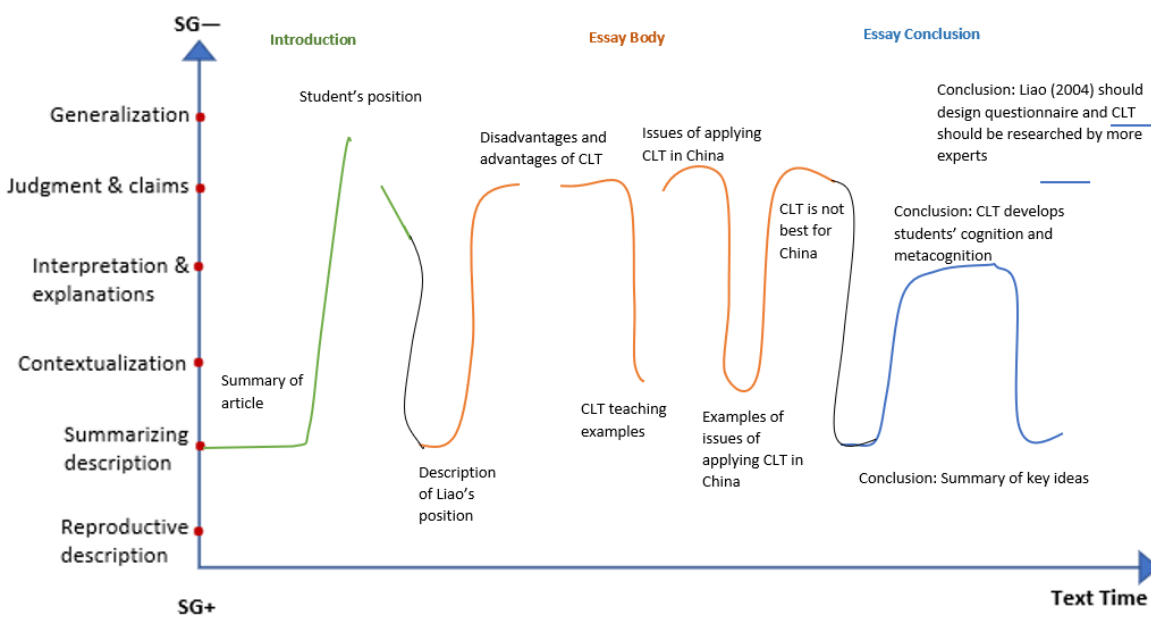
Figure 5.1   Semantic profile of Zoe's overall essay

In terms of overall complexity or epistemological condensation (EC) and adding more relations between meanings, Zoe's writing moves between lower epistemological condensation in the form of establishing (EC— —) to higher forms such as taxonomising (EC++).

Establishing (EC— —) refers to building relations among ideas but not many, and relations among ideas remain relatively fewer. An example of this is Zoe's introduction where she established that CLT is difficult to apply in China due to several issues: large class sizes, teachers' training and traditional assessment methods, but without explaining those issues and the relations among them.

Taxonomizing (EC++) refers a form of condensation where a meaning is established and connected to multiple different meanings to create one constellation of similar ideas that build on the original meaning. An example is Zoe's claim that CLT improves students' cognition and metacognition. To support this claim, the student referred to CLT's characteristics of paying attention to students' needs, student-led classrooms, using assimilations procedure to teach grammar, Piaget's compliance concept, learner autonomy, integration of skills, and self-assessment.

Zoe's writing showed little use of other forms of complexity or epistemological condensation such as coordinating (EC+) and characterising (EC—). Coordinating refers to presenting alternative points of view to show relations of differences, and characterising refers to the condensation of meanings where teaching and learning practices are nuanced by examining the various factors or scenarios that may affect their applications. For example, Zoe presented teaching practices in a very rigid and fixed style as if teaching and learning always occur in a fixed format (see page 146 for more details).

5.2.2   Yara's Overall Essay

Yara's academic essay is a critique of an academic article written by Liao (2004) titled The Need for Communicative Language Teaching in China, in which the author argues that CLT is the best teaching and learning approach for Chinese English classrooms.

Yara initially scored 71 out of 100 for her assignment but was downgraded to 68 after moderation. In her academic essay, Yara argued against Liao's (2004) proposal that CLT is the best teaching approach for China. She argued that this proposal is unrealistic due to the negative washback of applying CLT in the Chinese context, the role of individual differences among learners, and the importance of considering the context. See Appendix H for Yara's complete essay. Also, see Figure 5.2 for a semantic profile of Yara's overall essay.

Using rhetorical move-step analysis of the Evaluative Account genre, Table 5.2 below shows the rhetorical moves and their social functions as employed by Yara.

Table 5.2   Rhetorical Move-Step analysis of Yara's essay

Move	Steps	Description	Examples
Introduction^	Summary of research	A summary of the academic article and its main claims	Xiaoqing Liao (2004), in this article, argues that the adoption of CLT will bring advantages to English teaching and learning in China. […] What's more, the context approach, suggested by Bax (2003), according to Liao, is not useful for Chinese schools.
Introduction^	Thesis	Introduces the proposition to be argued	Although, there is no denying that CLT would bring in benefits in some aspects, there are still some issues which make Liao's statement debatable. My paper will argue that Liao's position regarding 'CLT is best for China' is not realistic, given that could be problematic when it comes to the assessment criteria and individual differences among students.
Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	A negative critique of the CLT approach in the Chinese context due to the negative washback effect	They hold that introducing CLT will help Chinese English learners to develop greater oral competence […] However, the assessment criteria have not changed accordingly, which causes 'Washback Effect'.
Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	A negative critique of applying the CLT approach in Chinese classrooms due to individual differences among learners	[Liao] also suggested that such constraints can be overcome in many ways, such as re - training Chinese teachers, revising textbooks and changing class size. However, what Liao did not mention is that there are individual differences among students.
Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	A negative critique of applying CLT in the Chinese classroom due to parents' and administrators' perspectives	A rich examination of classroom culture should include consideration of the views of parents and administrators as well (Brumfit, 2001).

Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	Positive critique of CLT	CLT is not an approach that concerns communication only. One of the characteristics of CLT is 'Concern for the needs of the learners, and attempts to define them' (Munby, 1978). CLT has served the language teaching well for decades and it has a lot of advantages.
Conclusion^	Summary of key points	A summary of the main ideas discussed in the Evaluative Account	In conclusion, Liao's (2004) article supports the adoption of CLT in China, in which he claims 'CLT is best for China'. Although CLT helps students develop oral competence in using English for communication, there are still problems in the assessment criteria and individual differences. […] In most case, language teaching involves more than one approach or method.
References	A list of references is presented.		

Yara achieved the social function of the introduction move by briefly summarising the reviewed text and introducing the proposition to be argued. In her essay introduction, Yara summarised Liao's article and stated her position towards Liao's (2004) article. Her position was that although CLT has benefits, there are still issues with Liao's arguments and that his claims that CLT is best for China are unrealistic because applying CLT in China could present issues due to assessment practices and individual differences among students. See the extract below:

> (1) Xiaoqing Liao (2004), in this article, argues that the adoption of CLT will bring advantages to English teaching and learning in China. (2) Based on his article, Liao approved the adoption of CLT in China by showing the Chinese government's supporting attitude toward CLT. (3) He mentioned that some problems caused by situational constraints could be overcome by teachers by giving a case study. (4) What's more, the context approach, suggested by Bax (2003), according to Liao, is not useful for Chinese schools. (5) Although there is no denying that CLT would bring in benefits in some aspects, there are still some issues which make Liao's statement debatable. (6) My paper will argue that Liao's position regarding 'CLT is best for China' is not realistic, given that could be problematic when it comes to the assessment criteria and individual differences among students. [Yara's writing extract]

Because a summary is related to a specific context, the reviewed article is described as stronger in semantic gravity (SG++). When Yara claimed that Liao's position was unrealistic due to contextual issues, her writing moved from the concreteness of summaries to abstractions in the form of

claims and value judgments. Claims are weaker in semantic gravity (SG— —) because they are more abstract. In LCT terms, Yara's introduction moves from stronger semantic gravity in the form of summaries (SG++) to weaker semantic gravity in the form of claims (SG— —). See section 5.3.2 for a detailed analysis of Yara's essay introduction.

Moving to the essay body, Yara approached the assignment by arguing against Liao's (2004) article, which took an absolutist position, stating that CLT is best for China. Yara argued against this claim by discussing the challenges of applying CLT in the Chinese context due to the negative washback effect and the influence that language testing has on teaching and learning practices, individual differences among Chinese students, Chinese parents' and administrators' views on language learning and testing, and a critique of Liao's (2004) views on the role of contextual factors on teaching and learning.

By examining Yara's choice of organising the essay, there is a clear disconnect between the choice of themes and arguments presented. There is little connection between the discussion of the negative washback effect of assessments, individual differences among students, Chinese parents' and administrators' views on language learning and testing and finishing with the role of contextual factors in teaching and learning. These disconnected themes create breaks in the semantic flow (see Figure 5.2).

However, Yara's essay is a high-achieving essay since it fulfilled the social function of the 'Analysis of the Article' move by using language theories and implications for classroom practices effectively and generalising statements beyond specific contexts.

First, Yara's essay discussion demonstrated effective and sufficient use of teaching and learning examples. These examples contextualise the discussion of Liao (2004) within the English teaching and learning practices of the Chinese context. Teaching and learning examples are concrete and relate to a specific context, the Chinese context. They are described as stronger in semantic gravity (SG+). Yara met an important requirement for this writing task in the MLTM module by constantly strengthening semantic gravity (SG↑). The following extract shows an example of how Yara contextualised the discussion within the Chinese context:

> (48) In China, the teaching content and pedagogical methods are mostly controlled by local governments and school administrators, which means that teachers do not have so much freedom in teaching. (49) Teachers should follow the ultimate goal set by administrators. When deciding teaching methods, the views of administrators should be considered as well. [Yara's academic writing extract]

Second, Yara made generalising statements and conclusions that go beyond the immediate contexts to cover wider contexts. For example, in the following extract, Yara generally acknowledged the strength of the CLT approach, as in sentence 62. Then, she considered CLT in the Chinese context in sentence 63. Finally, she concluded with a general statement that teaching involves more than one approach or method in sentence 64. This last statement generalises beyond the Chinese context to cover all teaching and learning contexts.

> (62) CLT has served the language teaching well for decades and it has a lot of advantages. (63) But, when Chinese education departments or local administrators attempt to introduce a new theory or pedagogical method into Chinese schools, they should think about the national educational aims and local contextual factors. (64) Briefly, it is hard to say which approach is best for a specific context. In most cases, language teaching involves more than one approach or method. [Yara's academic writing extract]

Generalising statements are abstract and much weaker in semantic gravity (SG— — —). Academic writing at a master's level is expected to show more abstractions (Shaheen, 2016). This perhaps explains why Yara's writing is considered high-achieving, as she moved from the concreteness of summaries and examples to more abstract meanings in the form of claims and generalisations.

Nonetheless, Yara used a lot of quotes Yara used a lot of quotes in her writing without proper paraphrasing. Quotes are meanings connected to a particular context, the context of the articles they come from. These meanings are said to show stronger semantic gravity (SG+++) (See Figure 5.2). However, this has not affected her overall score, suggesting that content and arguments matter more than writing mechanics (see 5.4.2 for a more detailed analysis of Yara's essay).

Finishing with Yara's conclusion, Yara fulfilled the social function of a conclusion by first presenting a summary of Liao's (2004) position, which is CLT is best for China. Second, she summarised her position on Liao's (2004) argument. She re-stated her position: despite the benefits of CLT, applying it in China is challenging due to individual differences among students and the assessment's negative washback effect. She followed that by making generalising statements that go beyond the context of China: differences in students' needs should be considered, and both the context approach and CLT prioritise learners, and it is difficult to determine which approach is the best for a specific context.

This means that Yara started with stronger semantic gravity in the form of summaries and moved beyond that to make generalising statements that don't apply to a specific context, making her writing much weaker in semantic gravity (SG— — —) (See Figure 5.2 below and 5.5.2 for a detailed analysis of Yara's essay conclusion).
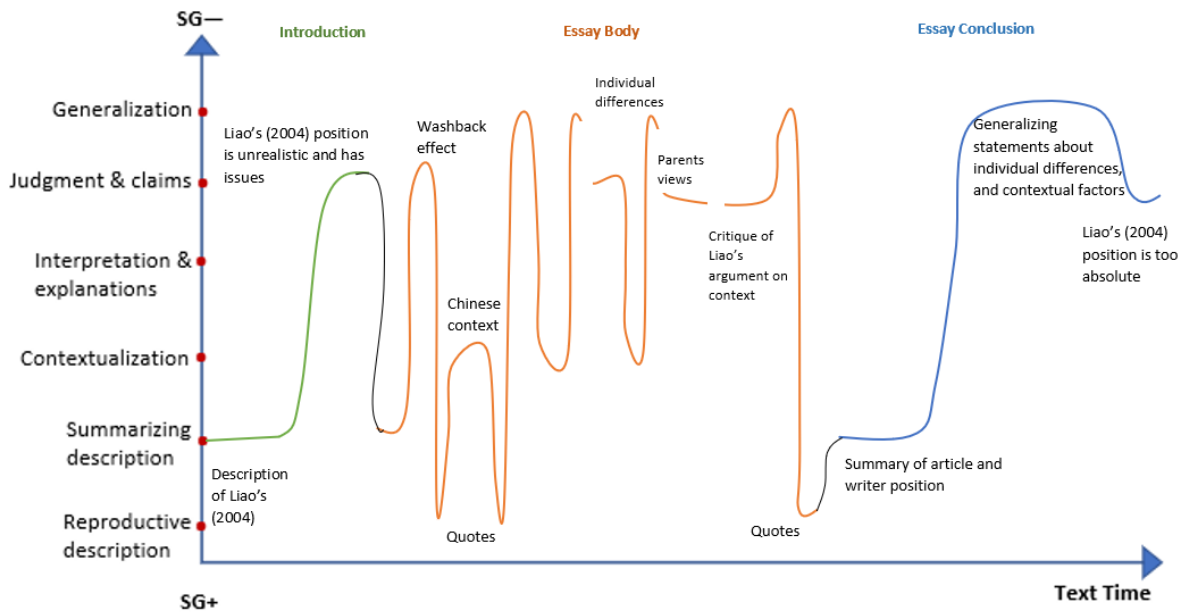
Figure 5.2   Semantic profile of Yara's overall essay

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, Yara's writing shows use of two main forms of complexity ranging from higher epistemological condensation to lower.

She established claims such as the negative washback effect of applying CLT in the Chinses context and provided multiple support for it from various perspectives. This is described as taxonomizing (EC++), in which a meaning is established and supported by relating it various meanings, thus increasing the complexity of both the original claim and the supporting details as they are being related to one another. Yara provided more support for her claims compared to the other students in the essay body and conclusion, thus, she achieved higher epistemological condensation through taxonomizing.

Yara also characterized her teaching and learning examples by going into detail about them and showing the various dimensions of those examples. Characterizing (EC—) refers to condensing examples by relating them to the various factors and properties that define them. (See page 151 for an example).

5.2.3   Chen's Overall Essay

Chen's academic essay is a critique of an academic article written by Bax (2003) and titled The End of CLT: A Context Approach to Language Teaching, in which Bax argued that context should be placed at the forefront of English language teaching and learning and criticised CLT for placing the context as a secondary priority.

Chen scored an overall mark of 58 out of 100 and chose to discuss the article by first discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the context approach, comparing the CLT approach with the context approach, and finally discussing some issues with Bax's (2003) claims. See Appendix I for Chen's complete essay and Figure 5.3 for a semantic profile of Chen's essay.

Using rhetorical move-step analysis of the Evaluative Account genre, Table 5.3 below shows the rhetorical moves and their social functions as employed by Chen.

Table 5.3   Rhetorical Move-Step analysis of Chen's essay

Move	Step	Description	Examples
Introduction^	Summary of research	A summary of academic article and its main claims	Bax held the view that CLT is not conducive to the development of language teaching and should be replaced by the context approach.
Introduction^	Thesis	Introduces the proposition to be argued	However, the author does not agree with this view and is going to use the characteristics of CLT (Put forward by Brumfit) to argue that context is included in CLT.
Introduction^	[Outlining of the text]	An outline of the essay structure	This paper mainly includes four parts: briefly discussion of the viewpoint of Bax's article, advantages and disadvantages of context approach, demonstrating the relationship between CLT and context, and discussing some other problems in Bax's article.
Introduction^	Summary of research	More summary of the academic article and its main claims	In Bax's article, he set out a method named context approach which is different from CLT approach.
Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	A positive critique of the Context approach	Especially in some counties where compulsory education is mainly exam - oriented education, such as China and Japan. [...] On this occasion, the introduction of context approach can change the phenomenon of students' lack of communication intention and extend periods of silence.
Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	A negative critique of the Context approach	The context is very complex. [...] So, because of the heterogeneous nature and the context - dependence feature of the concept itself, it is hard for the people to give a standard definition.

Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	A positive critique of CLT	The core of CLT in the process of development is around the context of the dialogue - - learners learn a language through using it to communicate. […] Use of "authentic" materials Authentic material is another aspect that can prove that CLT approach includes context approach.
Analysis of article^	Point/Elaboration	A negative critique of Bax's knowledge and style of argumentation	Bax has been trying to convince readers of the importance of context approach with strong emotions, but he has not fully defined what is context approach.
Conclusion^	Summary of key points	A summary of key points raised in the essay	In a word, I agree with Bax's emphasis on the importance of context. […] However, this does not justify Bax's opposition to CLT, as a new approach of opposition to traditional teaching methods, CLT always emphasizes the importance of context for real communication. […] In order to convince readers, he used many unquestionable statements and vague arguments.
References	A list of references is presented	The student presents the list of references and resources used in the writing task.	Abbott, G. (1981). Encouraging Communication in English: A Paradox. ELT Journal. 35(3), 228-230.

Starting with Chen's essay introduction, Chen fulfilled the social function of the essay introduction by providing a summary of Bax's (2003) article claiming the end of CLT's popularity and suggesting the Context Approach to language teaching and learning as an alternative. Then, she stated her position: that the context is part of CLT and not different from it (see the extract below).

> (1) This discussion is mainly related to Bax's article on the relationship between Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Context Approach. (2) Bax held the view that CLT is not conducive to the development of language teaching and should be replaced by the context approach. (3) However, the author does not agree with this view and is going to use the characteristics of CLT (Put forward by Brumfit) to argue that context is included in CLT. [Chen's writing extract]

She followed this with an overview of how she plans to structure her essay. She then provided some summaries of the history of CLT. Next, she provided an overview of the essay structure: a brief discussion of Bax's article, the advantages and disadvantages of the context approach, a demonstration of the relationship between CLT and context, and a discussion of some other problems in Bax's article. Then, she moved beyond the description of the history of CLT to claim that Bax doesn't agree with the importance of CLT and sets out to replace it with the context

approach. At the end of the introduction, she provided more summaries of Bax's arguments (see 5.3.3 for a detailed analysis and extract of Chen's essay introduction).

Using the lens of LCT Semantics, the essay introduction is mostly descriptive, summarising either Bax's arguments or the history of CLT. Summaries are meanings close to a specific context; the articles being described. They are stronger in semantic gravity (SG++). She moved from descriptions and concreteness by making value judgments, such as disagreeing with Bax and claiming the context is part of CLT. Claims and value judgments are more abstract meanings than descriptions; thus, they are weaker in semantic gravity (SG— —). The overview of the structure of the essay contained themes that were not well connected, such as a brief discussion of Bax's article, the advantages and disadvantages of the context approach, a demonstration of the relationship between CLT and context, and a discussion of some other problems in Bax's article. This affects the coherence or degree of semantic flow in the student's writing. Breaks in the semantic flow are shown in Figure 5.3.

Moving to Chen's essay body, Chen approached the assignment by first discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the context approach, comparing the CLT approach with the context approach, and finally discussing some issues with Bax's claims. Below is an outline of Chen's essay body:

1. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Context Approach
2. Compare the CLT Approach with the Context Approach
    a) Focus on discourse, not isolated language forms
    b) Emphasis on meaning rather than on form
    c) A supportive and participatory environment
    d) Focus on the needs of learners
3. Some issues in Bax's article

These themes are disconnected and fail to address the task requirement, a critique of the author's ideas. This lack of coherence between themes and ideas is a lack of semantic flow in LCT semantics. This fragmentation is reflected in the semantic profile of Chen's essay, where the semantic wave breaks at different points (see Figure 5.3).

In her essay, Chen also failed to address the task, which is a critique of the author's claims. Instead, she presented a critique of concepts per se. Below is an extract of her writing where she discussed the context approach instead of Bax's arguments:

> (9) The context approach has its own merits and demerits as the CLT approach does. (10) However, it is not necessary to replace the CLT approach with the context approach from Bax's point of view. (11) Foremost, they are not opposites. (12) Bax regarded the context method and CLT as two isolated and unrelated individuals, but in fact context and CLT are closely related, and it can even be said that CLT contains context to some extent, as can be proved by Brumfit's Principles of Communicative Language Teaching. [Chen's essay writing]

Another aspect of Chen's writing is the tendency to use debated concepts without relating them to the article or explaining them. The following extract and the use of the concept of 'authentic' shows this tendency:

> The context is very complex. "Context is seen as a dynamic construct which is interactionally organized in and through the process of communication" and Fetzer likened the context to an onion (Fetzer A., 2007). So, because of the heterogeneous nature and the context-dependence feature of the concept itself, it is hard for people to give a standard definition. Just because of this, it is difficult to give a detailed scope about what is the specific context in an **authentic** class. [Chen's academic writing]

Explanations have more abstract meanings compared to descriptions. They are weaker in semantic gravity (SG—). Likewise, Chen used less practical teaching and learning examples to support her arguments. Examples relate to specific teaching and learning contexts. They are stronger in semantic gravity (SG+). Below is an extract in which Chen referred to the context of China and Japan in a very superficial manner without enough detail and explanation:

> (1) Compared with the traditional language teaching method, the context approach has many advantages. (2) Especially in some countries where compulsory education is mainly exam-oriented education, such as **China and Japan**. (3) "It appears that the compulsory education of the target learners has trained them as if they are linguists, studying about language, rather than as language users" (Opitz, T.A., 2016). (4) On this occasion, the introduction of a context approach can change the phenomenon of students' lack of communication intention and extend periods of silence. [Chen's writing extract]

Overall, the student's writing moves from context-bound meanings, such as summaries and quotations, to less context-bound meanings, such as claims and interpretations, which allowed her writing to show a semantic wave (see Figure 5.3). However, other requirements were not met, such as achieving the semantic threshold of demonstrating understanding of the article, focusing the discussion on critiquing the article's claims, and creating semantic flow by choosing arguments that build on a consistent theme or use of cautious language and presenting the writing in a clear structure. (See 5.4.3 for a detailed analysis of Chen's essay body). Also, in terms of genre analysis, Chen's essay was only marginally successful in developing the schematic move of 'Analysis of the Article' since her writing was mainly descriptive and was not connected to the author's presentation of ideas. Her writing also critiqued Bax as a knower by critiquing his understanding of CLT and the use of language instead of critiquing the knowledge presented.

Moving to Chen's essay conclusion, the writing began with a summary of the student's position. She acknowledged the importance of context in language teaching and learning. Still, she refused Bax's rejection of CLT and argued that context forms an essential element of CLT. Summaries are texts related to a specific context, the written essay. Therefore, they are said to be stronger in semantic gravity (SG++). Next, she claimed that Bax lacked understanding of CLT and criticised his intentions, use of language and argumentation style.

By making claims, the student moved higher than the summaries level, and the writing became more abstract. It is described as weaker in semantic gravity (SG— —). (See 5.5.3 for a detailed analysis of Chen's essay conclusion).
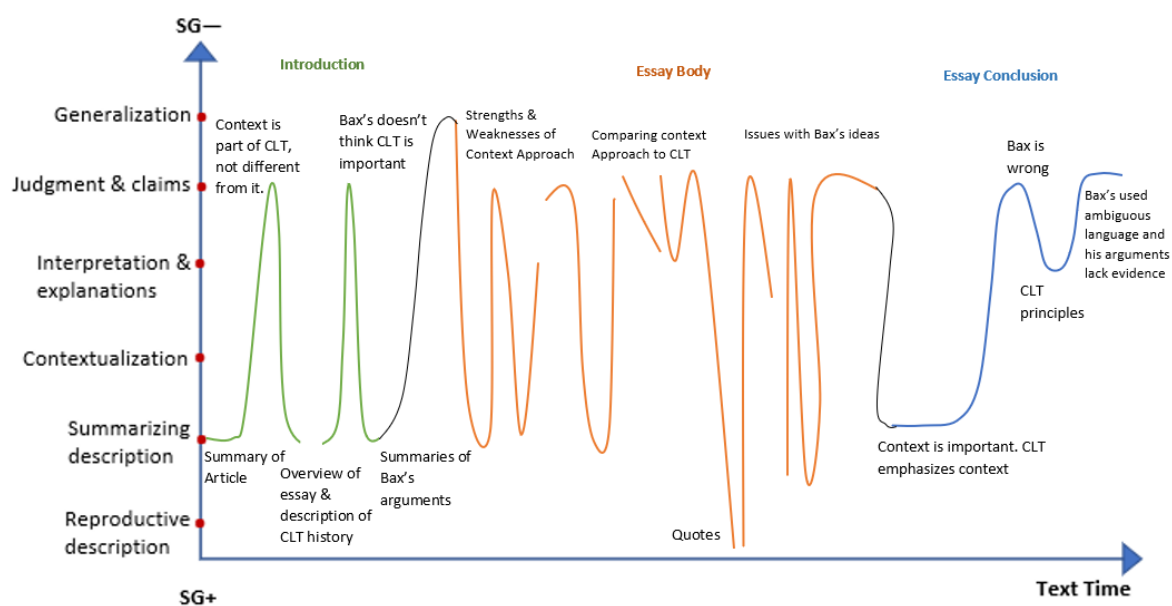
Figure 5.3   Semantic profile of Chen's overall essay

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, the student established a lot of ideas that contain fewer relations among them. An example is the selection of themes throughout her essay such as a summary of Bax's article, a history of CLT, a comparison of CLT to the Context approach, and a critique of Bax's knowledge and argumentation style. Establishing (EC— —) refers to stating ideas that contain fewer connections, thus reducing the complexity of the writing.

Overall, her writing showed lower epistemological condensation by mostly establishing ideas and fewer taxonomizing (EC++) or providing support for her claims. This is apparent in the essay introduction and conclusion where Chen established several ideas that contained fewer relations among them and less support from the literature. The essay body showed some support for claims but not sufficient. She did not consolidate her rejection of Bax's claims by using multiple evidence from the research.

Her writing also lacked other forms of epistemological condensation. Chen's writing lacked sufficient coordination (EC+) or juxtaposing and comparison of different perspectives and points of view. For example, Chen did not compare Bax's arguments with other different perspectives. Also, the teaching and learning examples used were very limited and lacked characterizing (EC—) or nuanced details to show the different features and aspects of those examples. (See page 157 for an example).

5.2.4 Cross-Case Analysis

In this section, I carry out a cross-case comparison of students' writing products in light of LCT Semantics gravity and density. I conduct a cross-case comparison of students' writing products to reveal the underlying use of context-dependence, context-independence, and condensation of meanings in a high-achieving writing task compared to lower-achieving writing tasks. I aim to answer the following questions:

> How do students use context-dependence, context-independence, complexity, or condensations of meanings in their academic essays?

Zoe, Yara and Chen scored 57, 68 and 58, respectively, with Yara's essay scoring the highest. Using semantic profiles, we can observe different semantic gravity waves created by the students, showing their differing use of abstraction and concreteness (see Figure 5.4).

In terms of genre analysis, similar to Woodward-Kron (2003), the findings show that students' writing differed in the 'Analysis of the Article' move. The higher scoring text of Yara successfully demonstrated this move while Zoe's and Chen's were marginally successful. This was due to the use of language theories, critiquing the journal article presentation of ideas and clarity of writing. While lower-scoring texts focused on language teaching approaches per se or provided very detailed language teaching and learning examples, the higher-scoring text made connections to theories and empirical research relevant to the article in question. This shows that making links to theories and research relevant to the article is an important component of the analysis (Woodward-Kron, 2003).

As for semantic gravity analysis of essay introductions, all students started their essay introductions with summaries of the articles or stronger semantic gravity (SG++). They all took a position towards the article by making claims or value judgments, thus weakening semantic gravity (SG↓). Regarding semantic flow, some ideas in Zoe's and Chen's essay introductions were disconnected and lacked semantic flow, creating a disconnected semantic wave. Only Yara's introduction showed a high semantic flow where no sudden jumps are made in the arguments.

Moving to essay bodies, all essays showed a semantic wave with meanings moving from stronger semantic gravity in the form of summaries (SG++) or quotations (SG+++), use of teaching and learning examples (SG+) to weaker semantic gravity in the form of explanations and interpretations (SG−) to judgments and claims (SG− −). However, Zoe's and Chen's essays produced less weakening of semantic gravity in the forms of interpretations and explanations (SG↓) either by making claims and judgments or introducing new concepts without enough explanations and unpacking.

Yara's highest-achieving essay was the only one that showed further weakening of semantic gravity by making generalisations and abstractions (SG↓), which is considered a very high level of weakening semantic gravity based on Maton's (2014) adapted Translation Device. This perhaps explains why Yara's assignment is considered a high-achieving assignment, as the student moved from summarising descriptions to making judgments and generalising her conclusions to wider contexts, which is expected at master's level academic writing. These findings align with studies that suggest the importance of semantic gravity and density in student work and that a successful combination of strengthening and weakening of semantic gravity is rewarded in student work (Maton, 2013, Maton, 2009, Macnaught et al., 2013, Clarence, 2014b).

Regarding semantic flow or the degree of connectedness between themes and arguments, all essay bodies did not show a high semantic flow, with Chen's essay showing the lowest. As for contextualisation or use of practical teaching and learning examples (SG+) and by examining the semantic profiles of essay body extracts, Yara's essay showed a relatively better use of contextualisation than the other essays.

As for the essay's conclusion, all texts showed stronger semantic gravity by summarising the claims, judgements (SG– –) and interpretations (SG–) previously discussed throughout the essays. Yara, who produced the highest-achieving essay, could move to much weaker levels of semantic gravity by producing more generalisations and claims that reach beyond the immediate context. This perhaps explains one of the reasons she was able to score higher. Even though Chen's writing showed weaker semantic gravity in claims and judgments, she was downgraded on the use of inappropriate language and unsupported claims.

In terms of semantic flow, Yara also produced writing which is very high in semantic flow by connecting ideas clearly. Chen's conclusion also has a relatively high semantic flow where ideas are well connected, but she was downgraded due to inappropriate language and unsupported claims. Zoe's writing created breaks in the semantic flow as the student made claims and generalisations not previously discussed in the essay and, therefore, were not clearly linked to the rest of the arguments.

In terms of complexity, Yara showed the highest complexity or epistemological condensation compared to Zoe and Chen. Yara's writing showed different forms of complexity ranging from higher epistemological condensation to lower. Her writing showed more taxonomizing (EC++) than Zoe and Chen. This was achieved by establishing ideas and providing multiple support for them from various perspectives, which increases the complexity of the original claim and the supporting claims as they are being related to one another. Her writing also showed

characterizing (EC—) in which teaching and learning practices are detailed to show the various dimensions that characterize them.

Zoe established (EC— —) points with few relations among them, and some taxonomizing (EC++) by providing support for specific ideas. However, her writing lacked coordinating (EC+) or presenting alternative points of view to show complexity and characterizing (EC—) where teaching and learning practices are nuanced by examining the various factors or scenarios that may affect them.

Chen's writing showed the lowest epistemological condensation. The student mostly established points that contained few relations among them. Her writing showed some taxonomizing (EC++) where a meaning is connected with multiple different meanings to create a constellation of similar ideas; however, she needed to provide more taxonomizing or support for the other ideas presented. Her writing also lacked characterizing (EC—) since teaching and learning examples were presented superficially without enough details.

All essays used less coordinating (EC+) or connecting a meaning with different meanings to show relation of differences.

Figure 5.4   Cross-case comparison of semantic profiles of students' overall essays

5.3   Academic Writing in the Essay Introductions

In this section, I analyse all students' essay introductions for writing task 1 in the MLTM module. I first analysed Zoe's introduction, followed by Yara's introduction, and I finished with Chen's introduction. I use a zooming-in strategy to look more closely at the writing and give a detailed understanding.

At the end of each essay introduction analysis, I provide a cross-case analysis which compares the potential underlying context-dependence, context-independence, and epistemological condensation of meanings structuring students' writing.

5.3.1   Zoe's Essay Introduction

In this section, I analyse Zoe's introduction using the lens of LCT Semantics. I use a zooming-in strategy to look more closely at the writing and give a detailed ana of it. I provide examples of Zoe's writing and a semantic profile of her text.

By examining Zoe's essay introduction (see Table 5.4), it is noted that Zoe, like most students in the MLTM module, began her essay introduction by providing a summary of Liao's (2004) article through sentences 1 to 4. She then provided a generalising statement that CLT is not only a useful approach for teaching and learning English, but it is especially beneficial for developing students' cognition and mitigation. She then claimed that although CLT may be beneficial, contextual issues such as classroom size, lack of teacher training, and traditional assessment methods may make CLT difficult to apply in the Chinese classroom environment. This claim also serves as the student's position towards the article.

Putting Zoe's writing through an LCT Semantic lens shows she started with stronger semantic gravity (SG++) by summarising the article. Her writing is much less abstract at this stage and more connected to a particular context, the article being critiqued. She then weakened the semantic gravity by generalising that CLT develops students' cognition and metacognition (SG−−−). Her writing is now more abstract and moved beyond a particular context. Finally, she claimed that CLT may be difficult to apply in China due to contextual issues. By making a claim, Zoe's writing remained relatively abstract or weaker regarding semantic gravity (SG−−). This movement from

stronger semantic gravity to weaker semantic gravity can be seen in a semantic profile (see Figure 5.5)[6]

However, the last two sentences on CLT's ability to develop students' cognition and metacognition and the contextual issues of applying CLT in the Chinese learning environment are poorly connected. This creates a jump or a break in the student's writing. This is called a break in the semantic flow or producing writing with a lower semantic flow in LCT Semantics.

Table 5.4   Zoe's Essay Introduction

Functional stages & phases	Student's text	SG
Summary of Liao's (2004) article followed by the student position towards the article	(1) Liao (2004), in this research paper, states that CLT is the best for China because the government supports to implement CLT, applying CLT will has good impact on English teaching as well as learning and contextual approach is unpractical in China. (2) His claims are based on the State Education Development Commission (SEDC) that is the official authoritative representative and using CLT in English classes, teachers will change traditional teaching and students can develop communicative ability. (3) In addition, Liao notes that using CLT no needs to consider "Contextual approach" from three reasons, such as teachers being fond of CLT, difficulty to re-train and contextual approach as an eclectic approach. (4) His goal is to highlight CLT is suitable for all Chinese English class while the western "relativism" is not workable in China. (5) As a matter of fact, CLT is not only benefit to English teaching and learning, but also it is conducive to the development of student's cognition and metacognition because of paying more attention to the needs of students as well as its features of learner autonomy and integrated skills. (6) However, to some extent, the issues with contextual influence in Chinese English classes are due to large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction.	(1 to 4) summarising description (SG↑) (5) generalisation (SG↓) (6) Judgments (SG↓)

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[6] I used (Maton, 2014) adapted Translation Device to trace the strengthening and weakening of semantic gravity in students' texts. Students writing texts were broken down into individual 'units of meaning' (sentences conveying a single coherent meaning) and each unit was coded using the scheme.
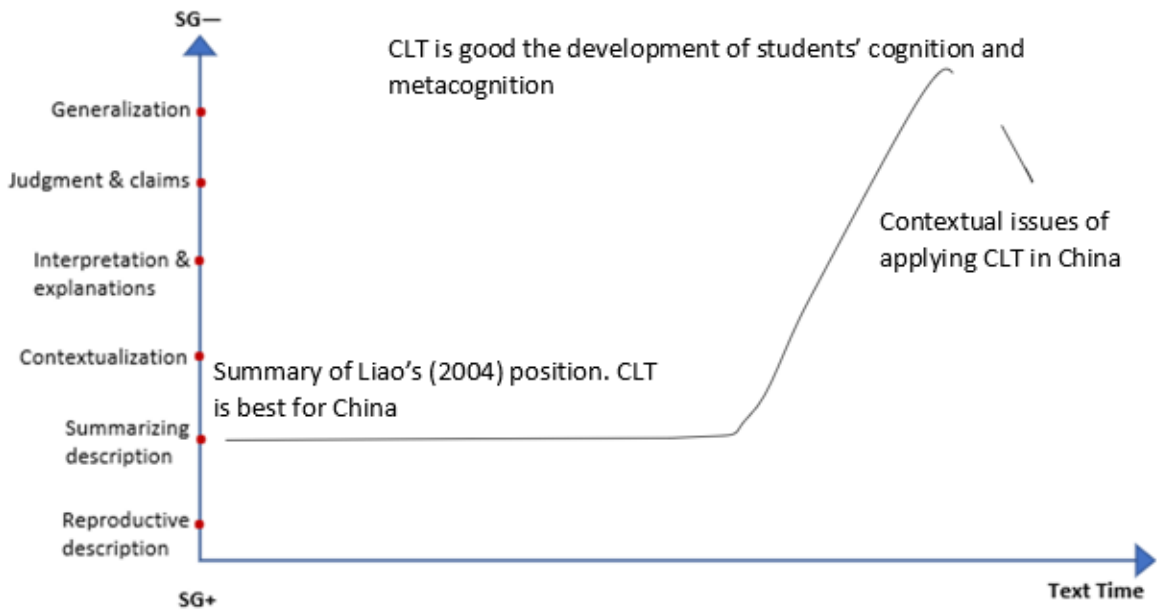
Figure 5.5   Semantic profile of Zoe's essay introduction

In terms of epistemological condensation or adding more relations between meanings, the student established several ideas in the essay introduction. First, she summarised points from the article as in sentences 1 to 4. Then she established that CLT is useful for developing students' cognition and metacognition due to its features of learner autonomy and integration of skills. Zoe finishes the introduction by establishing that CLT is difficult to apply in China due to several issues: large class sizes, teachers' training and traditional assessment methods. In this text, the student mostly establishes and lists points. Establishing (EC— —) builds relations among ideas but not many, and relations among ideas remain relatively less strengthened (see Figure 5.6). It is important to note that the epistemic condensation (EC) diagrams are heuristic and that the number of nodes shown in a diagram does not correspond exactly to the example quotes they are linked to.

Figure 5.6   Epistemological condensation in Zoe's essay introduction

5.3.2   Yara's Essay Introduction

In this section, I specifically analyse Yara's essay introduction for task 1 using LCT Semantics. I use a zooming-in strategy to look more closely at the writing. I provide examples of Zoe's writing and a semantic profile of her text.

By examining Yara's essay introduction, it is noted that she began her writing by providing a summary of the reviewed article in sentences 1 to 4. She then judged Liao's (2004) claim that CLT is the best teaching approach for China. She claimed that although CLT has benefits, there are still issues with Liao's argument. She claimed that Liao's position is unrealistic and that applying CLT in China could present issues due to assessment criteria and individual student differences. Sentences 5 to 6 form the student position (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5   Yara's Essay Introduction

Functional stages and phases	Student's text	SG-
Summary of article claims followed by the student's position towards the article	(1) Xiaoqing Liao (2004), in this article, argues that the adoption of CLT will bring advantages to English teaching and learning in China. (2) Based on his article, Liao approved the adoption of CLT in China by showing Chinese government's supporting attitude on CLT. (3) He mentioned that some problems caused by situational constraints could be overcome by teacher by giving a case study. (4) What's more, context approach, suggested by Bax (2003), according to Liao, is not useful for Chinese schools. (5) Although, there is no denying that CLT would bring in benefits in some aspects, there are still some issues which make Liao's statement debatable. (6) My paper will argue that Liao's position regarding 'CLT is best for China' is not realistic, given that could be problematic when it comes to the assessment criteria and individual differences among students.	(1 to 4) summarising description (SG↑)

(5 to 6) Judgments (SG↓) |

Putting Yara's writing through the lens of LCT semantics shows that she started with a summary of the reviewed article, which is not abstract. A summary is more connected to a specific context, the reviewed article. In LCT Semantics, this is described as a relatively stronger text in semantic gravity (SG++) because the text is more connected to a particular context. She then made a claim and a value judgment of the reviewed article. By making a claim, she produced a more abstract text as a claim and a judgment is less tied to a specific context and can be generalised to another context. This means she produced a relatively weaker text in semantic gravity (SG—).

Using semantic profiles to map students' writing over text time, the text remained mostly context-bound or relatively stronger in semantic gravity (SG++) by providing mostly summaries and descriptions of the reviewed article (see Figure 5.7). However, the student weakened semantic gravity by providing clear judgements (see sentences 5 and 6 in Table 5.5). It is possible that the choice of providing a short introduction with a summary of the article followed by a clear position also helped the student present an introduction with a high semantic flow where no sudden jumps are made in the arguments.

Figure 5.7   Semantic profile of Yara's essay introduction

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, the student presents an introduction that has lower epistemological condensation. This is because the student mainly establishes ideas (EC — —) that have some relations between them, but these relations are few and not complex.

In the essay introduction, the student establishes some ideas from Liao's (2004) argument that CLT is the best teaching approach for the Chinese context. The student follows that by establishing her own position which argues that Liao's argument is unrealistic due to issues with assessment practices and individual differences among students. Using constellations to show relations among ideas, Figure 5.8 below shows the level of lower complexity in Yara's essay introduction since the student simply establishes ideas but without create a lot of relations among them or incorporating ideas from the wider literature to support her ideas.
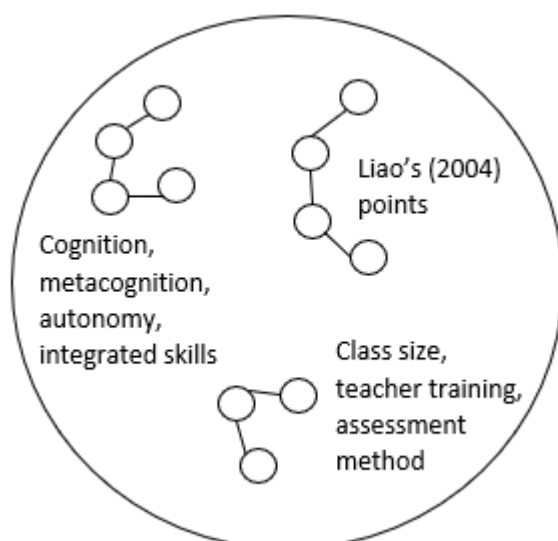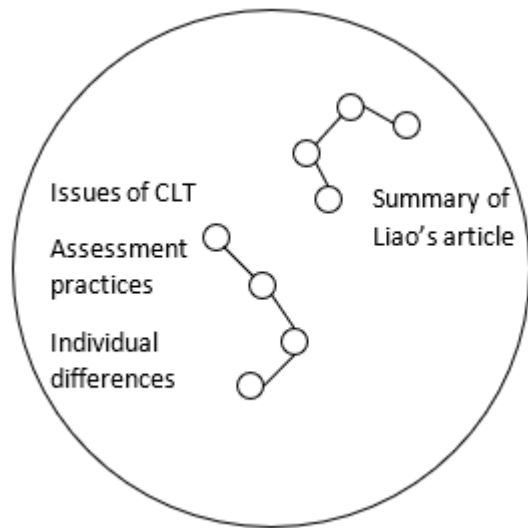
Figure 5.8   Epistemological condensation in Yara's essay introduction

5.3.3   Chen's Essay Introduction

In this section, I specifically analyse Yara's essay introduction for task 1 using LCT Semantics. I use a zooming-in strategy to look more closely at the writing. I provide examples of Zoe's writing and a semantic profile of her text.

By examining Chen's essay introduction, it is noticeable that she started it with a summarising description of the reviewed article. She summarised Bax's (2003) article, which claims that the popularity of CLT is ending, and he suggests the Context approach to language teaching and learning as an alternative. Then, she stated that she disagrees with the author and that the context is part of CLT and not different from it. This formed her position. She followed this with an overview of how she planned to structure her essay. She then provided some summaries about the history of CLT, as in sentences 5 and 6. In sentence 7, she moved beyond the description of the history of CLT to claim that Bax does not agree with the importance of CLT and sets out to replace it with the context approach. The last sentences from 8 to 14 are summaries of Bax's arguments.

Putting Chen's writing through the lens of LCT semantics shows that Chen started her writing by summaries of the reviewed article. Summaries are not abstract or theoretical forms of writing. They are more connected to the context of the reviewed article. In LCT Semantics, these meanings are considered stronger in semantic gravity. She then produces a value judgement of the article by stating that she disagrees with Bax and will show that the context is part of CLT. This forms the student's position. This shows that she moved from concrete writing in the form of summaries to more abstract writing in the form of claims and value judgments. This means her writing is now weaker in semantic gravity (SG— —) as it becomes more abstract.

Later, she presented an overview of the structure of the essay in sentence 4. She stated that she would briefly discuss Bax's article, the advantages and disadvantages of the context approach, demonstrate the relationship between CLT and context, and discuss some other problems in Bax's article. However, these points are not clearly linked to one another, affecting the connectedness of her arguments. In LCT Semantics, this is referred to as semantic flow. In Chen's writing, the semantic flow is low as the ideas in this sentence are not well connected.

The writing then moves back to the description of the history of CLT, as in sentences 5 and 6, which makes Chen's writing more concrete and stronger in semantic gravity (SG++). In sentence 7, she moves beyond the description of history to claim that Bax doesn't agree with the importance of CLT and sets out to replace it with the context approach. In this sentence, she moves from descriptions and concrete meanings to making claims about Bax's arguments, which are more abstract than mere descriptions and weaker in semantic gravity. The last sentences from 8 to 14 summarise Bax's arguments, and the student returns to concrete meanings or meanings stronger in semantic gravity (SG++).

Table 5.6   Chen's Essay Introduction

Functional stages & phases	Student's text	SG-
Summary of article and a statement of position; signposting	(1) This discussion is mainly related to Bax's article on the relationship between Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Context Approach. (2) Bax held the view that CLT is not conducive to the development of language teaching and should be replaced by the context approach. (3) However, the author does not agree with this view and is going to use the characteristics of CLT (Put forward by Brumfit) to argue that context is included in CLT. (4) This paper mainly includes four parts: briefly discussion of the viewpoint of Bax's article, advantages and disadvantages of context approach, demonstrating the relationship between CLT and context, and discussing some other problems in Bax's article. Bax's opinion of CLT and Context Approach	(1) summarising description (SG ↑) (2) summarising description (SG ↑) (3) Judgement (SG↓) (4) Signposting
Summary of the article's author's viewpoints	(5) In the past five decades, after the emergence of the communicative language teaching approach in the 1970s and 1980s, CLT approach gradually is recognized and be used in language teaching by many people. (6) Until today, nearly fifty years later, CLT become a symbol of the "modern approach" and "advanced approach". (7) But Bax does not think so. In Bax's article, he set out a method named context approach which is different from CLT approach. (8) This approach discarded methodology and claimed that there is a large amount of method to learn a foreign language, but context is the key to successful language learning. (9) And Bax claimed that context approach should be put into the most important position of language teaching. (10) He believed that the context approach should replace the current position of CLT as the approach that language teachers consider in the first place in a teaching environment. (11) Bax enumerated four examples of a teacher from the Czech Republic, a teacher trainer from Holland, a teacher from Taiwan and a famous ELT author to prove the attitude towards CLT. (12) As he mentioned, many teachers, writers and trainers believe that CLT is an integrated solution of language teaching, and this method is better than other "traditional approaches". (13) However, he also expressed that CLT neglect and ignore teachers' and learners' requirements and the local context. (14) Besides, Bax stated that the solution to the drawback of CLT is "to demoted CLT to second place' (Bax, 2003)	(5, 6) Summarizing description (SG↑) (7) judgment (SG↓) (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14) summarising description (SG↑)

Using semantic profiles to map students' writing over text time, the text remained mostly context-bound or relatively stronger in semantic gravity (SG++) by providing mostly summaries and descriptions of the reviewed article (see Figure 5.9). When the student weakened semantic gravity by providing judgements (see sentences 2 and 3 in Table 5.6), those sentences were claims which lacked enough explanations and interpretations from the literature. Some ideas presented were also disconnected and lacked semantic flow, as in sentence 4 (see Table 5.6), where the student chose to discuss article claims, advantages and disadvantages of the context approach, the relationship between CLT and context approach and other problems with Bax's claims; all

showing a lack of a consistent theme and producing a disconnected semantic gravity wave (see Figure 5.9).
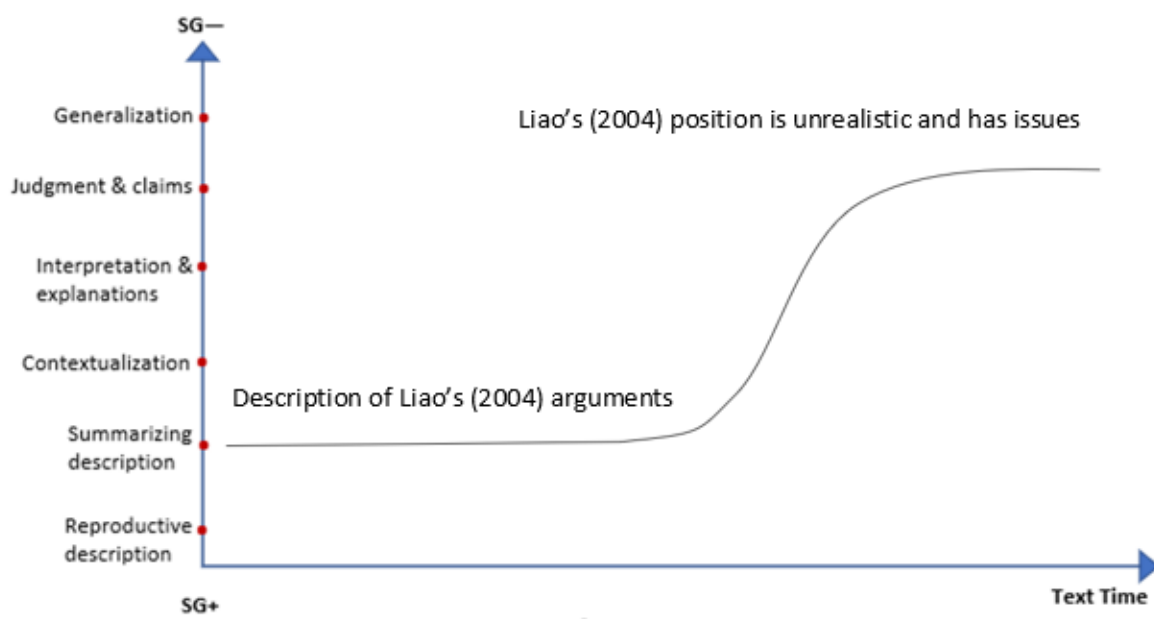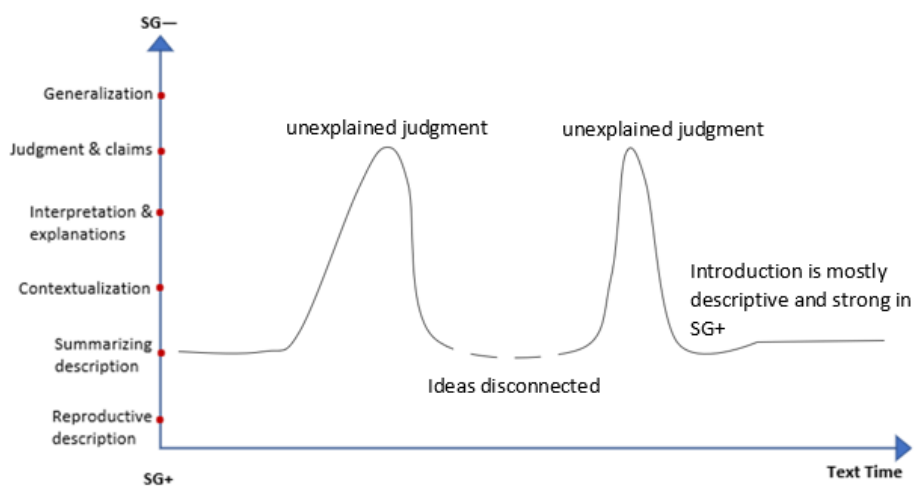

Figure 5.9   Semantic profile of Chen's essay introduction

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, the student presents an introduction that has lower epistemological condensation. The student establishes (EC— —) several ideas in the introduction. Mostly, the student summarises points from Bax's (2003) article. These ideas include the author's preference for the Context approach over CLT, examples of teachers' experiences from Bax's article, the history of CLT, the student's position towards Bax's claims, and finally an overview of the structure of the essay. While all these points are related as they set out the article's claims and the student position and how she plans to structure the essay, the connections between these ideas remain fewer which reduces the complexity of this extract. For example, the student does not engage in coordinating (EC+) by comparing Bax's arguments with other research or taxonomizing (EC++) by consolidating her rejection of Bax's claims by using supporting evidence from the research. Therefore, Chen's introduction extract shows lower epistemological condensation. Using constellations to show the relations between the meanings presented in the introduction, Figure 5.10 below shows the limited relations among ideas.
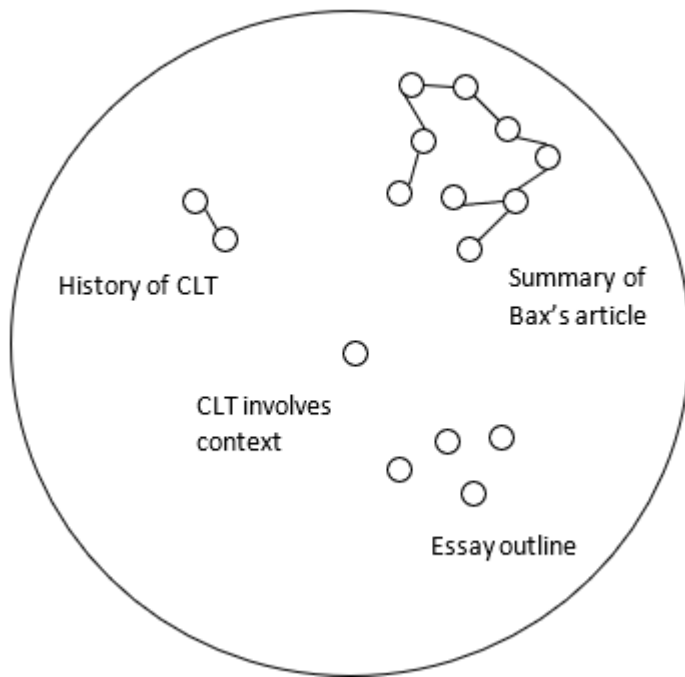
Figure 5.10   Epistemological condensation in Chen's essay introduction

5.3.4   Cross-Case Analysis

In this section, I carry out a cross-case comparison of students' writing products to reveal the underlying use of context-dependence, context-independence, and epistemological condensation of meanings in a high-achieving writing task compared to lower-achieving writing tasks. I aim to answer the following questions:

> How do students use context-dependence, context-independence, complexity, or condensations of meanings in their academic essays?

Zoe, Yara and Chen scored 57, 68 and 58, respectively, with Yara's essay scoring the highest. Zoe began her essay introduction by providing a summary of the article or stronger semantic gravity (SG++). She then was able to weaken semantic gravity by providing a generalisation (SG−−−) and making a judgment towards the article. Regarding semantic flow, the essay introduction was low in semantic flow as ideas were not clearly linked to each other, creating a break in the semantic flow.

Yara also began her essay introduction by summarising the article or stronger semantic gravity (SG++) and weakened semantic gravity by providing clear but undetailed judgment or position (SG−−). Regarding semantic flow, Yara's introduction showed a high semantic flow where no sudden jumps are made in the arguments.

Chen's essay introduction also moves back and forth between summarising the article (SG++) and weakening semantic gravity by taking a position towards the article (SG↓). Regarding semantic flow, some ideas presented were also disconnected and lacked semantic flow, creating a disconnected semantic wave.

Overall, in terms of semantic gravity, all three essays contained some stronger semantic gravity in the form of a description of the article (SG++) and a weakening of semantic gravity in the form of a position or a judgment made towards the article (SG↓). Using semantic profiles, we can observe different semantic gravity waves created by the students, showing their differing use of context dependence and context independence (see Figure 5.11). Research shows that semantic profiling can be useful because they provide an immediate visual of what is going on in a text, in terms of how the student is building knowledge (Wilmot, 2018).
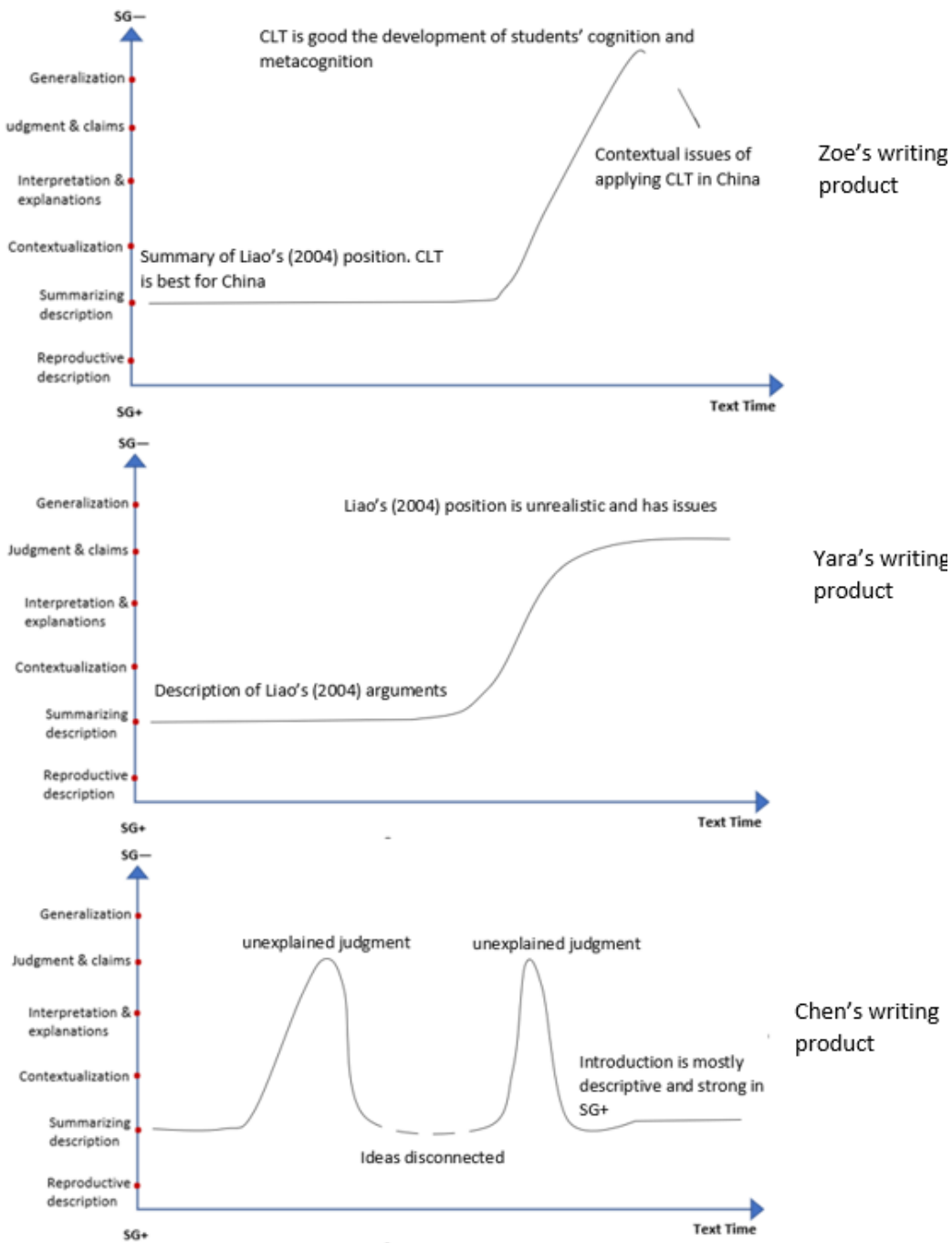
Figure 5.11   Cross-case comparison of semantic profiles of essay introductions

In terms of complexity, all three essay introductions were lower in epistemological condensation as they were limited to the degree of establishing (EC— —) ideas with relatively few relations among them. They did not go up to the level of taxonomizing (EC++) where multiple meanings are created to support a single idea or coordinating (EC+) where multiple different meanings are related to show similarities and differences. See Figure 5.12 for a visualisation of epistemological condensation in students' texts.
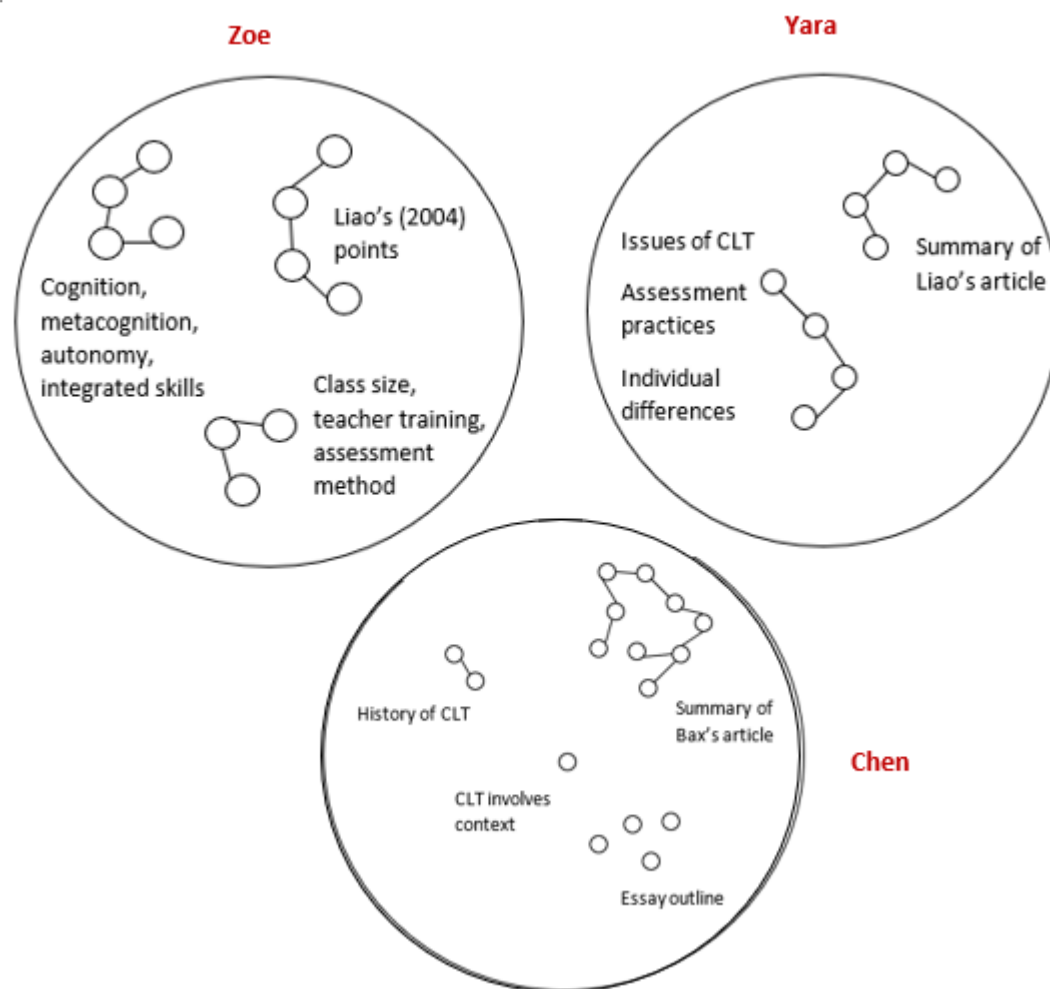
Figure 5.12   Cross-comparison of epistemological condensation in students' essay introductions

5.4   Academic Writing in the Essay Body

In this section, I analyse students' writing in the middle of the essays for writing task 1 in the MLTM module. I first analyse Zoe's essay body, followed by Yara's, and finish with Chen's. I use a zooming-in strategy to look more closely at the writing and give a detailed understanding of student writing.

At the end of the essay body analysis of all students, I provide a cross-case analysis in which I examine students' writing in light of LCT Semantics gravity and density to reveal and compare the underlying semantic basis of student writing.

Chapter 5

5.4.1   Zoe's Essay Body

In this section, I analyse Zoe's essay body. I use a zooming-in strategy to examine Zoe's essay discussion more closely and give a detailed understanding of the writing using the concepts of semantic gravity and density.

Zoe scored 57 out of 100 for her academic essay. She chose to critique Liao's (2003) article, which claimed that CLT is the best teaching approach for China.

In the essay body, Zoe started the discussion by showing the weaknesses of Liao's proposal that CLT is the best teaching approach to apply across all Chinese English classrooms. Then, she explained the strengths of CLT and its role in developing students' cognition and metacognition, and finally, she discussed more contextual issues when applying CLT in China. See Appendix AAppendix G for Zoe's entire essay.

When examining Zoe's essay writing, it is apparent that she addressed Liao's article by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of CLT. This is apparent in her choice of discussing the advantages of CLT in developing students' cognition and metacognition and later discussing the contextual issues of applying CLT in the Chinese context. She writes:

> There are some alignments with the development of students' metacognition in CLT on account of its features of learner autonomy (Brumfit, 1984) as well as integrated skills (Whong, 2013). As Cross and Paris (1988:131) noted that metacognition is to control learners to learn and think by themselves. Generally, it argued that one of characteristics of CLT is promotion of learner autonomy, which help students to develop the students' metacognition (Xiao, 2015:53). [Zoe's academic writing]

The choice to argue against Liao's claims that CLT is best for China, followed by the advantages of CLT and finishing by discussing more issues with applying CLT in the Chinese context, produces themes that are not well connected and do not build on one another. This creates breaks in the semantic flow at the macro level of the essay, which can be seen in the semantic profile of Zoe's essay discussion (see Figure 5.13).
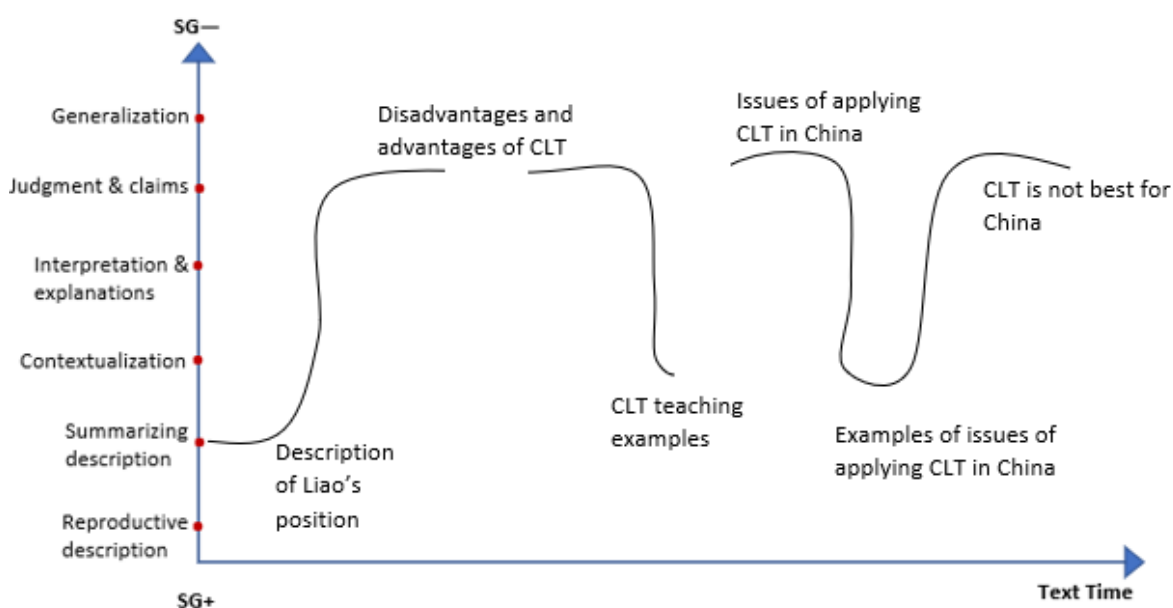
Figure 5.13   Semantic profile of Zoe's essay body

Looking more closely at Zoe's use of examples (see Table 5.7), in sentences 14 and 15, Zoe explored one of the advantages of the communicative approach related to its student-led classrooms. In sentence 16, Zoe explained the process of teaching the plural forms of English as an example to support her argument.

Table 5.7   Zoe's Essay Body Extract

Functional stages & phases	Student's text	SG-/SG+
Discussion of the advantages of CLT	(13) It is argued that CLT is contributed to the development of students' cognition in virtue of it paying more attention to the needs of students (Munby, 1978). (14) In China, the teaching model more focus on learning rather than teaching, which results in more power of classes changing from teachers to students (Barr and Tagg, 1995). (15) According to Xiao (2015:12), the effective English teaching needs to more emphasize that students are subject position while teachers serve as instructors, which can more caters for the demands of students. (16) For instance, teaching plural form of English, the English teacher speaks some nouns without any plan, such as a cat, vegetable and fruit, to ask the students to discuss what are their plural forms. The students as central roles in the English classes by observing and discussing the contents from last lesson that the plural forms of "apple and dog" were "apples and dogs" can shout out the answers "cats, vegetables and fruits". During this process, it demonstrates the dominant position of students as well as a wider range of needs of students since the students acquire grammatical knowledge by themselves while their teacher plays a facilitator role.	(13) judgment (SG↑) (14, 15) interpretation (SG↑) (16) Contextualization (SG ↑)

However, the example shown in sentence 16 is far too specific to explain how the communicative approach develops students' cognition through its student-led classroom techniques. In LCT terms, the example shows much stronger semantic gravity than what is possibly required (SG+), which makes Zoe's use of examples go very down on the semantic scale (see Figure 5.14). The following is sentence 16, which exemplifies Zoe's use of very specific examples. She went into specific details about examples of 'cats, vegetables, fruits, apples, and dogs':

> (16) For instance, teaching plural form of English, the English teacher speaks some nouns without any plan, such as a cat, vegetable and fruit, to ask the students to discuss what are their plural forms. The students as central roles in the English classes by observing and discussing the contents from last lesson that the plural forms of "apple and dog" were "apples and dogs" can shout out the answers "cats, vegetables and fruits". During this process, it demonstrates the dominant position of students as well as a wider range of needs of students since the students acquire grammatical knowledge by themselves while their teacher plays a facilitator role.
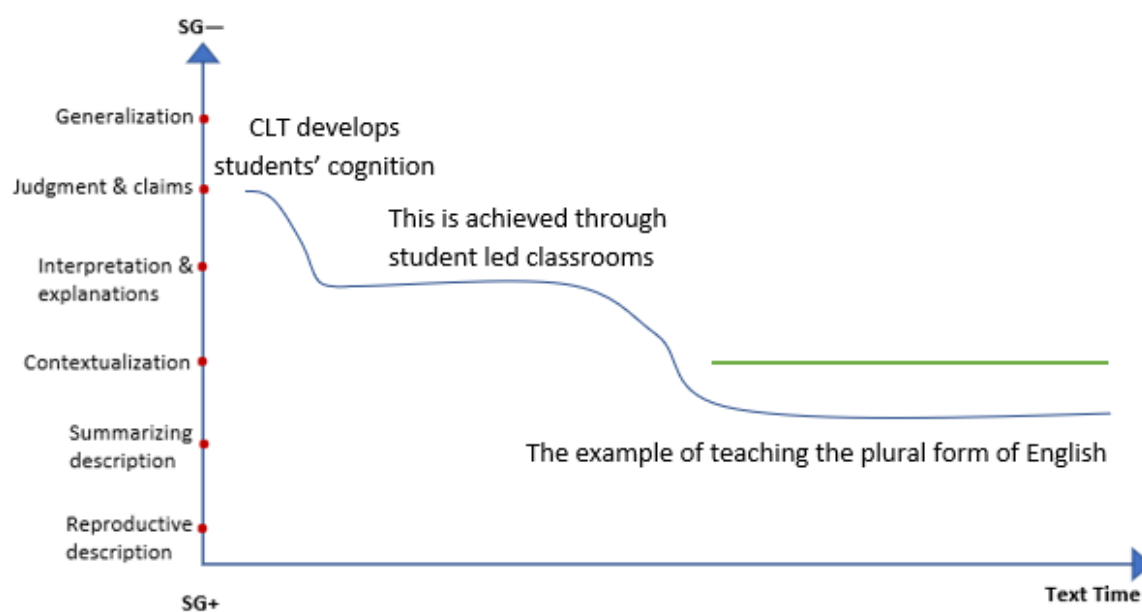
Figure 5.14   Semantic profile of Zoe's essay body extract

As shown in Figure 5.14 above, Zoe's use of examples goes very down on the semantic scale and shows a much stronger semantic gravity. Successful practical teaching and learning examples in the data collected for this study are usually coded at the level of 'contextualisation' (SG+). It is stronger in its semantic gravity but can explain the arguments without being too specific and detached. This level is marked as a green line in the semantic profile above, showing that Zoe's examples went below this level or were much stronger in semantic gravity than expected for this task.

Also, Zoe's discussion is characterised by a lack of explanations. In the following extract, Zoe discussed one of the issues of applying CLT in the Chinese context: lack of professional training and teachers' competence to apply CLT effectively in the Chinese context. She explained that rural teachers cannot use CLT because they cannot produce authentic materials. However, she did not explain what is unique about CLT and its relation to authenticity, nor does she provide sufficient explanations for why rural tutors cannot produce authentic material:

> In Chinese rural, a large number of English teachers lack professional training. Thus, not only are they not ability to ask some questions that are no in their plans, but also, they are no able to answer spontaneous questions. Sometime, even if they can speak English fluently, they maybe get wrong in pronunciation, which will have a great influence on their learners and cause their pronunciation out of standard. Namely, CLT cannot effectively be used by these English teachers because authentic materials are their stumbling blocks for them to apply it. Some teachers who are at lower language competence often complain that: "I can teach English to some extent, but it is quite beyond me if I am asked to give more explanations on language and cultural differences" (Hu, 2010:2). [Zoe's academic writing extract]

In the essay body, overall, Zoe made more claims or judgements (SG− −) or listed ideas without enough explanations and interpretations from the wider literature. This resulted in writing that mostly moved between either much weaker semantic gravity in terms of judgments and claims (SG− −) or much stronger semantic gravity in terms of summaries (SG++) or too specific examples than is required with fewer interpretations and explanations for the claims made. The lack of explanations also resulted in writing where Zoe listed several issues and topics in short paragraphs, which did not allow her to explain those in more detail.

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, Zoe's essay body shows some enactment of epistemological condensation. The student began the essay body by establishing the importance and purpose of CLT (EC— —). The student continued to establish other points about issues with CLT and Liao's (2004) arguments. These points were presented briefly and descriptively contained few relations with other ideas.

Going into more detail, the student began to explain the advantage of CLT in improving student cognition and metacognition. To support this claim, the student cited some sources and provided teaching examples to support these claims such as CLT's characteristics of paying attention to students' needs, student-led classrooms, using assimilations procedure to teach grammar, Piaget's compliance concept, learner autonomy, integration of skills, and self-assessment. The student here tried to state a claim and provide enough support for it from the literature, thus increasing complexity through taxonomizing (EC++) where a meaning is established and connected to multiple different meanings to create one constellation of similar ideas that build on

the original meaning. However, the student does not always provide support for the claims made such as the following extract:

> In terms of autonomic learning and self-assessment, learners with high level of English maybe can do well. On the contrary, students who have lower abilities in English fail to do it because they lack of enough English language to support them to do them. [Zoe's writing extract]

Although the student shows a high form of epistemological condensation in the form of taxonomizing (EC++) (see Figure 5.15). The essay body also shows little use of other forms of epistemological condensation such as coordinating (EC+) or presenting alterative point of views to show complexity and characterising (EC—) where teaching and learning practices are nuanced by examining the various factors that may affect them. Instead, teaching practices are presented in a very rigid and fixed style as if teaching and learning always occur in a fixed format as in the extract below:

> It can show with example that if students say: 'Lili go to Library with her best friend yesterday', normally, in China, the older teachers will point out their mistakes 'You need say went not go' while the young teachers or the teachers without the traditional way of correction will recast the sentence 'you mean: Lili went to Hartley Library with her best friend yesterday'. [Zoe's writing extract]
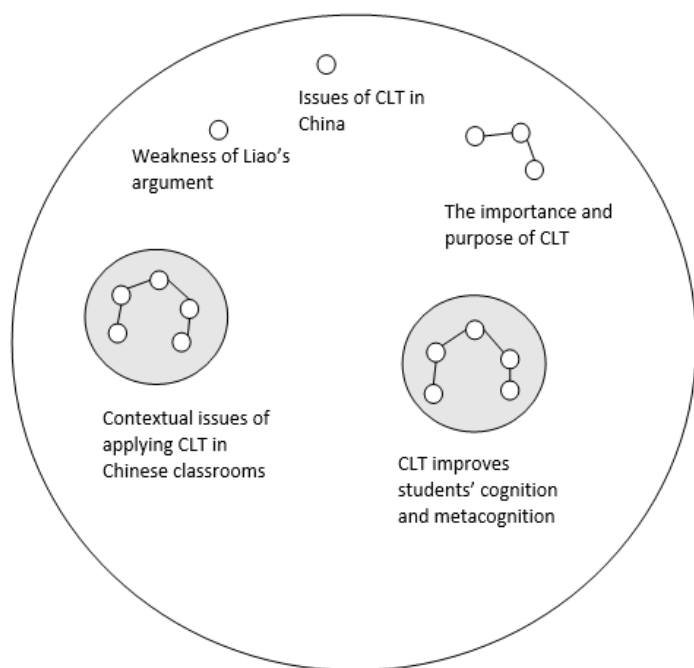
Figure 5.15   Epistemological condensation in Zoe's essay body

5.4.2   Yara's Essay Body

In this section, I analyse Yara's essay body. I use a zooming-in strategy to examine Yara's essay discussion more closely and give a detailed understanding of the writing using the concepts of semantic gravity and density.

Yara's academic essay is a critique of an academic article written by Liao (2004) titled The Need for Communicative Language Teaching in China, in which the author argues that CLT is the best teaching and learning approach for Chinese English classrooms.

Yara initially scored 71 out of 100 for her assignment but was downgraded to 68 after moderation. To analyse Liao's (2004) article, Yara approached the assignment by arguing against Liao's (2004) article, which took an absolutist position, stating that CLT is best for China. Yara argued against this claim by discussing the challenges of applying CLT in the Chinese context due to the negative washback effect and the influence that language testing has on teaching and learning practices, individual differences among Chinese students, Chinese parents' and administrators' views on language learning and testing, and a critique of Liao's (2004) views on the role of contextual factors on teaching and learning. See Appendix G for Yara's full academic essay.

Yara's essay discussion demonstrated sufficient and successful attempts to contextualise the discussion of Liao (2004) within the English teaching and learning practices of the Chinese contexts (see Figure 5.16). By doing so, Yara was able to meet an important requirement for this writing task in the MLTM module by constantly strengthening semantic gravity and bringing in teaching and learning examples from the Chinese contexts (SG↑). The following extract shows an example of how Yara contextualised the discussion within the Chinese context:

> (48) In China, the teaching content and pedagogical methods are mostly controlled by local governments and school administrators, which means that teacher do not have so much freedom in teaching. (49) Teachers should follow the ultimate goal that set by administrators. When deciding teaching methods, the views from administrators should be considered as well. [Yara's academic writing extract]

It is also noticeable that Yara's writing, unlike Chen's and Zoe's, as will be shown in the following cross-case analysis sections, made some statements and conclusions that go beyond the immediate context to cover the wider contexts. For example, in the following extract, Yara generally acknowledged the strength of the CLT approach, as in sentence 62. Then, she considered CLT in the Chinese context in sentence 63. Finally, she concluded with a general statement that teaching involves more than one approach or method in sentence 64. This last statement generalises beyond the Chinese context to cover all teaching and learning contexts.

> (62) <u>CLT has served the language teaching well for decades and it has a lot of advantages.</u> (63) But, when Chinese education departments or local administrators attempt to introduce a new theory or pedagogical method into Chinese schools, they should think about the national educational aims and local contextual factors. (64) <u>Briefly, it is hard to say that which approach is</u>

best for a specific context. In most case, language teaching involves more than one approach or method. [Yara's academic writing extract]

In LCT Semantics terms, Yara weakened semantic gravity by making generalisations (SG− − −), which is considered a very high level of weakening semantic gravity (SG↓) based on Maton's (2014) adapted Translation device. This perhaps explains why this assignment is considered a high-achieving assignment, as the student moved from summarising descriptions to making judgments and generalising her conclusions to wider contexts (see Figure 5.16).
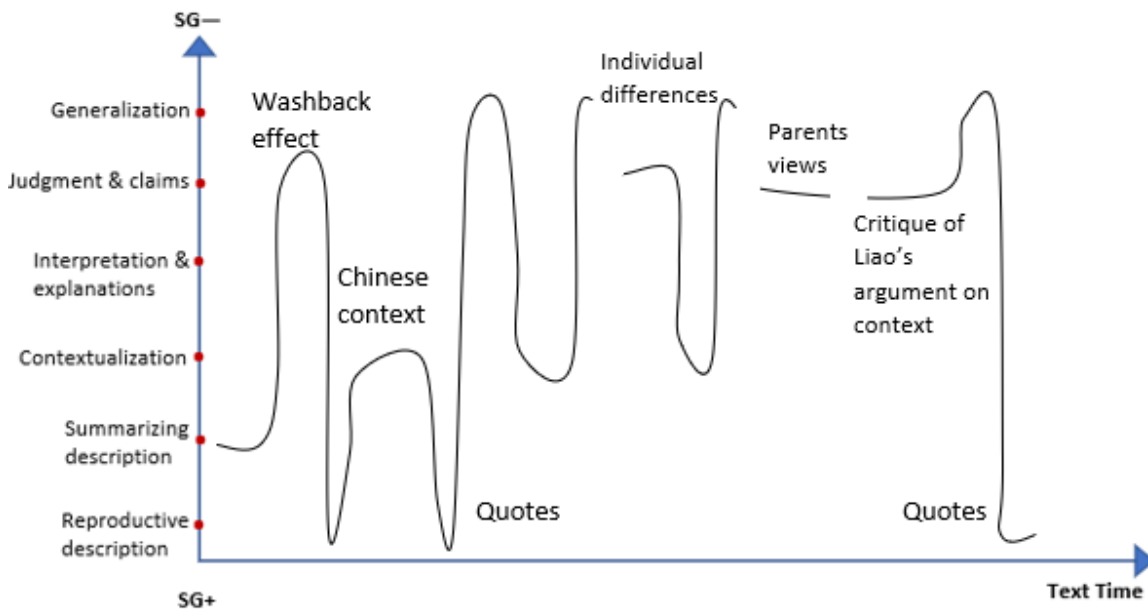
Figure 5.16   Semantic profile of Yara's essay body

However, as shown in Figure 5.16, Yara used a lot of quotes in her writing without proper paraphrasing. Quotes are meanings connected to a particular context, the context of the articles they come from. These meanings are said to show stronger semantic gravity (SG+++). The following is an example of Zoe's use of direct quotes without paraphrasing:

(10) 'Washback effect' refers to the influence that language testing has on curriculum design, teaching practices, and learning behaviours (McKinley & Thompson, 2018). [Yara's academic text extract]

Regarding Semantics flow, there seems to be a disconnect between the choice of the arguments Yara presented in her essay. The disconnect occurs between the choice of discussing language testing's negative washback effects on teaching and learning practices, followed by a discussion on the individual differences among Chinese students, parents and administrators' views on language learning and assessment, and finally critiquing Liao's (2004) views on the role of contextual factors on language teaching and learning. These disconnected themes create breaks in the semantic flow of the essay, as shown in Figure 5.16.

Looking more closely at the semantic flow in Yara's writing, I examine it in the extract below (see Table 5.8). Yara explored the differences in Chinese students' needs that make CLT problematic in the Chinese context. Yara argued against Liao's (2004) claim that CLT is best for China by discussing the individual differences among Chinese students and their needs, which makes the adoption of CLT as the only teaching approach in the Chinese context debatable. In sentences 37 to 42, Yara explained that some Chinese students may prefer the communicative approach, and others prefer the exam-oriented teaching style due to their different needs. However, in sentences 44 and 45, Yara made a jump in the essay discussion by examining the influence of learner personality and its role in the teaching and learning process. Sentences 44 and 45 states:

> (44) Another factor is learner's personalities, which largely decide how the learners react to CLT class. (45) For example, a rather private person might be inactive in communicative activities given by teachers. [Yara's essay writing extract]

Table 5.8   Yara's Essay Body Extract

Functional stages & phases	Student's text	SG-/SG+
Discussion of individual differences among Chinese students	(37) From the above numbers, it is clear that more and more Chinese students choose to study abroad, and the number of overseas students is expected to grow year by year. English learners, who want to go abroad for further studies, are likely to turn their eyes to overall language skills instead of focusing on test form only. (38) They might be willing to accept CLT as a creative way in learning English. Thus, students who appreciate CLT might have more engagement in CLT class. (39) It must be noted, however, that not all learners could get accustomed to the approaches that teachers take in CLT class. (41) For those students who focus more on test skills, the communicative activities in class, which are regarded as 'waste of time', might cause disaffection among them. (42) Also, there are some learners who have already got into job, who might not have enough time to engage in a long language training course. So, the short-term language training courses which directly focus on test skills might be better for those learners who want to achieve a specific goal or relatively high marks in assessments in a short period. (44) Another factor is learner's personalities, which largely decide how the learners react to CLT class. (45) For example, a rather private person might be inactive in communicative activities given by teachers.	(37 to 42) contextualisation (SG↑) (44) judgment (SG↓) (45) contextualization (SG↑)

In the previous extract, Yara made a jump in the discussion, which created a break in the semantic flow, as shown in a semantic profile created for this extract (see Figure 5.17). This shows that some of the themes and examples in Yara's writing are not well connected.
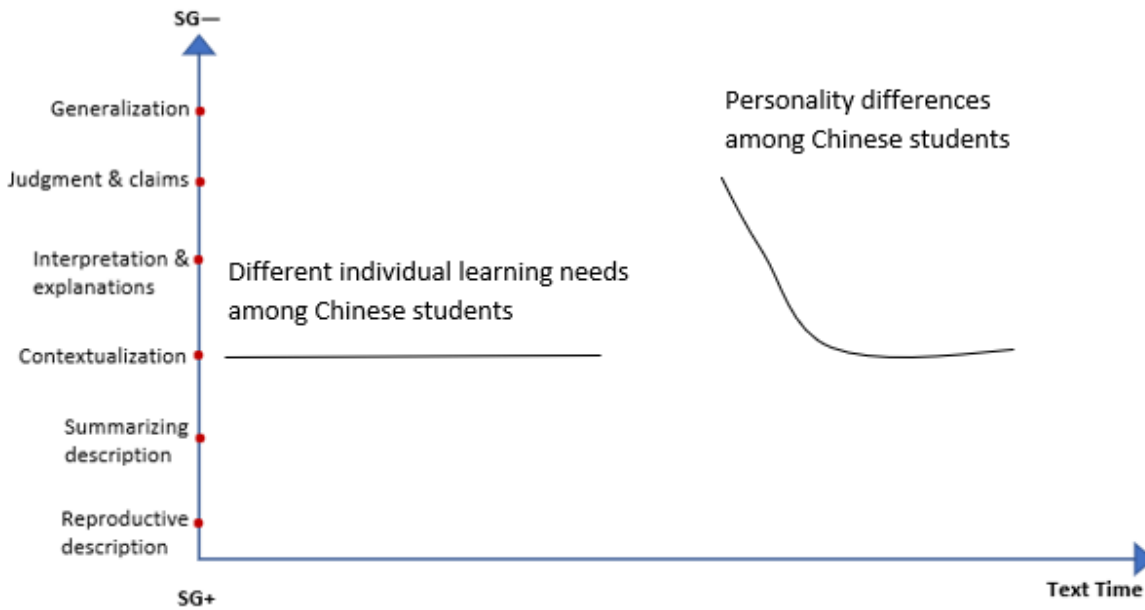
Figure 5.17   Semantic profile of Yara's essay body extract

When it comes to complexity or epistemological condensation in Yara's essay body, her writing shows different forms of complexity ranging from higher epistemological condensation to lower. She argued against Liao's (2004) article which claimed CLT is the best teaching approach in China. She used three main themes to argue her point: (1) application of CLT in the Chinese context causes a negative washback effect, students have different needs and CLT is not suitable for all of them, and language teaching requires more than one approach not just CLT.

Starting with her first argument: the application of CLT in China can cause a negative washback effect. She established a claim that assessment practices in China are not updated to match the principles of CLT which can cause a negative washback effect. To support this claim, Yara's explained that language testing influences curriculum design, teaching practices and students' expectations. Within each idea, she provided more support from the literature and practical examples.

> Both learners and teachers are affected by the impact that caused by washback. (15) According
> to leaners, it may result in different preparations for the test and leaning outcomes. An example
> is a study of the washback on learning by introducing a speaking test in Hong Kong (Andrews,
> Fullilove, & Wong, 2002) [Yara's writing extract]

The process of establishing a claim and providing multiple support to it from various perspectives is described as taxonomizing (EC++) which increases the complexity of the original claim and the supporting claims as they are being related to one another.

Moving from higher epistemological complexity in the form of taxonomizing, Yara begins discussing the second theme of her argument, which is the difficulty of applying CLT in China due to individual differences among students', parents' and administrators' expectations. Using the example of individual differences, the student was able to select one learning practice and go into detail about it to show the various dimensions that characterise it. Using the concept of epistemological condensation, this is referred to as characterizing (EC+). See the abridged example below:

> Students' needs should always be considered when designing teaching methods. More Chinese students choose to study abroad. These learners are likely to focus on overall language skills instead of exams only. They might be willing to accept CLT as a creative way in learning English. Thus, they may enjoy a CLT class more. However, not all learners appreciate CLT. For those students who focus more on test skills, the communicative activities in class, could be regarded as a 'waste of time', and might cause dissatisfaction among them. Also, there are some learners who are already in employment and might not have enough time to engage in a long language course. So, short-term language courses which directly focus on test skills might be better for them. [Yara's writing extract]

Yara finally argued that language teaching requires more than one approach. She used different sources to argue this point, thus achieving higher epistemological condensation by taxonomizing (EC++). Using constellations, Figure 5.18 below is a visualization of the complexity of Yara's essay body.
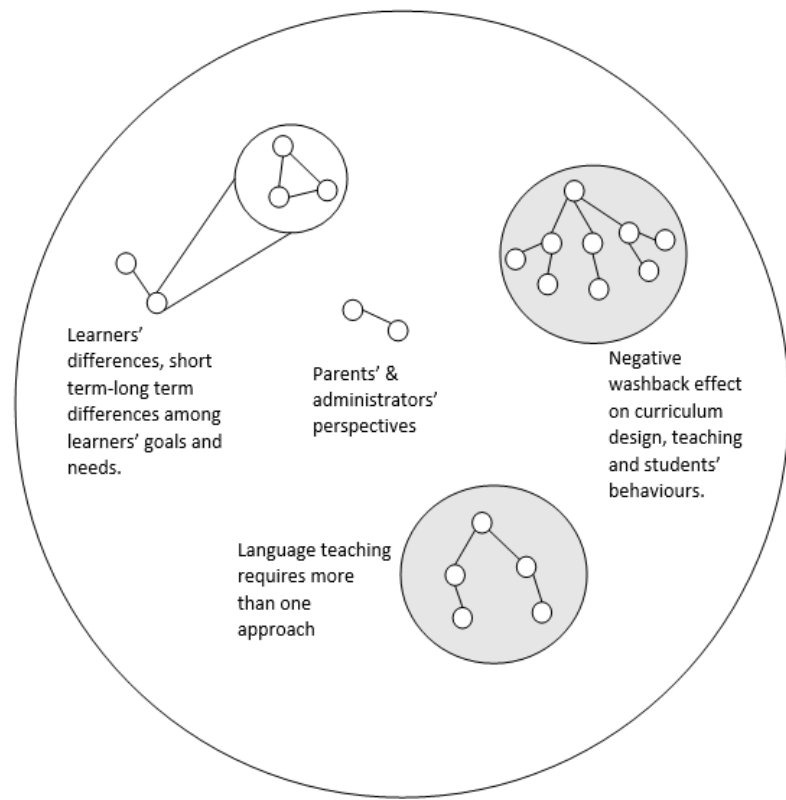
Figure 5.18 Epistemological condensation in Yara's essay body

5.4.3 Chen's Essay Body

In this section, I analyse Chen's essay body. I use a zooming-in strategy to examine Chen's essay discussion more closely and give a detailed understanding of the writing using the concepts of semantic gravity and density.

Chen's academic essay is a critique of an academic article written by Bax (2003) and titled The End of CLT: A Context Approach to Language Teaching, in which Bax argued that context should be placed at the forefront of English language teaching and learning and criticised CLT for placing the context as a secondary priority.

Chen scored an overall mark of 58 out of 100. To analyse Bax's (2003) article, Chen approached the assignment by first discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the context approach, comparing the CLT approach with the context approach, and finally discussing some issues with Bax's claims. See Appendix I for Chen's complete academic essay. Below is an outline of Chen's essay body:

4. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Context Approach
5. Compare the CLT Approach with the Context Approach
    e) Focus on discourse, not isolated language forms.
    f) Emphasis on meaning rather than on form.
    g) A supportive and participatory environment

h) Focus on the needs of learners.
6. Some issues in Bax's article

This choice appears to be fragmented and disconnected from each other. This shows in her choice to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the context approach, a comparison of the context approach and the CLT approach and the final section when she chose to discuss issues with Bax's (2003) article, such as the use of ambiguous phrases, emotive language and absolutist claims. Chen wrote:

> Second, Bax used many ambiguous phrases in his essay, such as "sake of teacher", "teacher's ability", "local variable" and "irrelevant". He just lists words without explanation, such as not defining the scope of these phrases and not explaining some confusing words, which leaves a lot of room for misunderstanding for readers and makes this article not particularly convincing.
>
> Finally, Bax's argument was too much strong. He used a lot of absolutist statements in his argument, such as "the context is a crucial determiner", and these absolutist views are not supported by evidence and arguments, which makes his article seem unquestionable at first glance, but full of holes in careful research.

These themes are disconnected and fail to address the task requirement, a critique of the author's ideas. This fragmentation is also reflected in the semantic profile of Chen's essay body. The student's writing shows a fragmented and disconnected semantic wave. Her writing lacks semantic flow and shows quantum leaps between points (see Figure 5.19). In LCT Semantics terms, the writing fails to show semantic flow and a consistent theme running through the arguments.
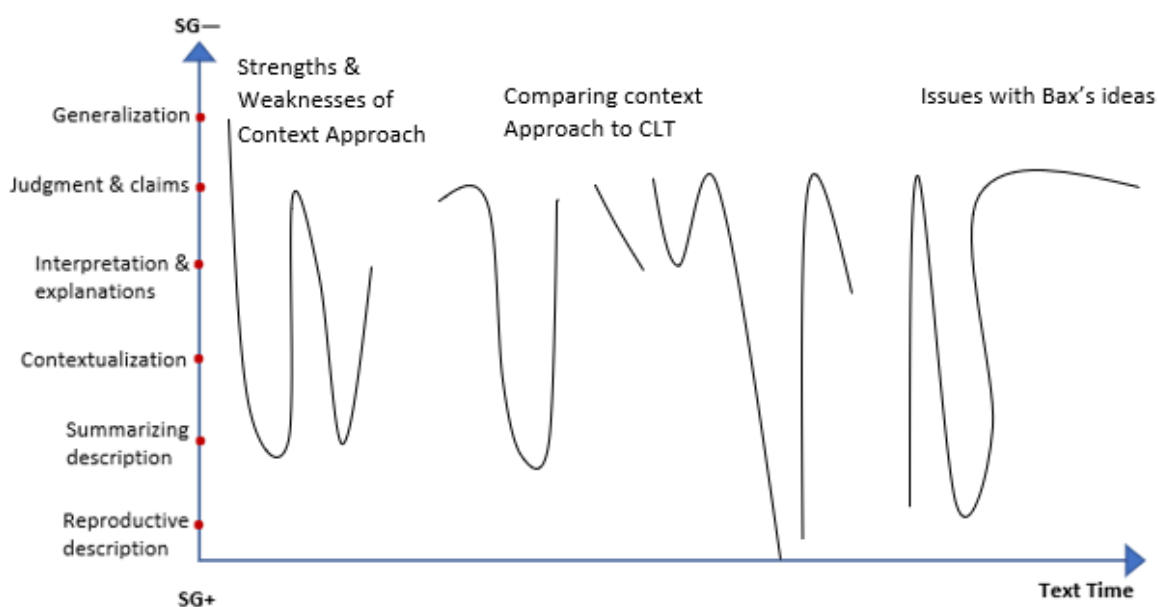
Figure 5.19 Semantic profile of Chen's essay body

The student also diverted from the writing task by discussing concepts and approaches per se rather than critiquing Bax's (2003) arguments and his presentation of those concepts. The following are extracts from the student's writing in which she discussed the concepts of CLT and

the Context Approach instead of critiquing the author's representations of those concepts and the author's arguments:

> (9) The context approach has its own merits and demerits as CLT approach does. (10) However, it is not necessary to replace CLT approach with context approach as Bax's point of view. (11) Foremost, they are not opposites. (12) Bax regarded context method and CLT as two isolated and unrelated individuals, but in fact context and CLT are closely related, and it can even be said that CLT contains context to some extent, as can be proved by Brumfit's the Principles of Communicative Language Teaching. [Chen's essay writing]

> (37) First of all, Bax always emphasized that the current position of CLT should be replaced by context approach, but the problem lies in that context approach itself is included in CLT. (38) Bax has been trying to convince readers of the importance of context approach with strong emotions, but he has not fully defined what is context approach. [Chen writing product]

Moreover, in sentences 9 to 12, Chen not only diverted from the task by comparing the CLT approach with the Context approach but also misrepresented Bax's (2003) arguments and representation of both CLT and Context approaches. Bax (2003) criticised the CLT attitude, which overemphasises communication and downplays the role of context. He advocates the Context approach as it prioritises the context and students' needs in specific teaching and learning settings. In the second extract, sentences 37 to 38, Chen criticised Bax's (2003) arguments for denying that context is part of the CLT approach, which misrepresents the article. In fact, Bax's article acknowledged that context is part of CLT but criticised it for reducing it to a secondary place. He argued that the context approach needs to be adopted instead because it places context as a primary concern in language teaching.

Another aspect of Chen's writing is the tendency to use debated concepts without relating them to the article or explaining them. The following extract and the use of the concept of 'authentic' shows this tendency:

> The context is very complex. "Context is seen as a dynamic construct which is interactionally organized in and through the process of communication" and Fetzer likened the context to an onion (Fetzer A., 2007). So, because of the heterogeneous nature and the context-dependence feature of the concept itself, it is hard for the people to give a standard definition. Just because of this, it is difficult to give a detailed scope about what is the specific context in an **authentic** class. [Chen's academic writing]

This means that Chen's writing lacked enough explanations and interpretations. These concepts are weaker in semantic gravity. Likewise, Chen's essay discussion makes less use of 'contextualisation' or reference to specific teaching and learning contexts about her discussion of Bax's (2003) article or the principles of CLT. Teaching and learning examples are stronger in semantic gravity.

We can examine these issues more closely by examining a smaller section of Chen's essay body (see Table 5.9). In this section, Chen explored the advantages and disadvantages of the context approach. In sentence 1, she made a general statement that the Context Approach

has many advantages compared to traditional methods. Second, she applied the previous statement to the Chinese and Japanese contexts and claimed that the Context Approach could be useful in those contexts that mainly have exam-oriented education. In sentence 3, she used a quote to support her idea that exam-oriented education is not helpful. In sentence 4, she claimed that the Context Approach could improve students' communication skills. She followed that with an explanation.

Table 5.9   Chen's Essay Body Extract

Functional stages & phases	Student's text	SG-/SG+
Discussion of advantages and disadvantages of context approach	(1) Compared with the traditional language teaching method, context approach has many advantages. (2) Especially in some counties where compulsory education is mainly exam-oriented education, such as China and Japan. (3) "It appears that the compulsory education of the target learners has trained them as if they are linguists, studying about language, rather than as language users" (Opitz, T.A., 2016). (4) On this occasion, the introduction of context approach can change the phenomenon of students' lack of communication intention and extend periods of silence. (5) When people talk about the context in a real class, it should be related to individual, classroom culture, local culture and even national culture (Holliday, A., 1994). (6) The context is very complex. "Context is seen as a dynamic construct which is interactionally organized in and through the process of communication" and Fetzer likened the context to an onion (Fetzer A., 2007). (7) So, because of the heterogeneous nature and the context-dependence feature of the concept itself, it is hard for the people to give a standard definition. (8) Just because of this, it is difficult to give a detailed scope about what is the specific context in an authentic class.	(1) generalisation (SG↓) (2) contextualisation (SG↑) (3) reproductive description (SG↑) (4) judgement (SG↓) (5) Interpretation (SG↓) (6) Reproductive description (SG↑) (7, 8) Interpretation (SG↓)

The student produced a text that starts with a generalising statement by asserting that the context approach has many advantages compared to traditional teaching methods. Generalising statements are weaker in semantic gravity. Then, she moved to stronger semantic gravity by contextualising the discussion in a Chinese context (SG↑) to further strengthen semantic gravity by using quotations or reproductive descriptions (SG↑) as in the quote:

> "It appears that the compulsory education of the target learners has trained them as if they are linguists, studying about language, rather than as language users" (Opitz, T.A., 2016).

She repeats this movement from weakening semantic gravity as in interpretations and judgments (SG↓) as in sentences 4 and 5 and then strengthening semantic gravity as in her

use of quotations in sentence 6 (SG↑), and back to weakening semantic gravity as she explains and interprets the quote (SG↓). This creates a semantic wave (see Figure 5.20).
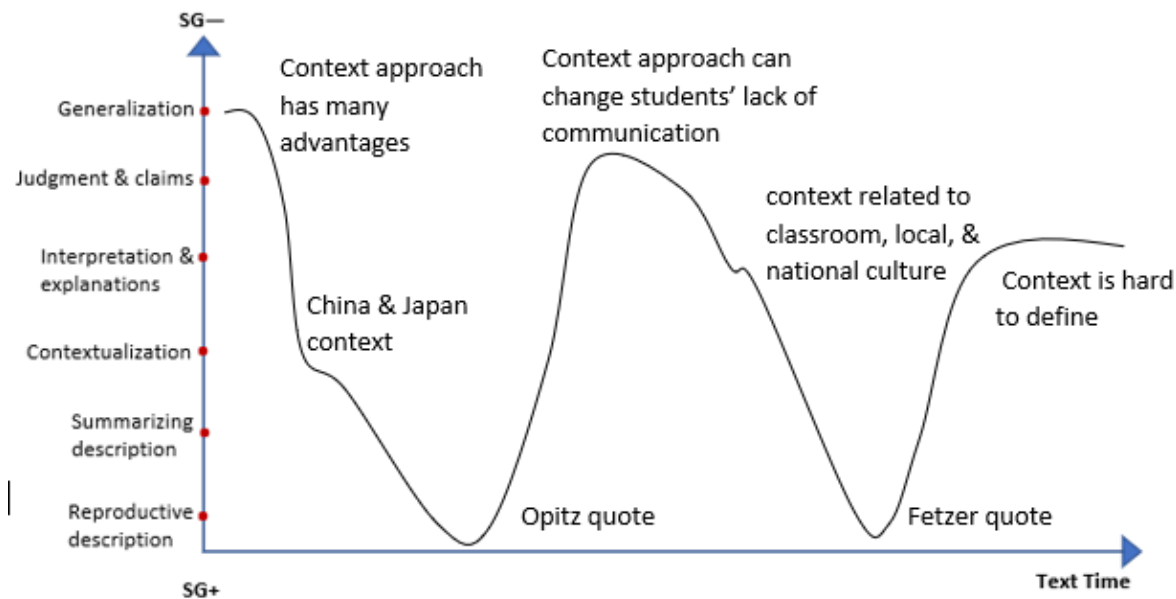
Figure 5.20   Semantic profile of Chen's essay body extract

When it comes to contextualisation or relating the discussion to particular teaching and learning examples, Chen produced less contextualisation in her writing overall. In this extract, as in sentence number 2, her use of Chinese and Japanese context is limited and lacks enough explanation. The example of the Chinese and Japanese context is used to argue against traditional teaching methods and fails to connect with Bax's arguments or the CLT approach. Chen writes:

> (1) Compared with the traditional language teaching method, context approach has many advantages. (2) Especially in some counties where compulsory education is mainly exam-oriented education, such as China and Japan. [Chen's academic writing]

In sentence number 6, Chen quoted Fetzor (2007) on the complexity of the context approach, which lacked unpacking and further explanation. Chen wrote:

> The context is very complex. "Context is seen as a dynamic construct which is interactionally organized in and through the process of communication" and Fetzer likened the context to an onion (Fetzer A., 2007). (7) So, because of the heterogeneous nature and the context-dependence feature of the concept itself, it is hard for the people to give a standard definition. (8) Just because of this, it is difficult to give a detailed scope about what is the specific context in an authentic class.

The student discussion is not entirely descriptive based on Maton's (2014) adapted translation device (see Table 3.4). The writing moves from more context-bound meanings, such as summaries and quotations, to less context-bound meanings, such as judgments and interpretations, thus creating a semantic wave. However, as the student scored 58, creating a

semantic wave is insufficient for an assignment to be considered a high-achieving work. Other requirements have to be met, such as achieving the semantic threshold of demonstrating understanding of the article and focusing the discussion on critiquing the article's claims and creating semantic flow by choosing arguments that build on a consistent theme or use of cautious language and presenting the writing in a clear structure.

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, Chen's writing shows lower complexity. She established a number of overall arguments that contained few relations among them. She argued against Bax's (2003) article which claimed the end of the CLT approach and its replacement with the Context approach. The overall approach she selected to argue against Bax's claims was by showing the strengths and weaknesses of the Context approach, comparing CLT with the Context approach and general issues in Bax's style of argumentation. Overall, there are few relations among those themes.

Beginning with the first theme: strengths and weaknesses of the Context approach, the student generally establishes (EC— —) ideas, but with very little support from the literature. For example, she argues that one of the challenges of the context approach is that it should consider individual students and teachers, classroom culture, and local culture. To support this claim, she quoted Fetzer (2007) who compared the context approach to an onion. However, she does not explain this quote and does not provide enough supporting evidence for her claims. Thus, her writing lacks higher epistemological condensation such as taxonomising (EC++). See the extract below:

> The context is very complex. "Context is seen as a dynamic construct which is interactionally organized in and through the process of communication" and Fetzer likened the context to an onion (Fetzer A., 2007). So, because of the heterogeneous nature and the context-dependence feature of the concept itself, it is hard for the people to give a standard definition. Just because of this, it is difficult to give a detailed scope about what is the specific context in an authentic class. [Chen's writing extract]

Another feature of Chen's writing is using teaching and learning contexts in a limited manner without detailing the complexity of those contexts. An example is when discussing assessment practices in China and Japan:

> Compared with the traditional language teaching method, context approach has many advantages. (2) Especially in some counties where compulsory education is mainly exam-oriented education, such as China and Japan. (3) "It appears that the compulsory education of the target learners has trained them as if they are linguists, studying about language, rather than as language users" (Opitz, T.A., 2016). (4) On this occasion, the introduction of context approach can change the phenomenon of students' lack of communication intention and extend periods of silence. [Chen's writing extract]

The student does not explain the teaching and learning context of China and Japan thoroughly and the factors that contribute to its traditional assessment practices, thus her

writing lacks characterizing (EC—) in which the properties of teaching and learning practices are detailed and nuanced.

The second theme compares CLT with the Context approach. Chen argued that CLT and the Context approach are not opposites and that CLT contains elements of the Context approach. She argued this point by examining CLT and its principles such as the focus on interaction, meaningful communication, authentic material, supportive environment, and emphasis on students' needs. At several times, the student was able to state a point and provide support for it. When an idea is introduced and further linked to other ideas to create a constellation of similar ideas, this is called taxonomizing (EC++). See the extract below:

> The core of CLT in the process of development is around the context of the dialogue--learners learn a language through using it to communicate. Within a CLT class, it is impossible to discuss the dialogue out of context, because there will not be isolated discourse irrelevant in the real classroom. [Chen's writing extract]

Although the student taxonomized her argument, the student used certain concepts without showing the complexity of those concepts by relating them to various different definitions and perspectives. An example is the use of the concept 'authentic', where the student state the concept without addressing the complexity and different perspectives around this concept. By not linking the concept 'authentic' to the various perspectives around it, the student writing fails to coordinate (EC+) which is a type of higher complexity or epistemological condensation. See the extract below:

> Authentic material is another aspect that can prove that CLT approach includes context approach. Using authentic materials in CLT means that all the conversations, dialogues, discourses and discusses happened in a CLT classroom are related to the context. This also serves the purpose of class activities--authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities. [Chen's writing extract]

The final theme in Chen's essay body relates to a critique of Bax and his argument style. She criticized Bax's knowledge and understanding of CLT, use of vague and emotional language, and lack of evidence. The points are not well connected and stay at the level of establishing (EC— —) where there are few relations among ideas. See Figure 5.21 below for an approximate visualization of complexity in Chen's essay body using constellations.
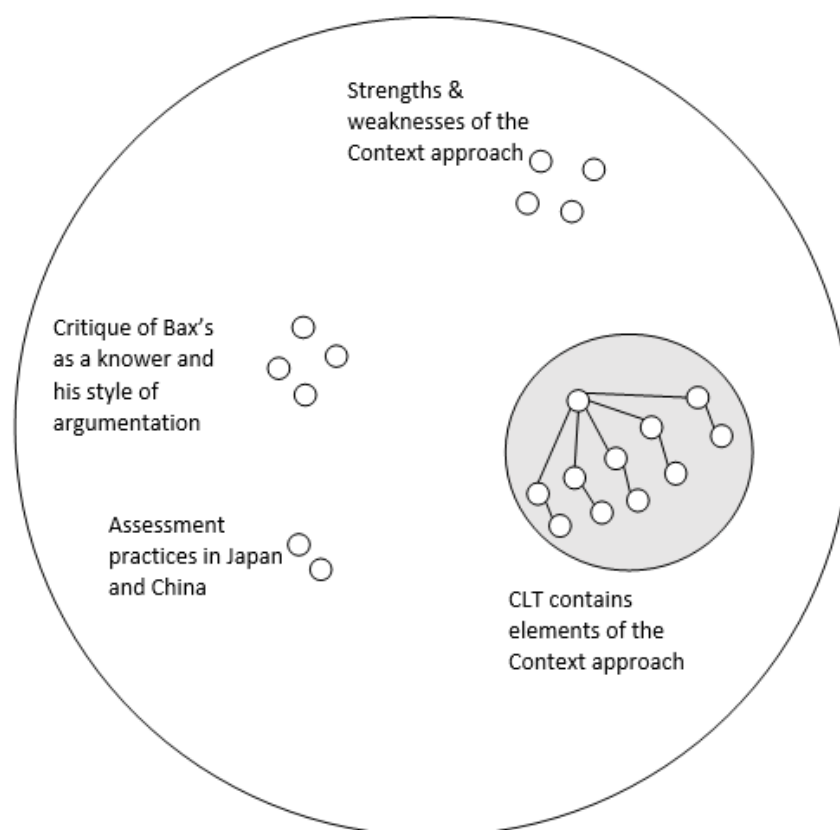
Figure 5.21 Epistemological condensation in Chen's essay body

5.4.4   Cross-Case Analysis

In this section, I carry out a cross-case comparison of students' writing products in light of LCT Semantics gravity and density to reveal the underlying use of context-dependence, context-independence, and epistemological condensation of meanings in a high-achieving writing task compared to lower-achieving writing tasks. I aim to answer the following questions:

> How does a high-achieving writing task use meanings in terms of context-dependence, context-independence and epistemological condensations of meanings compared to lower-achieving essays?

Zoe, Yara and Chen scored 57, 68 and 58, respectively, with Yara's essay scoring the highest. All essays showed a semantic wave with meanings moving from stronger semantic gravity in the form of summaries (SG++) or quotations (SG+++), use of teaching and learning examples (SG+) to weaker semantic gravity in the form of explanations and interpretations (SG−) to judgments and claims (SG− −) as can be seen in the semantic profiles of the essays (see Figure 5.22). However, Zoe's and Chen's essays produced less weakening of semantic gravity in the forms of interpretations and explanations (SG↓) either by making claims and judgments or introducing new concepts without enough explanations and unpacking.

Yara's highest-achieving essay was the only one that showed further weakening of semantic gravity by making generalisations and abstractions (SG$\downarrow$), which is considered a very high level of weakening semantic gravity based on Maton's (2014) adapted Translation Device. This perhaps explains why Yara's assignment is considered a high-achieving assignment, as the student moved from summarising descriptions to making judgments and generalising her conclusions to wider contexts, which is expected at master's level academic writing.

Regarding semantic flow or the degree of connectedness between themes and arguments, all essay bodies did not show a high semantic flow, with Chen's essay showing the lowest. Still, her essay was downgraded due to a lack of appropriate paraphrasing and citation.
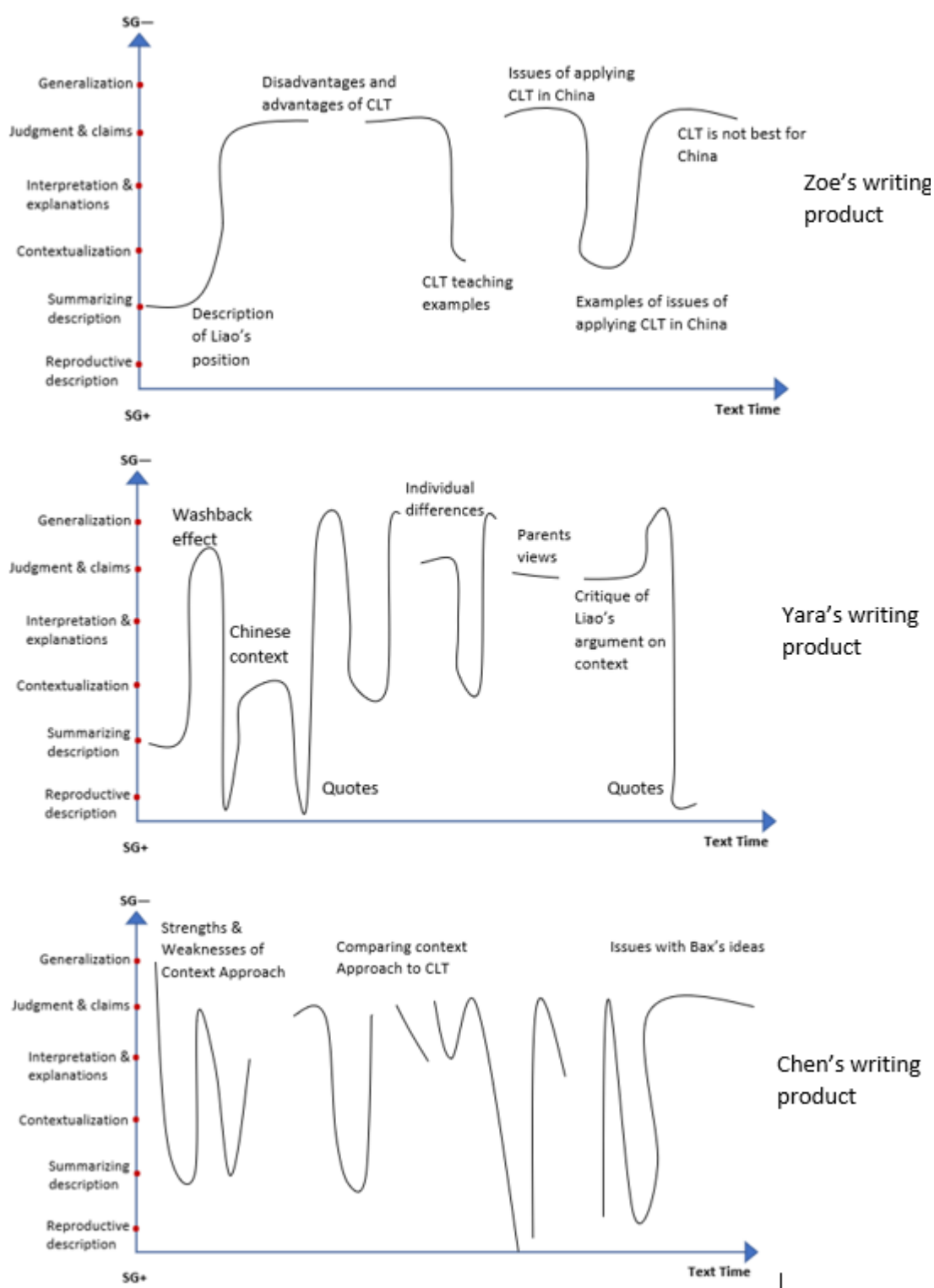
Figure 5.22   Cross-case comparison of semantic profiles of students' essay body

Regarding contextualisation or use of practical teaching and learning examples (SG+) and by examining the semantic profiles of essay body extracts (see Figure 5.23), Yara's essay showed a relatively better use of contextualisation than the other essays.

On the one hand, Yara's essay discussion demonstrated sufficient and successful attempts to contextualise the discussion of Liao (2004) within the English teaching and learning practices of

the Chinese context. By doing so, Yara was able to meet an important requirement for this writing task in the MLTM module by constantly strengthening semantic gravity and bringing in teaching and learning examples from the Chinese contexts (SG↑). However, her use of examples showed an occasional lack of semantic flow, with some addressing a different area than the previous examples.

On the other hand, Zoe's and Chen's essays could not use contextualisation appropriately (SG+). Zoe used examples far too specific than required and compared to the other two students, thus producing teaching and learning examples that are much stronger in semantic gravity than is required. Chen's essay discussion makes very little to no use of 'contextualisation' or reference to specific teaching and learning contexts (SG+) concerning her discussion of Bax's (2003) article or the principles of CLT. When Chen used teaching and learning examples, the examples were very brief and lacked explanations and elaborations, as in her use of the Chinese and Japanese teaching contexts. Similarly, Brooke (2017) found that the interplay between theory and empirical exemplification demonstrates critical academic writing. He found that students often fail to write successfully because they may not refer to the literature/known theories or they may simply list out theories without actually applying them to context (Brooke, 2020). I add that when theories are applied to the context, students need to be aware of the degree of context dependency or details required.

It is also possible that Yara's essay was the highest-achieving essay due to other factors. Unlike the other two students, Yara read the assignment guidelines more thoroughly, used tutorials better, and sought extensive feedback on her writing. She also spent a longer time on her essay and used more resources to support her arguments (see section 6.7.2).

Although all students produced writing that created semantic gravity waves, tutors evaluated students' essays differently. They awarded different marks, suggesting that creating semantic gravity waves is insufficient to produce a high-achieving essay. See Chapter 1 for a detailed analysis of tutors' and students' perspectives.

SG—

Generalization

Judgment & claims

Interpretation & explanations

Contextualization

Summarizing description

Reproductive description

SG+

CLT develops students' cognition

This is achieved through student led classrooms

The example of teaching the plural form of English

Zoe's writing product

Text Time

SG—

Generalization

Judgment & claims

Interpretation & explanations

Contextualization

Summarizing description

Reproductive description

SG+

Different individual learning needs among Chinese students

Personality differences among Chinese students

Yara's writing product

Text Time

SG—

Generalization

Judgment & claims

Interpretation & explanations

Contextualization

Summarizing description

Reproductive description

SG+

Context approach has many advantages

Context approach can change students' lack of communication

context related to classroom, local, & national culture

Context is har to define

Chen's writing product

China & Japan context

Opitz quote

Fetzer quote

Text Time

Figure 5.23   Cross-case comparison of semantic profiles of essay body extracts

Regarding complexity or epistemological condensation, Yara showed the highest complexity or epistemological condensation compared to Zoe and Chen.

Yara's writing showed different forms of complexity ranging from higher epistemological condensation to lower. Her writing showed more taxonomizing (EC++) than Zoe and Chen. This was achieved by establishing ideas and providing multiple support for them from various perspectives, which increases the complexity of the original claim and the supporting claims as they are being related to one another. Her writing also showed characterizing (EC—) in which

teaching and learning practices are detailed to show the various dimensions that characterize them.

Zoe established (EC— —) points with few relations among them, and some taxonomizing (EC++) by providing support for specific ideas. However, her writing lacked coordinating (EC+) or presenting alterative points of views to show complexity and characterizing (EC—) where teaching and learning practices are nuanced by examining the various factors that may affect them.

Chen's writing showed the lowest epistemological condensation. The student mostly established points that contained few relations among them. Her writing showed some taxonomizing (EC++) where a meaning is connected with multiple different meanings to create a constellation of similar ideas; however, she needed to provide more taxonomizing or support for the other ideas presented. Her writing also lacked characterizing (EC+) since teaching and learning examples were presented superficially without enough details.

All essays used less coordinating (EC+) or connecting a meaning with different meanings to show relation of differences. See Figure 5.24 below for a comparison of epistemological condensation in the essay bodies.
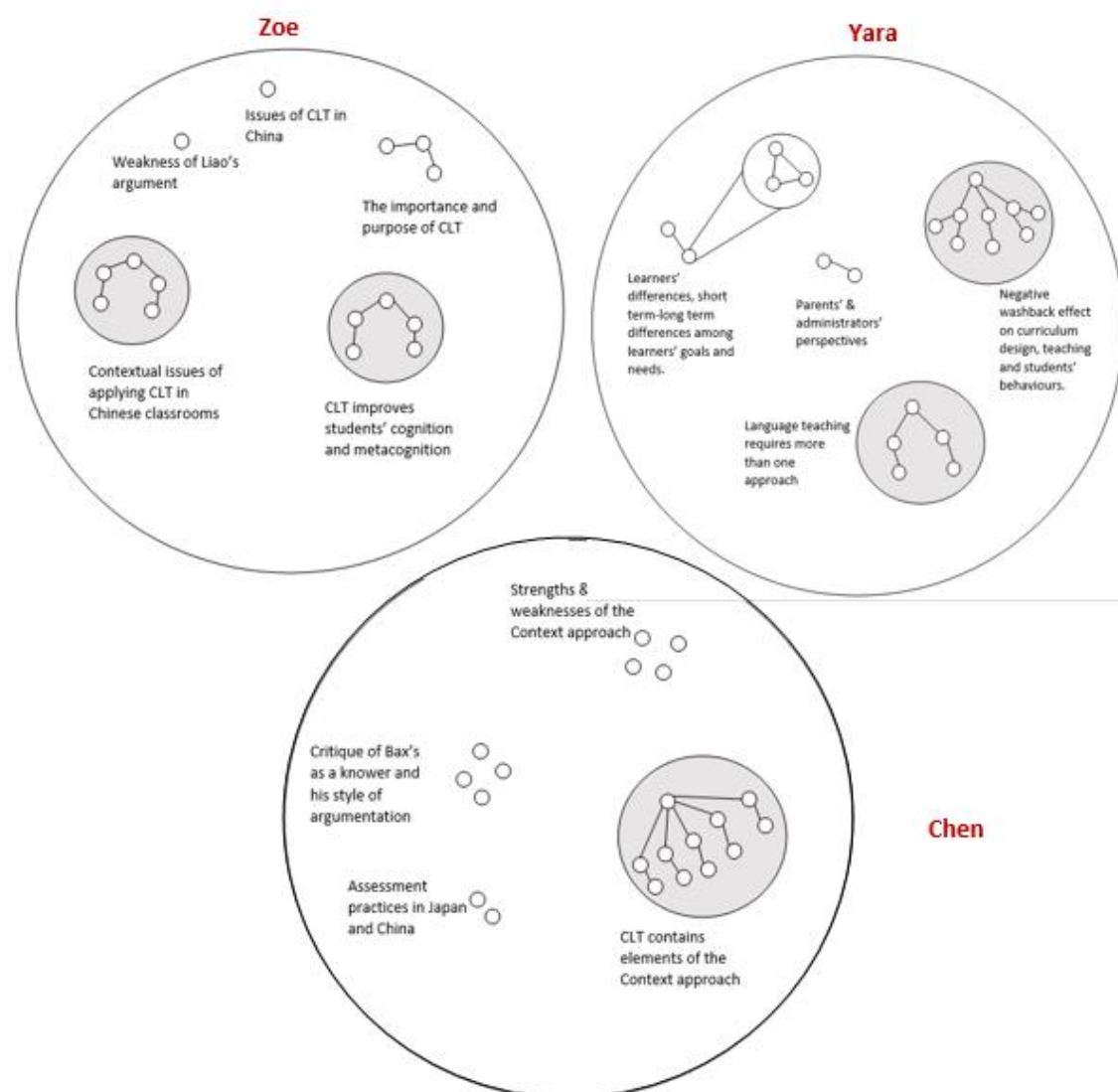
Figure 5.24   Comparison of epistemological condensation in the essay bodies

5.5   Academic Writing in the Essay Conclusions

5.5.1   Zoe's Essay Conclusion

In this section, I analyse Zoe's essay conclusion by examining the student's text using the lens of LCT Semantics. I use a zooming-in strategy to look more closely at the writing. I also provide a semantic profile of Zoe's essay conclusion.

By examining Zoe's writing, the essay concluded with a summary of a key point: CLT is important for developing students' cognition and metacognition. This is followed by explaining how CLT develops students' cognition and metacognition by giving attention to students' needs, learner autonomy, and use of integrated skills. Then, she returns to describing the essay's key points: the difficulty of applying CLT in Chinese classrooms due to large class sizes, lack of teacher training

and traditional assessment methods. She follows this with sentence 55, which claims that Liao (2004) should have designed a questionnaire to ask Chinese tutors from different regions about their views of CLT to support her arguments. This is the first time the student has made this claim, which has not been discussed previously in her essay. In the final sentence, 56, the student makes a general statement: CLT needs to be researched by more experts as it plays a significant role in teaching and learning. Again, the last statement was not discussed previously in the essay, nor does it connect to the previous points (see Figure 5.25).

Table 5.10   Zoe's Essay Conclusion

Functional stages & phases	Student's text	SG-/SG+
Summary and restatement of position	(51) To sum up, this essay focus on discussing CLT is advantage to the development of student's cognition and metacognition from two aspects. (52) On the one hand, CLT pays more attention to the needs of students, which can help the development of students' cognition. (53) On the other hand, the development of students' metacognition in consequence of its characteristics of learner autonomy and integrated skills. (54) However, this article also reveals that some issues are about contextual influences in Chinese English classes, and they are large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction respectively. (55) As a matter of fact, in this essay, the authors should design some questionnaires or interviews with Chinese teachers from different regions and educators, which could know their views about CLT to support the argument of the article. (56) In the future, CLT should be researched by more experts since it plays a significant role in teaching and learning.	(51) Summarising description (SG++) (52, 53) explanations (SG−) (54) Summarising description (SG−) (55) judgment or claim (SG− −) (56) generalisation (SG− − −)

Using Maton's (2014) adapted Translation Device to analyse each sentence in Zoe's essay conclusion, it's noted that as the student first summarised her position in sentences 51 and sentence 54, her conclusion remains at a relatively stronger semantic gravity as the student is summarising their claims and judgments (SG++) with further weakening of semantic gravity through explanations (SG↓) as in sentences 52 and 53 (see Table 5.10). However, in sentence 55, since the student made a claim which was discussed previously, a break in the semantic flow occurred as the student made an unsupported claim that she had not discussed previously in the essay. Zoe also finished the conclusion, as in sentence 56, by making a generalisation stating that CLT should be researched by more experts, which was not well connected to the previous sentences. This created breaks in the semantic flow as the arguments do not build on each other and are not supported by the previous discussion (see Figure 5.25) for a semantic profile of Zoe's essay conclusion).

Figure 5.25   Semantic profile of Zoe's essay conclusion

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, the conclusion extract shows different degrees of condensation. First, the student started with higher epistemological condensation by stating an idea and providing two supporting details for it. The idea is that CLT develops students' cognition and metacognition. This is followed by more explanations and supporting details which explain how CLT develop students' cognition and metacognition by paying attention to students' needs, developing their autonomy and through integrating different skills. This form of epistemological condensation is called taxonomising (EC++). Taxonomizing occurs when an idea is established and further extended to other different ideas to create a constellation of similar ideas.

In addition to taxonomizing, the student used a lower form of epistemological condensation which is establishing (EC— —) by stating several ideas that contain few relations among them. For example, explaining issues with applying CLT in China such as classroom size, lack of teacher training, and old assessment methods. Zoe also finished by establishing (EC— —) two ideas which contained much fewer relations with the overall meanings in the essay conclusion. She claimed Liao should have designed a questionnaire or interviews with Chinese teachers from different regions and that CLT should be researched by more experts. These two ideas were not related to any of the ideas discussed in her essay.

Figure 5.26   Epistemological condensation in Zoe's essay conclusion

5.5.2   Yara's Essay Conclusion

In this section, I analyse Yara's essay conclusion by examining the student's text using the lens of LCT Semantics. I use a zooming-in strategy to look more closely at the writing. I also provide a semantic profile of Yara's essay conclusion.

By examining Yara's writing, the essay conclusion extract began by mentioning Liao's (2004) position, which is CLT is best for China in sentence 65. Then, she summarised her position on Liao's (2004) argument. In sentences 66 and 67, she explained this position: despite the benefits of CLT, applying it in China is challenging due to individual differences among students and the assessment's negative washback effect. In sentences 68 to 70, the student moved from mere summaries to providing general statements that apply to a wider context. In those sentences, she stated that differences in students' needs should be considered, and both the context approach and CLT prioritise learners, and it is difficult to determine which approach is the best for a specific context. She was able to make a general statement that most of the time, language teaching involves more than one approach or method. In sentence 71, she concluded by restating her claim that Liao's position is too absolute. See Table 5.11 for the Yara's conclusion text.

Putting Yara's writing under the lens of LCT Semantics Using Maton's (2014) adapted Translation Device (see Table 3.3), the student started her conclusion with summaries of both Liao's claims and her position towards it. Summaries refer to a particular context: the reviewed article or the

written essay discussion. Therefore, both are described as stronger in semantic gravity (SG++). However, in sentences 68 to 70, the student started making general statements that apply to wider contexts. These statements are more abstract and are said to be weaker in semantic gravity (SG—). She concluded sentence 71 by restating her position towards Liao's argument. Claims are more abstract than mere descriptions; therefore, they are weaker in semantic gravity (SG—).

Table 5.11   Yara's Essay Conclusion

Functional stages & phases	Student's text	SG-/SG+
Summary and restatement of position	(65) In conclusion, the Liao (2004) article supports the adoption of CLT in China, in which he claims 'CLT is best for China'. (66) Although CLT helps students develop oral competence in using English for communication, there are still problems in the assessment criteria and individual differences. (67) Mismatching between national teaching goal and test form will cause washback effect, which has negative impact on teaching process. (68) As an essential feature in CLT, student's differences in needs should be taken into first consideration. (69) Context approach and CLT both care about learners and it is hard to say that which approach is best for a specific context. (70) In most case, language teaching involves more than one approach or method. (71) Liao's 'CLT is best for China' is too absolute.	(65) Summarising description (SG++) (66, 67) summaries (SG++) (68, 69, 70) generalisation (SG– – –) (71) judgment (SG– –)

Overall, the essay's conclusion can be said to show both the strengthening (SG↑) and weakening (SG↓) of semantic gravity by providing summaries, generalisations, and claims. It is also noticeable that the conclusion remains mostly at the weakest semantic gravity, the level of making 'generalisations' based on Maton's (2014) adapted translation device. This perhaps explains why this assignment is considered a high-achieving assignment, as the student moved from summarising descriptions to making judgments and generalising her conclusions to wider contexts. See Figure 5.27 for a semantic profile of her essay conclusion.
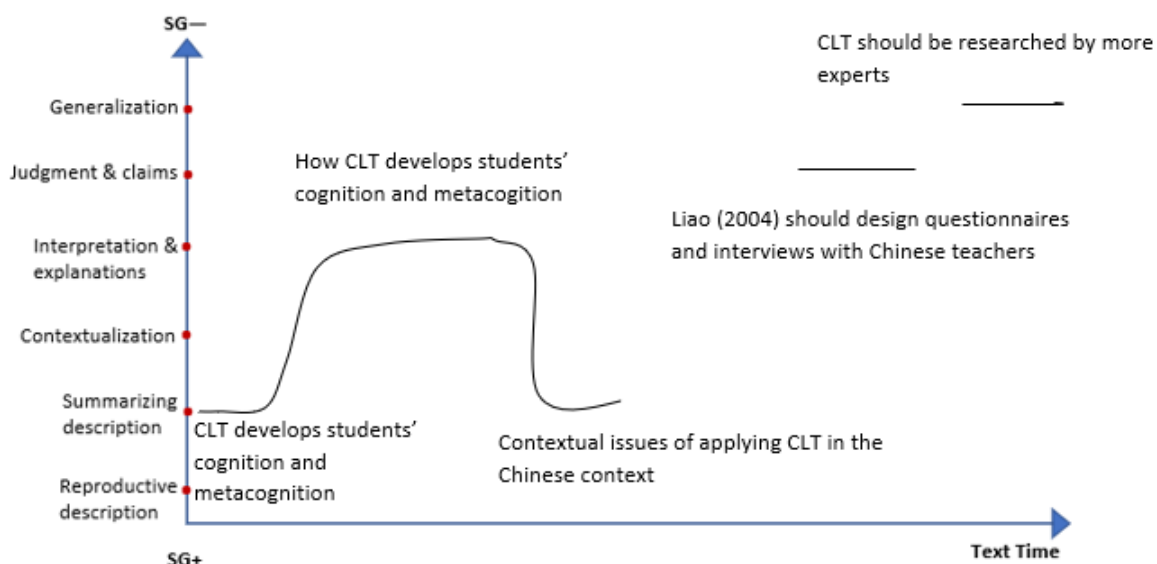
Figure 5.27   Semantic profile of Yara's essay conclusion

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, the conclusion extract shows different forms of condensation. First, the student summarized Liao's (2004) claim that CLT is the best teaching approach for China. Here the student establishes this meaning (EC— —). Then, she moved to state her own position which is that CLT is problematic when considering assessment practices in China and individual different among students. Here she moved from Liao's (2004) position to establish her own. She then supported her claim by explaining how assessment practices can be problematic and how they could cause a negative washback effect. She also argued that students' needs are essential in CLT and therefore need to be taken into consideration. By establishing a meaning and then providing more meanings to support it, the student increases the complexity by taxonomizing (EC++) in which more different meanings are added to the main claim to form part-part relationship.

She then moved to establish a different idea which is the difficulty of determining which approach is best for a specific context. She then supported this idea by claiming that language teaching involves more than one approach or method, thus building the complexity of the idea by taxonomizing (EC++). Figure 5.28 shows the forms and degrees of complexity in Yara's conclusion through establishing and taxonomizing.
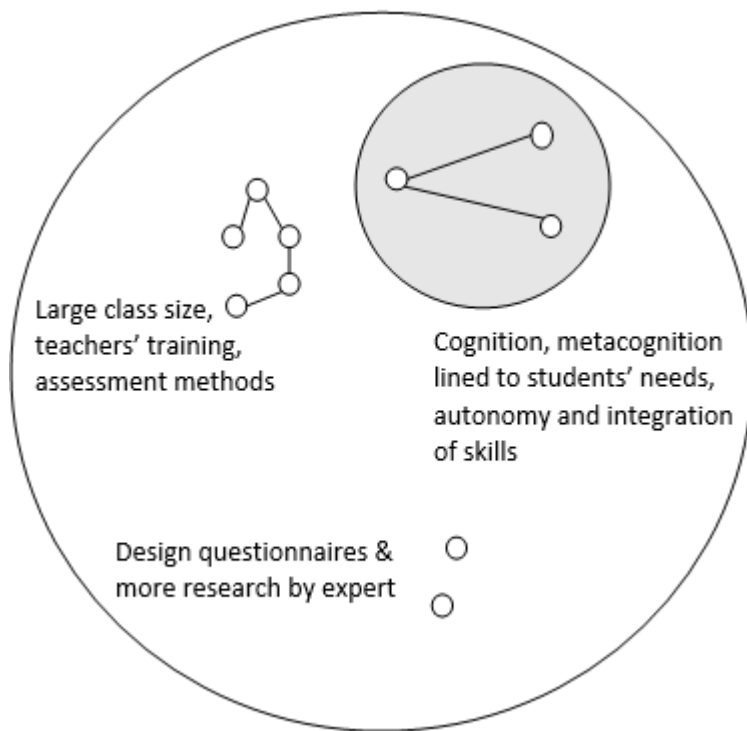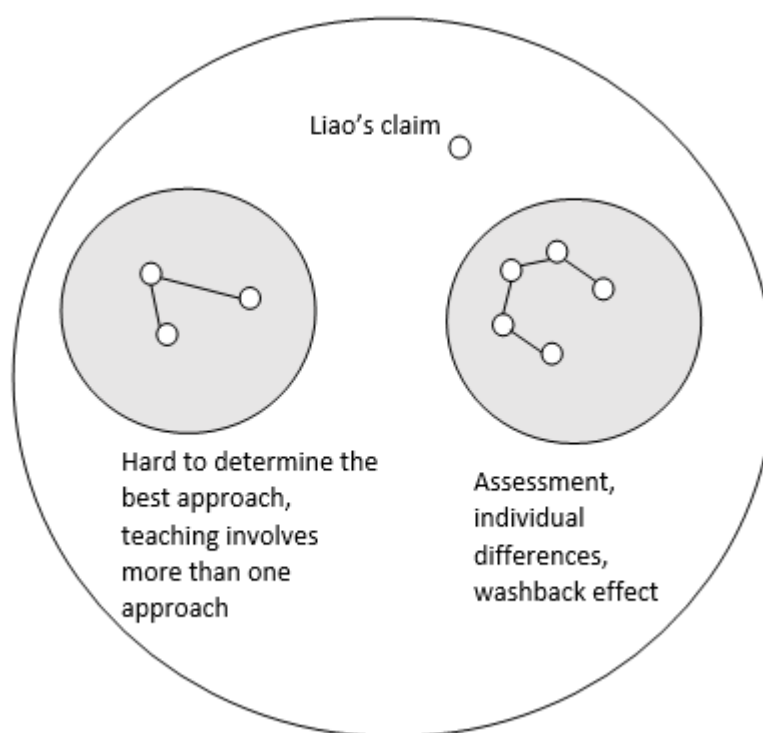
Figure 5.28 Epistemological condensation in Yara's essay conclusion

5.5.3   Chen's Essay Conclusion

In this section, I analyse Chen's essay conclusion by examining the student's text using the lens of LCT Semantics. I use a zooming-in strategy to look more closely at the writing. I also provide a semantic profile of Chen's essay conclusion.

By examining Chen's writing, she started the essay's conclusion by summarising her position, which was argued throughout her essay. In sentences 1 and 2, she acknowledged the importance of context in language teaching and learning. Still, she refused Bax's rejection of CLT and argued that context forms an essential element of CLT. In sentence 3, she criticised Bax's knowledge and understanding of CLT and claimed he did not know much about it. In sentence 4, she tried to argue her previous statement by claiming that the principles of CLT proved her point. However, this point lacked enough explanations. In the final sentence 4, she strongly criticised Bax's intention, use of language, and lack of evidence to support his arguments. See Table 5.12 for the Chen's conclusion text.

Putting this text under the lens of LCT Semantics using Maton's (2014) adapted Translation Device (see Table 3.3), the student started by summarising her position. Summaries are texts related to a specific context, the written essay. Therefore, they are said to be stronger in semantic gravity (SG++). In sentences 3 and 5, the student made claims about Bax's knowledge, intentions, use of language and argumentations. By making claims, the student moved higher than the summaries

level, and the writing became more abstract. Her writing in sentences 3 to 5 is weaker in semantic gravity (SG— —). Also, by attempting to explain in sentence 4 through reference to the principles of CLT, the writing is moving towards abstraction or weaker semantic gravity.

Table 5.12   Chen's Essay Conclusion

Functional stages & phases	Essay Conclusion	SG-/+
Summary and restatement of position	(1) In a word, I agree with Bax's emphasis on the importance of context. No matter what kind of language learning method, learning without context makes learning becoming superficial. (2) However, this does not justify Bax's opposition to CLT, as a new approach of opposition to traditional teaching methods, CLT always emphasizes the importance of context for real communication. (3) Bax probably did not know as much about CLT as he thought, because many of the arguments in his essay that he thought belonged to context approach were included in CLT. (4) This can be proved by the 11 characteristics of CLT of Brumfit, Canale and Swaine. (5) In order to convince readers, he used many unquestionable statements and vague arguments (which should not appear in academic papers), but the lack of evidence made his arguments seem too much strong and unconvincing. So, no matter how unmistakable his tone, his arguments for lack of evidence does not hold water.	(1, 2) summaries (SG++) (3) inappropriate judgement (SG— —) (4) interpretation (SG—) (5) inappropriate judgement (SG— —)

The essay conclusion is stronger in semantic gravity overall as it summarises the discussion. That is, the sentences reflect some of the levels of semantic gravity the student has been dealing with in their essay, including judgements, claims, and interpretations (SG++), albeit those judgements and interpretations are mostly inappropriate or inaccurate. See Figure 5.29 below for a semantic profile of Chen's essay conclusion.
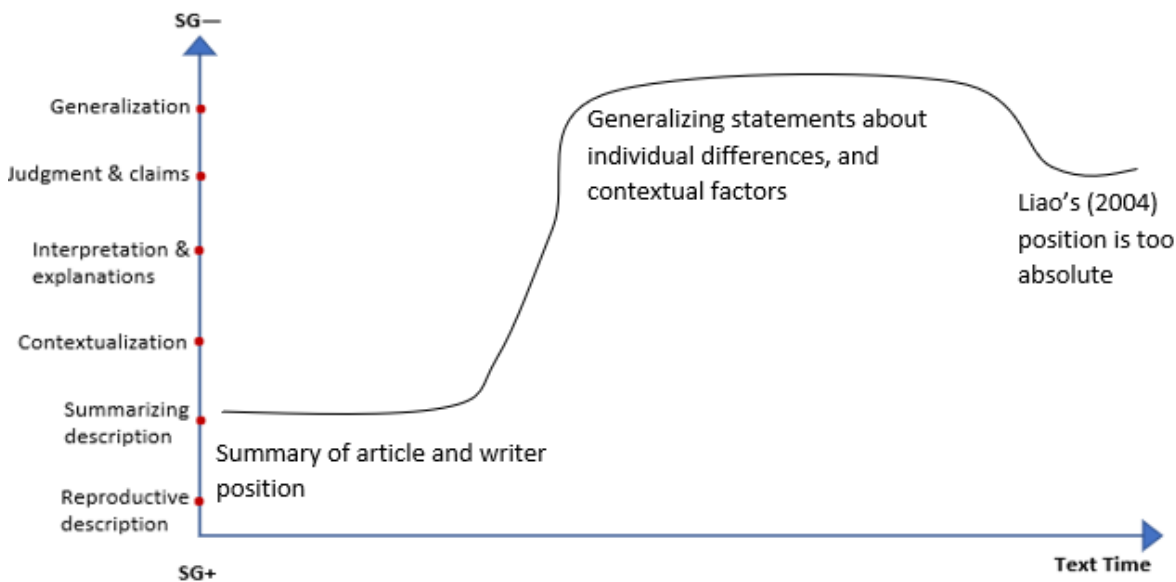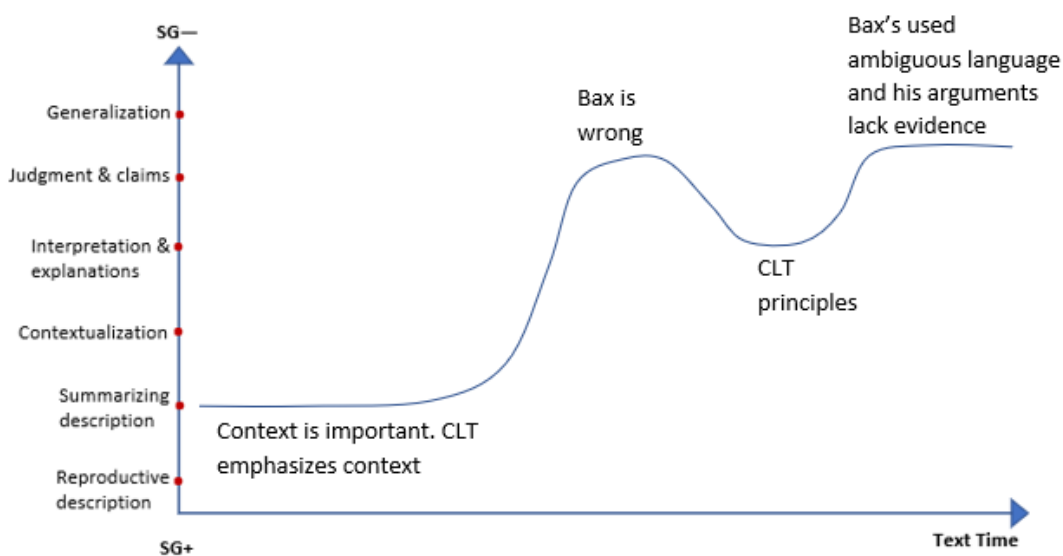
Figure 5.29   Semantic profile of Chen's essay conclusion

In terms of complexity or epistemological condensation, the conclusion extract shows two forms of complexity or epistemological condensation. First, the student established her position which is that she agrees with Bax's on the importance of context in teaching and learning, but she claims CLT already emphasises the context and there is no need to replace CLT with the Context approach. In this part, Chen establishes her claims but does not provide enough details or evidence to support them. Thus, her writing remains at the degree of establishing (EC— —), which shows some complexity but is relatively low.

Then she moved to critique Bax's. She criticised his knowledge of CLT, his writing style as in producing 'unquestionable statements and vague arguments', 'lack of evidence', 'strong and unconvincing' arguments, and his tone of voice. This forms a constellation of a critique of Bax's as a knower. This can be viewed as establishing (EC— —) with few relations among them or the previous ideas. Overall, Chen's conclusion is relatively low in epistemological condensation (see Figure 5.30).
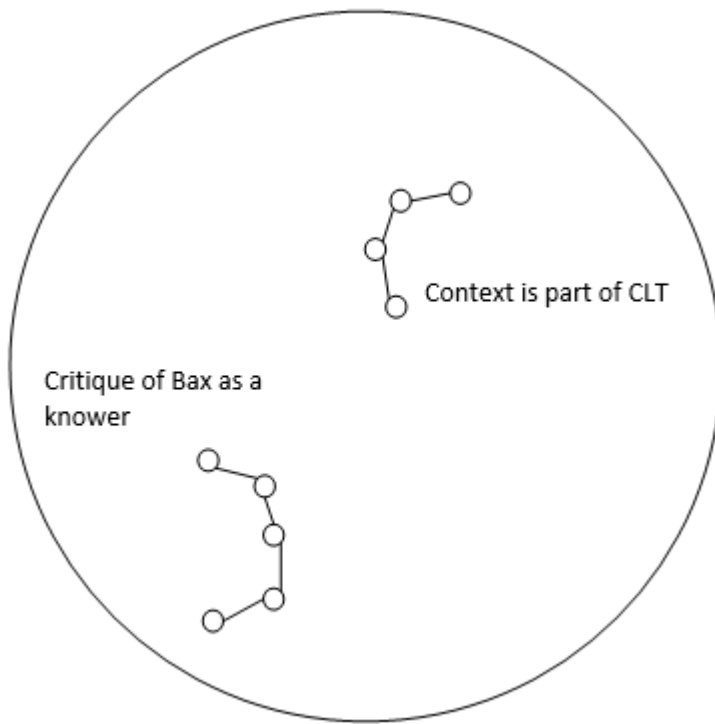
Figure 5.30   Epistemological condensation in Chen's essay conclusion

5.5.4 Cross-Case Analysis

In this section, I carry out a cross-case comparison of students' writing products in light of LCT Semantics gravity and density. I conduct a cross-case comparison of students' writing products to reveal the underlying use of context-dependence, context-independence, and epistemological condensation of meanings in a high-achieving writing task compared to lower-achieving writing tasks.

Zoe, Yara and Chen scored 57, 68 and 58, respectively, with Yara's essay scoring the highest. Based on Maton's (2014) semantic gravity Translation Device (see Table 3.3) and as can be seen in the semantic profiles of the essays (see Figure 5.31), all texts showed stronger semantic gravity by summarising the claims, judgements (SG––) and interpretations (SG–) which had been previously discussed throughout the essays. Yara, who wrote the highest-achieving essay, produced more generalisations and claims that reach beyond the immediate context; thus, demonstrating weaker semantic gravity. This perhaps explains one of the reasons she was able to score higher. Studies show that successful student writing demonstrates an ability to move from abstract knowledge to contextualised knowledge (Szenes et al., 2015, Brooke, 2017), however, it may be possible that some parts of the writing task such as the essay conclusion require more abstraction.

Also, even though Chen's writing showed weaker semantic gravity in claims and judgments, she was downgraded on the use of inappropriate language and unsupported claims. It is important to

note that semantic gravity is not the only requirement for a good essay conclusion. Choice of language appeared to be one important criterion for assessing student work. International students often struggle with language accuracy and appropriate academic language use (Burris, 2020).

In terms of semantic flow, Yara also produced writing which is very high in semantic flow by connecting ideas clearly. Chen's conclusion also has a relatively high semantic flow where ideas link to one another, but she was downgraded due to the use of inappropriate language and unsupported claims. Zoe's writing created breaks in the semantic flow as the student made claims and generalisations not previously discussed in the essay and, therefore, were not clearly linked to the rest of the arguments.

In terms of epistemological condensation, the lower-achieving essays written by Zoe and Chen showed more establishing of ideas (EC——) than other forms of epistemological condensation. Establishing means that students introduce ideas with relatively fewer relations to other ideas. Yara's essay, which is the highest achieving essay, showed higher epistemological condensation in the essay conclusion by establishing ideas and connecting them to other meanings to strengthen their meanings, thus creating more relations among those ideas. This is described as taxonomizing (EC++), which occurs when an idea is presented and further supported by similar and different ideas.
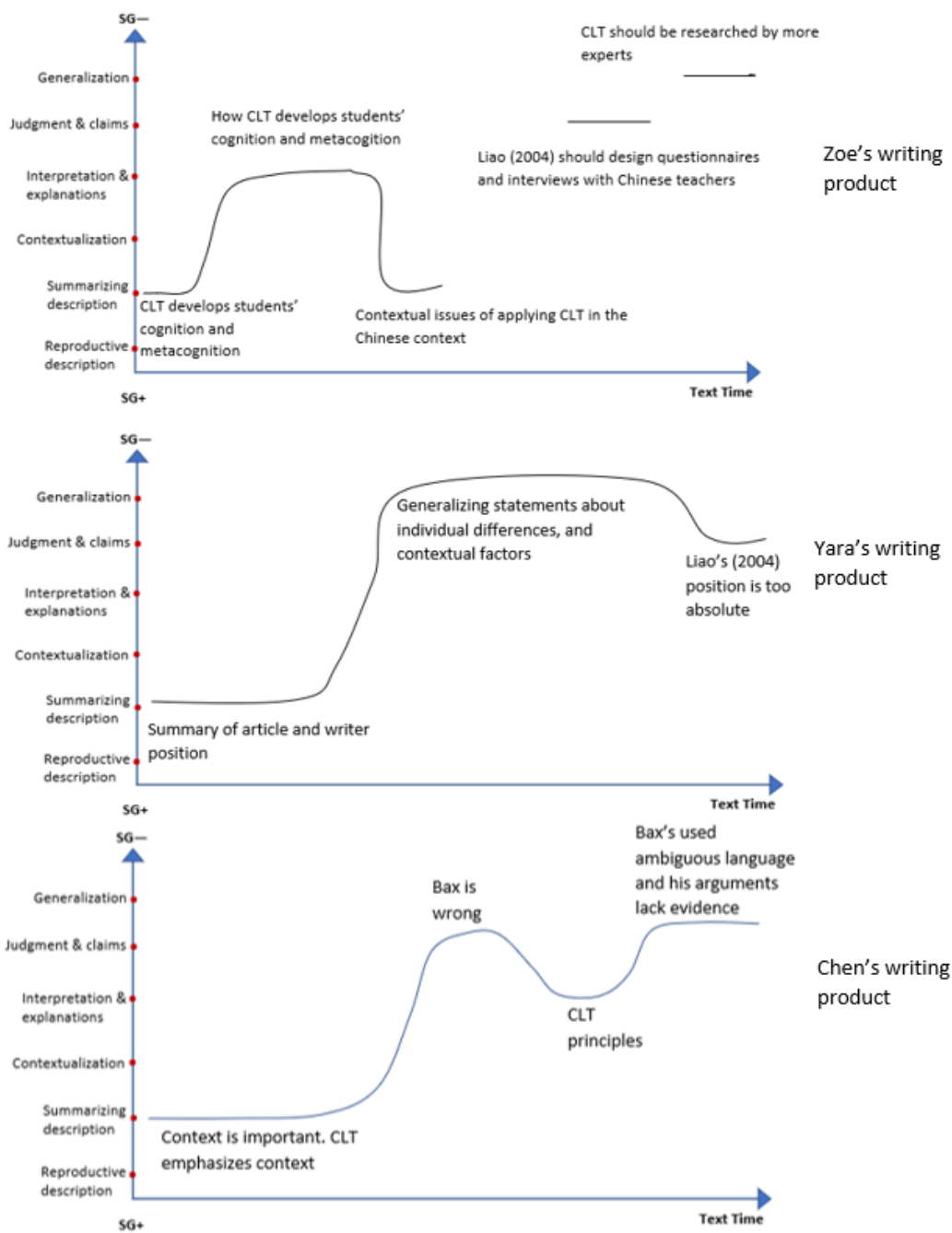
Figure 5.31   Cross-case comparison of semantic profiles of essay conclusions

5.6   Chapter Summary

Using LCT Semantics, the chapter aimed to answer the question:

> How does a high-achieving writing task use meanings in terms of context-dependence, context-independence and condensations of meanings compared to lower-achieving essays?

First, I conducted a within-case analysis to examine semantic gravity and density in each student essay. Second, I conducted a cross-case analysis to compare the findings of each case.

The analysis of students' writing products revealed that a high-achieving assignment showed the use of much weaker semantic gravity in the form of abstraction and generalisations (SG– – –) compared to lower-achieving assignments. They also showed a higher semantic range as the writing moves between theoretical concepts and teaching and learning approaches, claims and judgments (SG– –), explanations and interpretations (SG–) to more practical teaching and learning examples (SG+).

A higher-achieving essay showed better use of contextualisation than other essays or better strengthening of semantic gravity (SG↑) by demonstrating sufficient and successful attempts to contextualise the discussion of an academic article to a specific teaching and learning context. Lower achieving assignments, however, produced a less appropriate level of strengthening semantic gravity in the form of practical teaching and learning examples (SG↑) as well as less weakening of semantic gravity in the forms of interpretations and explanations (SG↓) either by making claims and judgments or introducing new concepts without enough explanations and unpacking. A high-achieving assignment had a higher semantic flow than other lower-achieving essays, as the arguments were more clearly linked. A higher-achieving essay showed more taxonomizing (EC++) or more support for the literature and characterising (EC—) or nuanced teaching and learning examples. A higher-achieving essay was also expected to coordinate (EC+) or juxtapose and compare different perspectives. Lower-achieving assignments showed lower epistemological condensation by mostly establishing (EC— —) ideas that contained fewer relations among them. They lacked sufficient taxonomizing (EC++) or sufficient support for claims, coordinating (EC+) where ideas are compared with different perspectives and characterising (EC—) where examples are nuanced and detailed to show the aspects and features that characterise them.

Why these findings are important?

The findings showed differences between high-achieving essays and low-achieving essays in terms of relative degrees of context-bound meanings and semantically dense meanings. LCT Semantics tools were successful in making these expectations more explicit.

This has important implications for teaching, learning and assessment. By making these successful or unsuccessful academic writing practices explicit, tutors and students can reflect on them, challenge them or make them clearer for teaching and learning purposes.

Since students come from different cultural backgrounds and may not have the same access to the rules of academic discourse, this may affect their academic writing performance.

This poses a social justice issue in higher education. Therefore, it is important that students are scaffolded appropriately towards the task and that successful academic writing practices in the discipline are made explicit and addressed.

LCT Semantics tools can be used by researchers and teaching practitioners to achieve social justice. These analytical tools can be used in the classrooms as teaching aids to examine high-achieving and low-achieving students' products to enhance the teaching and learning process. As Rusznyak (2021) notes, higher education should prioritize finding ways to support the academic success of students and make knowledge accessible to all. If lecturers want to support the academic success of students, they need to make explicit how knowledge is structured and built in their courses (Rusznyak, 2021).

Chapter 6   Analysis and discussion of tutor and student comments

Knower-oriented perspectives and espoused practices

6.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the driving question of this study: 'What are the disciplinary expectations of tutors and students of academic writing in MLTM?' I explore the answer to this question using the concepts of LCT Semantics.

This chapter uses a zooming-out strategy to analyse the interview themes from the three assessors' academic writing expectations. These themes are organised based on tutors' expectations under the following sub-headings: 'Assessor 1 Overall Academic Writing Expectations', 'Assessor 2 Overall Academic Writing Expectations', and 'Assessor 3 Overall Academic Writing Expectations'. In these subheadings, I report each assessor's overall academic writing expectations for the first academic writing task in the MLTM module by examining the potential underlying context dependence, context independence, and the epistemological condensation of meanings structuring the assessors' valued academic writing practices.

Using a zooming-in strategy, I also report on the interview themes that emerged from three assessors' academic writing expectations in three essays. These themes are subdivided following the chronological order of reading a student's essay: 'academic writing expectations in essay introductions, 'academic writing expectations in the middle of the essays', and 'academic writing expectations in the essay conclusions'. For brevity, I use extracts of essays to help me explain certain practices. I also report on students' perspectives for triangulation purposes.

I also present semantic profiles of the academic writing practices tutors expect to see in essays. It is not possible to envisage exactly how assessors view an excellent piece of academic writing, and their views are often flexible. Therefore, the semantic profiles presented are approximate, not exact.

At the end of these sub-headings, I conduct a cross-case analysis comparing the tutors' disciplinary academic writing expectations. A summary is provided at the end of the chapter, which describes the chapter's main findings, how they answer the research questions and why they are important.

6.2   Assessor's 1 Overall Essay Expectations

Assessor 1 main expectation for a high-achieving academic essay for task 1 in the MLTM module could be organised into three key themes: (1) showing an understanding of the article and the field, (2) contextualisation, and (3) showing a complex discussion.

The first theme referred to showing understanding of the article and the field of CLT and language teaching or learning and its various applications in the field.

> Not misrepresenting the field and not misrepresenting the article and the author's intention when they wrote it. And most fundamentally the characteristics of this module are about understanding language learning and language teaching, the communicative approach and how that has been applied differently, both in practice and in theory. [Assessor 1 interview]

Assessor 1 stressed the word 'contextualise', which he used to refer to contextualising the discussion of the article within the field of CLT and language teaching:

> I'll use the word contextualise a lot. I think they have to contextualise the discussion of the article within the field of CLT and language teaching more broadly. [Assessor 1 interview]

It is important to note that Maton's (2014) adapted translation device defines contextualisation differently. In Maton's (2014) adapted translation device (see Table 3.3), contextualisation refers to strengthening semantic gravity by the use of language teaching and learning examples and relating the discussion to more practical examples (SG↑). Assessor 1 used the same term to refer to both strengthening semantic gravity by using practical teaching and learning examples (SG↑) and strengthening complexity or epistemological condensation by creating relations among multiple meanings from the literature. Similarly, students are expected to weaken semantic gravity by bringing the discussion to the broader field of language teaching and learning and moving to a higher level of semantic gravity, such as 'generalisation'.

The third central theme that emerged from the interview of Assessor 1 is the expectation to show a complex discussion in which students do not produce a superficial answer and consider the various factors that contribute to effective or ineffective teaching.

> There isn't one way of talking about any area of language teaching. I think one of the main learning objectives of the module is that not a statement that it could possibly be true or false, because teaching doesn't work like that. It's about contextualising that article with the understanding that there are a number of factors that would make teaching effective or not effective, or practices problematic or effective within a particular context. So, a kind of having a complex discussion about teaching processes, or whatever the article is about, rather than treating it superficially. [Assessor 1 interview]

Thus, according to Assessor1, students are expected to produce a relatively semantically dense text by both coordinating (EC+) and characterising (EC—). Coordinating means

connecting multiple different meanings to create relations of differences. Characterising means creating more details around certain practices to show the various contributing factors and nuances of practices, thus increasing the complexity of practices.

When comparing Assessor 1 expectations for a good essay discussion to that of Zoe, it is noted that Zoe thought a good discussion and critique is about showing both agreement and disagreement from the literature with regards to the claims presented in the article being discussed, with an emphasis on showing disagreement from the literature:

> To discuss the article. I need to find some disagree the authors ideas or not don't disagree about this […] it means I say that the opposite side. So, I need to find something opposites idea [to the article's arguments] and then I think I will find some like similar ideas. And maybe she says that the right and some idea that it's not. I can disagree. So as to my opinion for the [critique] I think a lot of the opposite side. [Zoe's interview]

This is also reflected in how Zoe read research articles and resources for her assignment. I asked Zoe whether she thought the authors she read for her assignment mostly agreed or disagreed in their views:

> I think balance because they will not say that it's right and that it's wrong. [Zoe's interview]

Clearly, there are different expectations between Assessor 1 and the student. Assessor 1 expects a good discussion essay to show understanding of the article and the field, contextualising the discussion of the article within the field of CLT and language teaching, showing complex discussion in which students do not produce a superficial answer and take into consideration the various factors that contribute to effective or ineffective teaching. In contrast, Zoe understood a good critique to show differing perspectives and arguments from the literature, which perhaps explains her choice of discussing the article in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of CLT.

6.3   Assessor's 2 Overall Essay Expectations

Assessor 2 main expectations for a high-achieving academic essay for task 1 in the MLTM module could be organised into six key themes: (1) offering more than a superficial answer, (2) offering a balanced argument, (3) making clear links between arguments and examples, and (4) showing breadth and depth in the discussion.

The first theme refers to an expectation to move beyond the 'what' or stronger semantic gravity in the form of descriptions (SG++) to weaker semantic gravity by answering 'why' questions or providing explanations and interpretations (SG−):

> You don't offer a superficial answer, but it is important to state what is obvious and then to go behind the underlying things that causes something. So, rather than mention about the 'what'

you go straight into the 'why' and the possible reasons that would trigger something. [Assessor 2 interview]

The second theme is the importance of presenting a balanced argument and strengthening semantic gravity by situating the discussion in its context (SG↑). As revealed through interviews with all assessors, the requirement of a balanced argument is unique to Assessor 2, which suggests that one of the degrees of accuracies required in this assignment by Assessor 2 is to strike a balance between the pros or cons of a particular approach or take the middle way as suggested by (Durkin, 2008) in which arguments are not presented in a dichotomy of either/or, but rather arguments are expected to show the strengths and weaknesses of each approach taken:

> [Students] cannot just say 'Yes, this is absolutely good, and everything else pro, and all or no, this is absolutely bad, and everything else pro'. So, it also indirectly also needs to include balanced because, again, in anything, it's not right or wrong, but why would it be good in this particular context? [Assessor 2 interview]

The third theme not only refers to the expectation to contextualise the discussion by providing examples from texts and language learning and teaching situations or strengthening semantic gravity (SG↑) but also to the expectation of making meaningful connections between the arguments and the examples presented, thus ensuring that high semantic flow is created within the academic text. However, as will be discussed later, this high semantic flow appears to be a requirement at the micro level of essay arguments and not the macro levels of essay arguments for assessor 2:

> It also helps if students can clearly or explicitly make links from certain factors that would inform the answer. So anytime that they were a little bit more explicit, or they make that links really clear, or they supported their arguments with logical examples from the text and from situations. [Assessor 2 interview]

The fourth theme pertains to showing breadth and depth in the academic discussion:

> So, if students are able to discuss from a broad spectrum like would possibly look at from a materials point of view, from engagement, and possibly to look into interaction, so you have like three different domains, so that would be good. It would be considered highly one sided if students just talk about interaction throughout. But again, if they talk about interaction, and they're able to move on and talk about interaction between teacher with students and then among students and how the interaction may be informed by materials or the source or the handouts. You see the discussion being extended. So, to put it simply breadth and depth in a discussion. [Assessor 2 interview]

Tutor 3 offered an example to explain breadth and depth. She explained breadth as in discussing a topic from three points of view 'materials', 'engagement', and 'interaction'. Depth, according to Tutor 3, means selecting one point of view and then discussing it in more details. For example, discussing 'interaction' by looking at interaction between teacher and students and then among students. In LCT terms, this is described as epistemological condensation in the form of taxonomising (EC++) by bringing different themes to create part-

whole relations where 'materials', engagement' and 'interaction' are parts of a bigger theme. Then within each theme, Tutor 3 expected students to characterise (EC—). Characterising is another form of epistemological condensation where more meanings are created within a specific theme to show the internal complexity of it such as by characterising 'interaction' into interaction between teachers and students and then among students.

Regarding the overall expectations of a good essay discussion or critique, tutor 2 seems to have different understandings of a good essay discussion or critique from the student. Tutor 2, on the one hand, viewed a good critique of the article as a piece of writing which includes several elements such as (1) offering more than a superficial answer, (2) offering a balanced argument, (3) making explicit links between arguments and examples, and (4) showing breadth and depth in the discussion. The student, on the other hand, viewed a good critique in a less sophisticated manner by limiting it to showing agreement and disagreement with the author's claims and offering evidence for both sides of the argument:

> Critique for me is just like you might partly agree with that the authors about some views in the article, but you could also have a disagreement with him. But you have to give the evidence to support your own idea. [Yara's interview]

6.4   Assessor's 3 Overall Essay Expectations

Assessor 3 main expectations for a high-achieving academic essay for task 1 in the MLTM module could be organised into four key themes: (1) showing an original or personal voice, (2) criticality, (3) the ability to engage with the subject from different perspectives and (4) taking a position towards those perspectives, which are expected to be nuanced in various degrees.

> [...] the ability to engage with the subject and view different aspects of the subject from different perspectives, different sources, etc. and take a position towards those. [...] And that position can be nuanced to various degrees. But I want to feel that they are weighing up the ideas and presenting those ideas to me. [Assessor 3]

Tutor 3 expects students to do two things. First, he expects students to view the subject from different aspects or perspectives. This perhaps means achieving a higher epistemological condensation by coordinating (EC+). Coordinating occurs when different meanings are connected to show relations of differences. Second, he expects students to be positioned towards those perspectives and aspects. This position can be characterised (EC—) by adding more nuanced meanings to it to show the complexity of ideas. The position is an abstract claim or value judgment. This refers to weakening semantic gravity (SG↓).

When asked about his expectations for a high-achieving academic essay for the MLTM module specifically, Assessor 3 stated that he looks for a well-developed argument and original or personal view:

> We are we're looking for a high level of developed argument which could to publication, so we're looking for some kind of original or at least personal view. [..] A well-structured personal view, based on the article in this case and the views of others. [Assessor 3 interview]

When students develop an original argument or at least a personal view, they make claims and value judgments. These meanings are more abstract and are weaker in semantic gravity (SG↓). When asked the same question, the student Chen, whose assignment was marked by Assessor 3, noted that she was not sure whether she could express an opinion in her assignment:

> We have the teacher give us like seven to eight papers. And we choose one of them, read it and judge it. I am not sure give our own opinion and show some evidence. Talk about some limitations or something like critical thinking. [Chen's interview]

The assignment requires students to show judgements (SG– –), which are based on evidence and differ from an opinion, suggesting that a distinction between the two may need to be explained to students. It also indicates that certain requirements, such as making judgments, informed opinions, and providing supported evidence, may not be clear to her.

It was noted during the interview that Assessor 3 examines students' products based not only on the content but also on stylistic and writing formalities such as structure and use of language. Even though LCT Semantics provides a lens that examines the meaning units of the essays, it is essential to note that content and meaning units are not the only criteria by which tutors assess students' work and that other markers such as structure, writing style, and use of language do influence the students' overall mark.

> Structure is another word that I'd like to discuss about this […] We pay attention to the structure or the use of the language or accuracy [Assessor 3]

6.5   Tutors' Overall Expectations: Cross-Case Analysis

A cross-case analysis between the tutors and their overall academic writing expectations for writing task 1 for the MLTM module shows some similarities and differences among the tutors' academic writing expectations.

Research shows that tutors differ in their expectations of successful academic writing and that they use vague and generic descriptions of students' writing or refer to surface features of writing (Lea and Street, 1998), the question that remains is how their expectations differ in relation to abstraction, concreteness and complexity. When it comes to using abstraction or weakening semantic gravity, all tutors expect to show a level of abstraction in their writing. However, they

differ in their understanding of abstraction. Tutor 1 expects students to show abstraction by bringing the discussion of an academic paper to the broader field of language teaching and learning. Tutor 2 expects students to show abstraction by moving beyond the 'what' or stronger semantic gravity in the form of descriptions (SG++) to weaker semantic gravity by answering 'why' questions or providing explanations and interpretations (SG–). Tutor 3 expects a good essay discussion to show abstraction by producing judgments (SG– –), developing an original argument or at least a personal view, and taking a position towards the article being critiqued and the various perspectives from the literature.

In terms of strengthening semantic gravity, the assignment calls for strengthening semantic gravity (SG↑) by using practical teaching and learning examples and referring to specific teaching and learning contexts. However, interviews with tutors showed that only tutors 1 and 2 stressed the importance of strengthening semantic gravity by using practical teaching and learning examples (SG↑). Tutor 3 did not seem to emphasise the importance of contextualising the discussion using practical teaching and learning examples.

Complexity and connecting concepts and contexts between different sources appear to be expected by all tutors. All tutors seem to have similar understandings of complexity and different forms of epistemological condensation. Tutor 1 expects a complex discussion by characterising (EC—) in which students do not produce a superficial answer and consider the various factors that contribute to effective or ineffective teaching, as well as taxonomising (EC++) by referencing the CLT literature and language teaching more broadly. Tutor 2 also expects breadth and depth of discussion by taxonomising (EC++) and characterising (EC—). Tutor 3 also expects coordinating (EC+) by engaging with the subject from different perspectives and characterising (EC—) by taking a position towards those perspectives which must be nuanced in various ways. These expectations are analysed as strengthening epistemological condensation (EC) or producing writing that is complex.

It was noted that sometimes tutors use the exact phrases to mean different things. For example, Tutor 1 and Tutor 2 require a discussion in which students do not produce a 'superficial answer'. For Tutor 1, this meant strengthening epistemological condensation by characterising (EC—) by offering a complex discussion in which students consider the factors contributing to effective or ineffective teaching. Tutor 2 used the exact phrase to refer to an expectation to move beyond the 'what' or stronger semantic gravity in the form of descriptions (SG++) to weaker semantic gravity by answering 'why' questions or providing explanations and interpretations (SG–).

Certain expectations seem to be emphasised by some tutors only. Tutor 1 stressed the importance of showing an understanding of the article and the field. As for Tutor 2, one

expectation appears to be unique to her, which is presenting a balanced argument by referring to the pros or cons of a particular approach. What is unique to Tutor 3 is that he expects a good essay discussion to show an original or personal voice. Thus, semantic gravity is weakened by developing an original argument or at least a personal view (SG↓).

By mapping tutors' expectations as semantic profiles (see Figure 6.1), we find that Tutor 1 expectations mostly sit between the strengthening of semantic gravity through contextualisation (SG↑) and the weakening of semantic gravity through showing understanding and engaging with the broader field of language teaching and learning (SG↓). Tutor 2 expectations mostly sit between providing explanations and why answers (SG—), and contextualisation (SG+). Tutor 3 expectations are mostly abstract in the form of criticality, showing voice, and engagement with different perspectives (SG—). This influences the semantic range of each tutor's expectations. Semantic Range is the highest and lowest points traced by semantic gravity on a semantic profile. These are important as they help us understand the educational requirements in particular tasks and disciplines, and some tutors may require a certain semantic threshold to be reached (Maton, 2013). By examining the diagram below shows that both Tutors 1 and 2 expect a higher semantic range than Tutor 3 since both emphasise the use of practical teaching and learning examples and the contextualisation of the discussion throughout. Tutor 3 mainly focuses on engagement with various perspectives and showing a nuanced position.
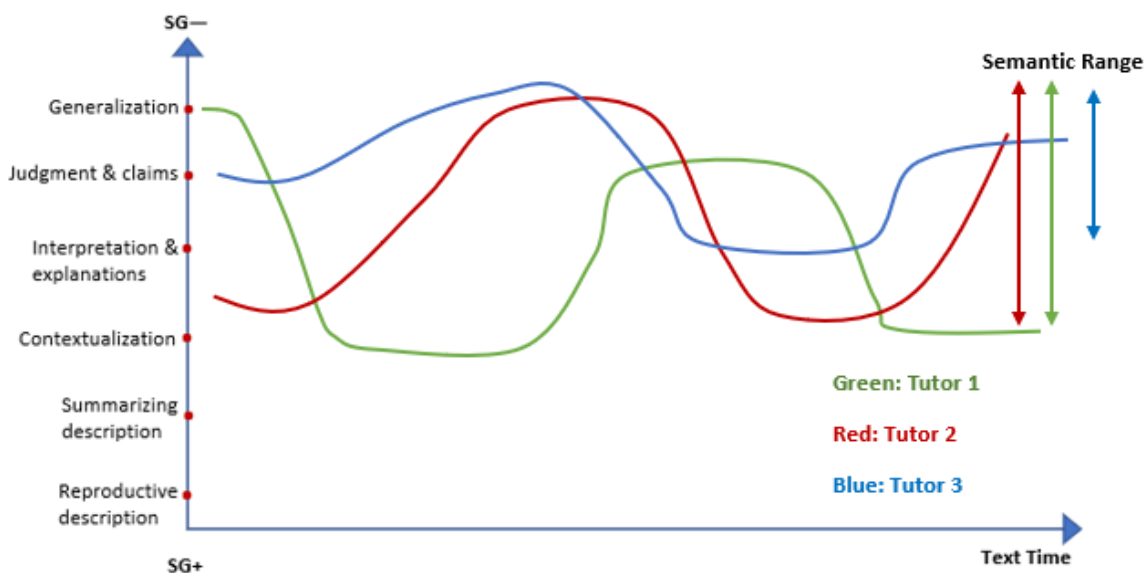
Figure 6.1   Cross-comparison of tutors' semantic profiles and semantic range of overall essay
            expectations

Regarding the overall expectations of a good essay discussion or a good critique, tutors seem to have different understandings of a good essay discussion or critique from the students. Students:

Zoe, Yara and Chen appear to have a less complex definition of a good critique. The findings below suggest that, despite extensive assessment support and guidelines, students may still have a different or limited understanding of the task requirements.

Tutor 1, on the one hand, expects a good discussion essay to show understanding of the article and the field, contextualising the discussion of the article within the field of CLT and language teaching, showing complex discussion in which students do not produce a superficial answer and take into consideration the various factors that contribute to effective or ineffective teaching. On the other hand, Zoe understood a good critique to show differing perspectives and arguments from the literature.

Tutor 2, on the one hand, viewed a good critique of the article as a piece of writing which includes several elements such as (1) offering more than a superficial answer, (2) offering a balanced argument, (3) making explicit links between arguments and examples, and (4) showing breadth and depth in the discussion. On the other hand, Yara viewed a good critique in a less sophisticated manner by limiting it, showing agreement and disagreement with the author's claims and offering evidence for both sides of the argument.

Tutor 3, on the one hand, required a good academic discussion essay to show a well-developed argument and original or personal view. On the other hand, the student showed uncertainty about whether she could express an opinion in the academic essay, showing that specific requirements such as making judgments and informed opinions may not be clear to her.

Additionally, essay marks are not only affected by how to use meanings in terms of their context dependence and context-independence (SG) or epistemological condensation of meanings (EC) but also by the rigour of their academic writing skills. Tutors expect correct use of academic writing formalities such as paraphrasing, citation, structure, and academic language.

These differences in tutors' and students' expectations and students' writing challenges are echoed in the literature. Students have linguistic difficulties with academic writing (Al-Zubaidi, 2012) and the differences between their expectations and those of their tutors could be attributed to cultural differences, previous educational background and students' difficulties with translating declarative knowledge such as 'critically evaluating texts' into actual practice (Tang, 2013).

6.6   Academic Writing Expectations in the Essay Introductions

In this section, I analyse all tutors' writing expectations in the marked essay introductions for writing task 1 in the MLTM module and the students' writing products. I first analysed Assessor 1

and Zoe's essay introduction, followed by Assessor 2 and Yara's introduction, and I finished with Assessor 3 and Chen's essay. At the end of each tutor's analysis, I provide a summary of the semantic requirements for the tutor's expectations using Maton's 7Gs 'going in', 'going down', 'going along', 'going up', 'gamut', 'get it right' and 'going out'. At the end of each essay introduction analysis, I conduct a cross-case analysis of tutors' perspectives.

6.6.1   Assessor 1: Essay Introduction Expectations

When Assessor 1 was asked about his expectations for a good essay introduction, he remarked that a good essay introduction shows several elements: (1) introduce key ideas about the article being critiqued (SG++), (2) suggest how to and why to discuss those ideas (SG−), and signpost. Assessor 1 remarked:

> I would expect them to introduce the key ideas that they're going to draw on. What it is in the article that's worthy of focus. I'd like them to suggest how they're discussing it. So, what in the article, for example, presents a very strong idea that's going to be discussed below, or what presents an area where it should be scrutinised further or juxtaposed with other ideas. And basically, what will follow. [Assessor 1 interview]

This extract refers to Assessor 1 expectations for the essay introduction to describe or summarise key points in the article or start with stronger semantic gravity (SG++). This needs to be followed by the student's position towards the article or making a claim and a judgment (SG− −), which is expected to be further explained by answering why or how questions or further weakening semantic gravity (SG↓). Assessor 1 remarked:

> I'm more concerned about the purpose, how are they looking at this what they are writing about and why are they writing about it like that. But what they need to do is they need to show what they're looking at, how they're looking at it, and why they're doing that. [Assessor 1 interview]

In the essay introduction, Assessor 1 commented that Zoe does present a clear and evaluative position (see Zoe's Essay Introduction). Below is Zoe's position and Assessor 1 comment:

> (5) As a matter of fact, CLT is not only benefit to English teaching and learning, but also it is conducive to the development of student's cognition and metacognition because of paying more attention to the needs of students as well as its features of learner autonomy and integrated skills. (6) However, to some extent, the issues with contextual influence in Chinese English classes are due to large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction. [Zoe's writing extract]

> I think this one has a clear position. If we compare it, for example, lacking a position would be describing the abstract of the article and not saying anything more. I think this student has a purpose; they have a clear intention. I can see what their opinion is. I think one positive of this is the student does have a clear position and an evaluative position on the article. [Assessor 1 interview]

According to Assessor 1, the student provided a clear and evaluative position, but he thought she could have improved her essay introduction by making points clear and linked. Below is sentence 6 from Zoe's introduction and Assessor 1 comment:

(6) However, to some extent, the issues with contextual influence in Chinese English classes are due to large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction. [Zoe's writing extract]

This last sentence is not really making a point but adding some factors. When introducing such ideas, try to make the point you are making clear and linked to the other ideas. Apart from that, it is a mostly clear and focused introduction. [Assessor 1 in-text feedback]

This comment suggests that Tutor 1 viewed Zoe's introduction as lacking semantic flow due to presenting poorly connected ideas. This break in the semantic flow is presented in the figure below.
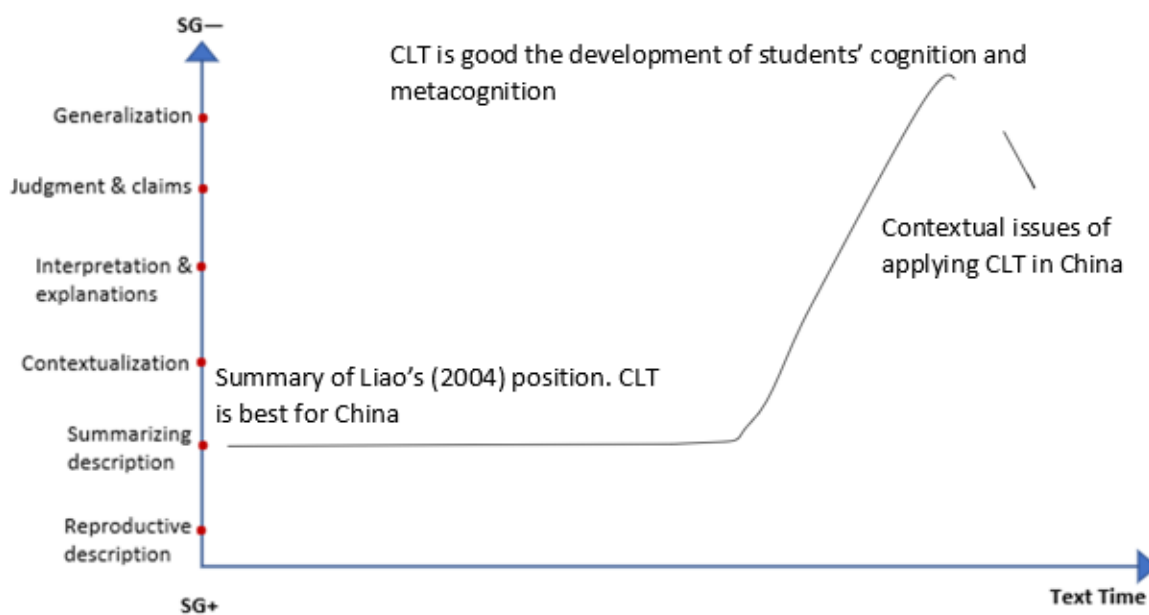
Figure 5.5   Semantic profile of Zoe's essay introduction

When I asked Assessor 1 about ways to improve Zoe's essay introduction, he commented that the introduction is clear and evaluative. However, it is still considered superficial and lacks a conceptual focus:

I think it lacks a conceptual focus. I think this one takes quite a superficial view of CLT. If you summarise the article, you could do so with this idea that CLT is a set of methods that China could just employ in a national education system without further discussion, and I think the student has accepted that and just moved with this idea that CLT is one thing, and there's a slight lack of discussion about why people might disagree. [Assessor 1 interview]

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When I probed Assessor 1 about what he meant by conceptual focus, he appointed that the student used a superficial approach to the assignment, which discussed an issue in terms of advantages and disadvantages:

> I think the advantages versus disadvantages approach is something it's an inheritance of IELTS. We've got this, this author claiming CLT is good for China. So, I'm going to look at the disadvantages of it and the advantages of it. And that's not actually the task. A teacher, who's experienced and has an understanding of a context, wouldn't go in and think, advantages, disadvantages. [Assessor 1 interview]

Assessor 1 wanted the student to answer 'why' questions and bring more nuance and complexity to the discussion:

> Why might a communicative approach work? Why might it not? Why might it not work? I think this student is not really discussing the why and what CLT is because in order to answer why CLT might work in China, you have to have a real understanding of CLT. [...] they communicate CLT is quite a superficial like it's one thing that can just be dropped in a country and it will work if the circumstances are okay. The discussion is kind of like, basically, here are the difficulties for CLT. Here are how this could be solved, which is okay. It's a position, but it's not really getting to the discussion of what is CLT? What are the constraints on CLT? It can't really be simplified to that. Good, bad. [Assessor 1 interview]

It is notable that Assessor 1, like Assessor 2, as will be shown in the following sections, views the student's position as showing the purpose of the essay by making a claim towards the article's argument, by showing what is being examined and how and why it is being examined. Investigation and Juxtaposition with other research perspectives are expected to be shown in the essay introduction; thus, the essay introduction is expected to be relatively higher in epistemological condensation by coordinating (EC+), defined here as connecting ideas and concepts by showing relations of differences. Moreover, Tutor 1 expects students to characterise (EC—) concepts and practices by adding more meanings within to show nuance around CLT and its applications. See Figure 6.2 below for a comparison of the epistemological condensations enacted in Zoe's essay and Tutor 1 expectations.
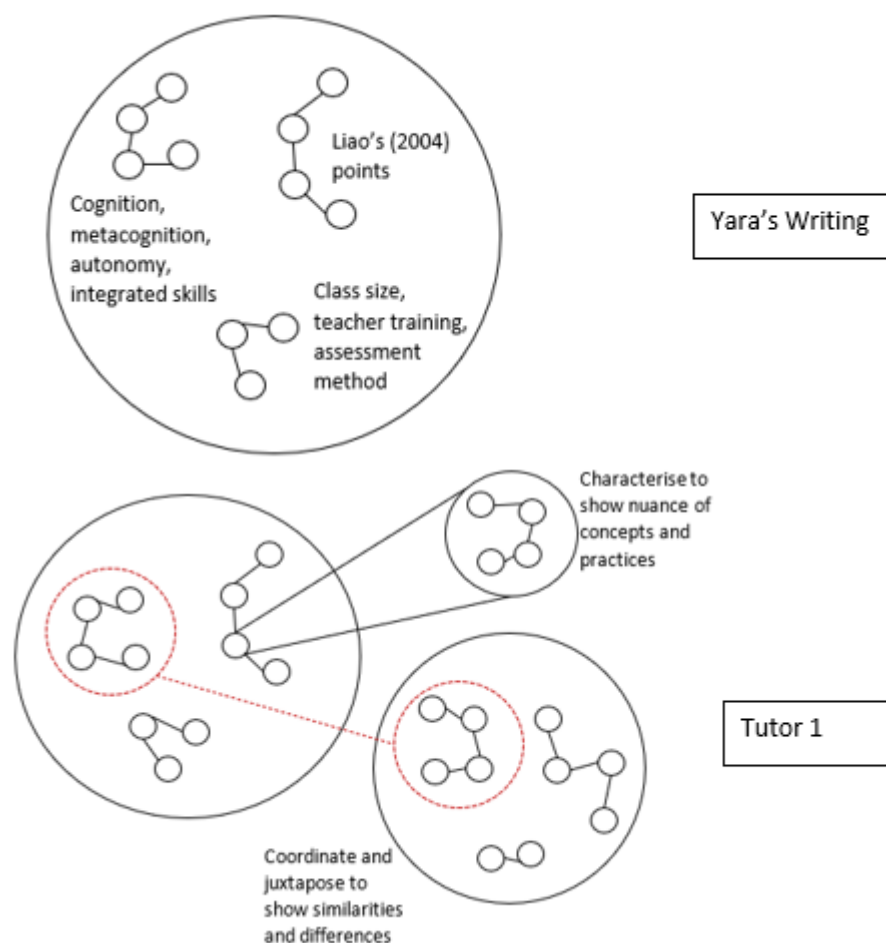
Figure 6.2   Comparison of Zoe's enactment of epistemological condensation and Tutor's 1 expectations

In addition, Assessor 1 expects the student to explain and interpret concepts when used or to weaken semantic gravity by providing explanations and interpretations. The tutor expects students to reduce the complexity of semantically dense concepts by explaining them. When Zoe mentioned the 'contextual approach' in her essay introduction without further explanations, Assessor 1 commented:

> If you are going to discuss this, you should briefly say what it is. [Assessor 1 in-text feedback]

To summarise, based on an interview with Assessor 1 as well as in-text feedback, the tutor's requirements for producing a good essay introduction include going in low at the semantic scale by providing a description of the article being critiqued or strengthening semantic gravity (SG↑) followed by going in high at the semantic scale by taking a conceptually focused position or weakening semantic gravity by producing judgments and claims (SG↓) and strengthening semantic density by showing nuanced understanding of concepts and contexts (SD↑)and investigating and juxtaposing various research perspectives. Assessor 1 also requires concepts to

be explained when introduced or further weakening of semantic gravity (SG↓) and also 'going along' to show coherence or semantic flow.

The following figure shows an approximate semantic profile of what Assessor 1 expects to see in the essay introduction for this writing task.

Figure 6.3   Semantic profile of Assessor's 1 expectations of the essay introduction

6.6.2   Assessor 2: Essay Introduction Expectations

When Assessor 2 was asked about her expectations for a good essay introduction, she remarked that a good essay introduction offers a brief overview of the article being critiqued and a clear position towards the article discussed:

> I expect the introduction to give me a brief overview, and to have the position so the position is very clear. [Assessor 2 interview]

This refers to a combination of a summary of the reviewed article (SG++), a writer's position or a value judgment (SG− −) and an interpretation or explanation of that position (SG−). That is a movement from more context-bound meanings, as in summaries, to less context-bound meanings, as in a position or claims and explanations.

When I asked Assessor 2 to evaluate Yara's essay introduction (see Table 5.5), assessor 2 explained that Yara satisfied the requirements of an essay introduction (see Yara's Essay Introduction). Assessor 2 referred specifically to sentences 5 and 6 below as the student's position and showed her approval of the two sentences. Below are sentences 5 and 6 and Assessor 2 comment:

(5) Although, there is no denying that CLT would bring in benefits in some aspects, there are still some issues which make Liao's statement debatable. (6) My paper will argue that Liao's position regarding 'CLT is best for China' is not realistic, given that could be problematic when it comes to the assessment criteria and individual differences among students. [Yara's writing extract]

Now, I clearly stated that there is a very good and clear position. And I thought that the introduction was good. It's served its purpose because I expect introduction to give me a brief overview, and to have the position so the position is very clear. [Assessor 2 interview]

Assessor 2 notes Yara's position, as shown in sentences 5 and 6 above, suits a master level since the student critiqued Liao's argument based on how realistic and feasible it is regarding classroom practices. However, Assessor 2 referred to an expectation to speculate the author's intention for making such a strong position:

Possibly the student might not have gotten more than 70 because a very strong paper would then start to question and speculate why any academic paper would claim and use very strong absolutist system [such as] CLT is best for China. There is a reason, and if that student had continued on further, that would definitely be a distinction level […] We speculate that it is because this is written for policymakers in China, therefore, they need very clear and grand sounding terms. [Assessor 2 interview]

Although the student's position critiqued Liao's position in terms of how feasible and realistic it can be in a classroom environment makes her essay introduction very good according to Assessor 2, speculating the author's intention for taking an extreme position would have allowed her to score higher. This suggests that for Assessor 2, weakening semantic gravity by making further speculations and claims (SG↓) is required for an excellent essay introduction.

Also, Assessor 2 does not require an essay introduction to be highly semantically dense by creating a dense discussion around certain concepts or ideas. Assessor 2 expects an essay introduction that is relatively lower in epistemological condensation compared to Assessor 1 and 3 by simply establishing (EC— —) a description of the article's claims and taking a clear position or judgment towards it. When students establish (EC— —) meanings, they add meanings. However, the relations among those meanings are few and limited; thus, remaining relatively lower in epistemological condensation.

Conversely, the student thought higher epistemological condensation was required to improve her essay introduction and overall essay. This suggests a code clash between the student and the assessor. When referring to ways to improve her essay introduction, Yara explained that coordinating (EC+) or using various similar and different meanings from the literature would improve her writing:

The most readings the more readings and see what other people say about this. [Yara's interview]

To summarise, based on an interview with Tutor 2 as well as in-text feedback, the tutor's requirements for producing a good essay introduction include going in low at the semantic scale by describing the reviewed text or strengthening semantic gravity (SG↑) followed by going back up to take a clear position or weakening semantic gravity by producing judgments and claims (SG↓), which relate to the classroom culture. Higher epistemological condensation by taxonomizing (EC++) or providing support or multiple meanings to build a specific idea and coordinating (EC+) or discussing different perspectives on the issues is not a requirement in the essay introduction for Assessor 2. However, Assessor 2 values students' attempt to speculate the author's intention in writing the article, which refers to the further weakening of semantic gravity by making claims (SG↓). The following semantic profile shows what Assessor 2 could imagine as a good essay introduction.
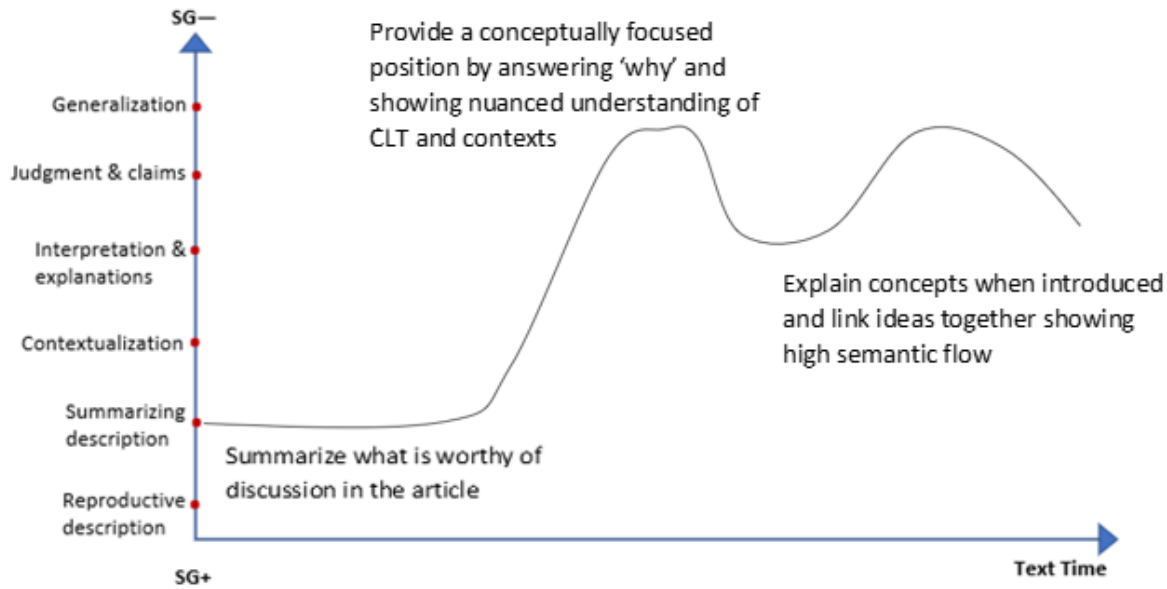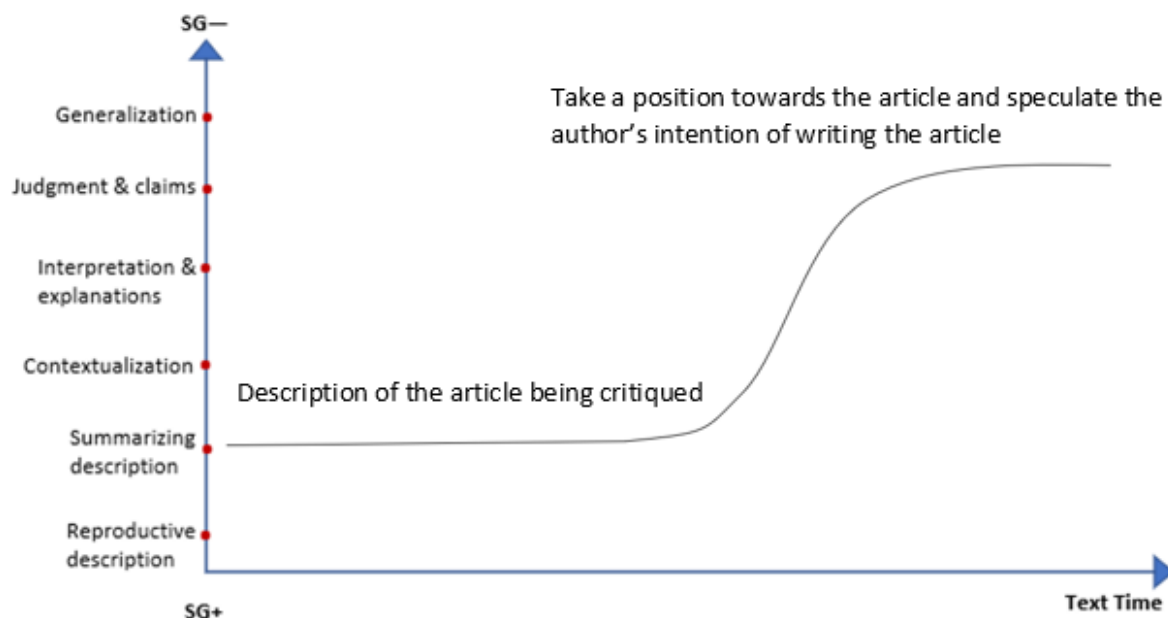

Figure 6.4   Semantic profile of Assessor's 2 expectations of the essay introduction

6.6.3   Assessor 3: Essay Introduction Expectations

Assessor 3 expects an essay introduction that shows an overview of the discussion and states the position that the student will take:

> I would like to see an overview and a clear idea of the direction that the assignment is going to take. So, setting out a pathway of what is going to be covered. And the position that will be taken. [Assessor 3 interview]

Tutor 3 expects students to start with an overview or summary of the article and the position that the student is taking. As the student sets out the pathway of the discussion, the student will need to provide claims and explanations. This means the student is expected to produce summaries, claims and value judgments (SG−−), and interpretation and explanations of

those claims (SG–). That is, a movement between more context-bound meanings to less context-bound meanings or a movement between stronger semantic gravity and weaker semantic gravity.

When I asked Assessor 3 to evaluate Chen's essay introduction (see Chen's Essay Introduction), he commented that it did not satisfy the requirements of an essay introduction. Assessor 3 explained:

> It's an attempt, but it I wouldn't say it's wholly satisfactory. No. And it's lacking. It doesn't really position the argument in an academic background. I mean other sources could have been mentioned here to relate it in a sense. It was a bit simplistic [...] I would like to see it more clearly positioned in its field. [Assessor 3 interview]

This shows that Assessor 3, like Tutor 1, expect an introduction higher in epistemological condensation by coordinating (EC+) or the use of multiple meanings to create similar or different relationships with the position being argued.

Assessor 3 also criticised Chen's position as simplistic and descriptive and lacked another reaction to it:

> I think it's too descriptive in a sense. I would like to hear the student's reaction to what they've said as well [...] this is what Bax is saying. I kind of have this idea of 'Yeah, and what do you think about that?' It needs another reaction to it. [Assessor 3 interview]

When students react to an argument, they make claims and value judgments about it and explain those claims. They weaken semantic gravity (SG↓). When probed further, Assessor 3 explained that a student's position needs to be explained using other sources or explanations of how ideas will be dealt with or approached.

> Some of the ideas are kind of taken for granted. I think that around context approach, or to give it some background. We get this background about Bax's. But this is a very highly debated area that we're dealing with, and I just didn't think that it was positioned well enough. This student is saying their idea of what Bax's is saying, but I would like to hear at this point, what issues there are around that. Okay, it moves on to that in some of the coming paragraphs, but the question was, what do I expect in an introduction, I would expect a clearer explanation of the position. [Assessor 3 interview]

Assessor 3 seem to require higher epistemological condensation in the essay introduction by not only explaining concepts but also coordinating (EC+) or connecting meanings by creating a discussion from multiple sources to show different perspectives around highly debated concepts. Assessor 3 tried to communicate this expectation for coordinating (EC+) through in-text feedback:

> At points, your argument could have been strengthened by further reference to the literature and the early part of the essay could have been improved with more criticality. You could have created a discussion around certain points such as Fetzer's view of context. By including different perspectives from the literature, you would have been able to create a more powerful voice. [Assessor's 3 in-text feedback]

However, the student Chen reported that this feedback regarding her essay introduction and the early part of her essay writing surprised her. She did not know that she was required to produce an essay introduction which situates the argument in the field of CLT and language teaching and learning by showing different perspectives from the literature. This suggests that the student was not aware of the level of semantic gravity and epistemological condensation required by Assessor 3 in the essay introduction and early part of the essay and, therefore, was not able to achieve this requirement.

> **Chen:** This sentence surprised me.
>
> **Researcher:** You mean this sentence, which said you could have strengthened by further reference to the literature […] and by including different perspectives.
>
> **Chen:** Yeah, and in the early part of the essay.

To summarise, Assessor 3 expects an essay introduction that remains relatively weaker in semantic gravity by situating the argument in the field of CLT and providing more information on the academic debate in the field. Interviews showed that Assessor 3 mainly stressed the expectation to make judgments and produce more explanations and interpretations in the essay introduction (abstractions at the level of SG— and SG— —). In other words, Assessor 3 expects students to go in high on the semantic scale, which creates a semantic wave that is relatively weaker in semantic gravity (see Figure 6.5). Assessor 3 also expects arguments to build on each other and create a theme running through. This is referred to as a high semantic flow, where ideas flow smoothly.
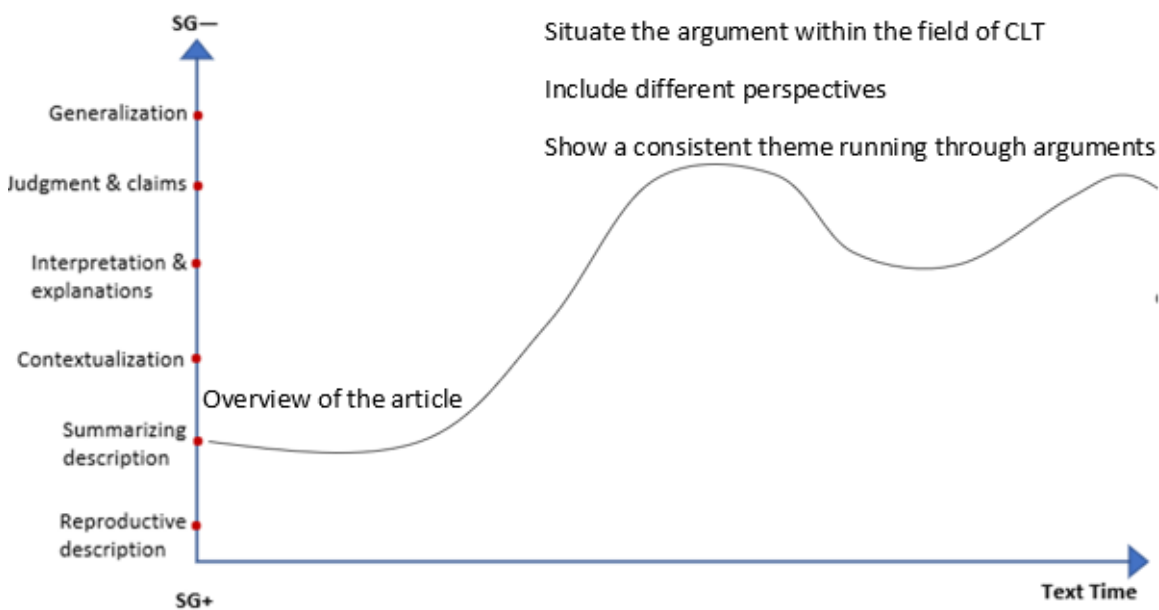
Figure 6.5   Semantic profile of Assessor's 3 expectations of the essay introduction

In terms of epistemological condensation, the student established a lot of points in the essay introductions which contained few relations among them. The tutor expected more relations among ideas by coordinating (EC+) and connecting ideas from the literature to show the differences between them. See Figure 6.6 below which presents a visualization of the complexity in Chen's essay introduction versus the Tutor's 3 expectations of complexity.
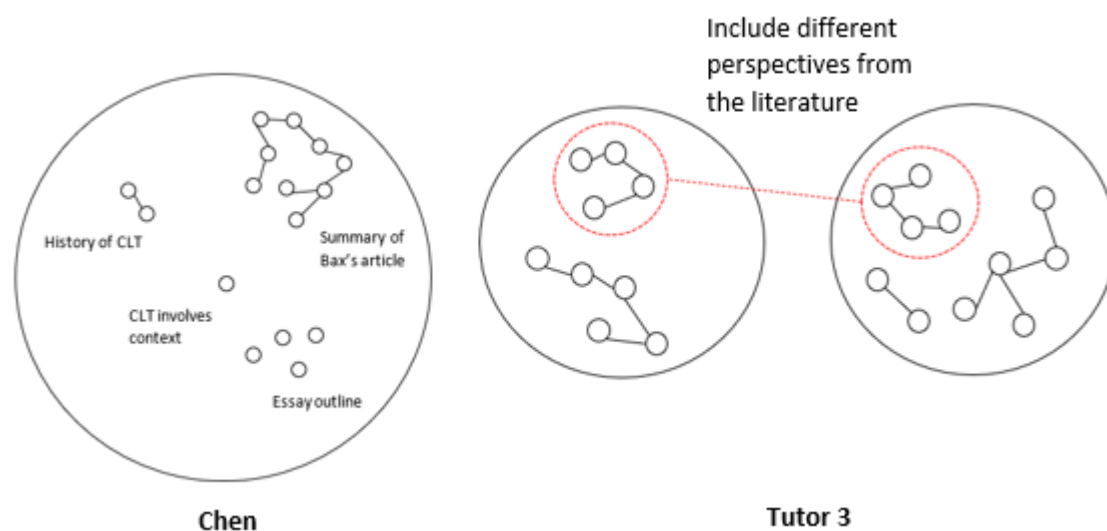
Figure 6.6   Comparison of Chen's enactment of epistemological condensation and Tutor's 3 expectations

6.6.4   Cross-case analysis

In this section, I carry out a cross-case comparison of tutors' academic writing expectations of the essay introduction.

Even though all three essays showed similar use of context-dependence, context-independence, and epistemological condensation of meanings with movement from stronger semantic gravity to weaker semantic gravity or vice versa and use of lower epistemological condensation, the three essay introductions were valued and marked differently by the three tutors. International students come from different backgrounds, and they are not socialised in UK HE education, which means they may not know the discourses, practices and procedures of UK HE and may not know the standards expected of them (Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2021). Therefore, it is important for educators who know the valued academic practices best to make them explicit. This is an important social justice issue in HE (Wilmot, 2017).

The tutors seemed to agree that essay introductions need to have some description of the reviewed article or stronger semantic gravity (SG++) followed by value judgements and

explanations or weaker semantic gravity. They also agreed on the importance of coherence or a high semantic flow.

Still, they differed in how semantic gravity needs to be weakened. For instance, Tutor 2 was the only tutor who expected students to weaken semantic gravity by (SG– –) speculating on the author's intention for writing the article. Tutors 1 and 3 expect a weakening of semantic gravity in student writing by introducing new concepts and ideas and providing explanations and interpretations for those new concepts or ideas (SG↓). This expectation was not shared by Tutor 2. The tutors' expectations were presented in semantic profiles, which envisage the academic writing practices that tutors expect to see in an essay introduction (see Figure 6.7).
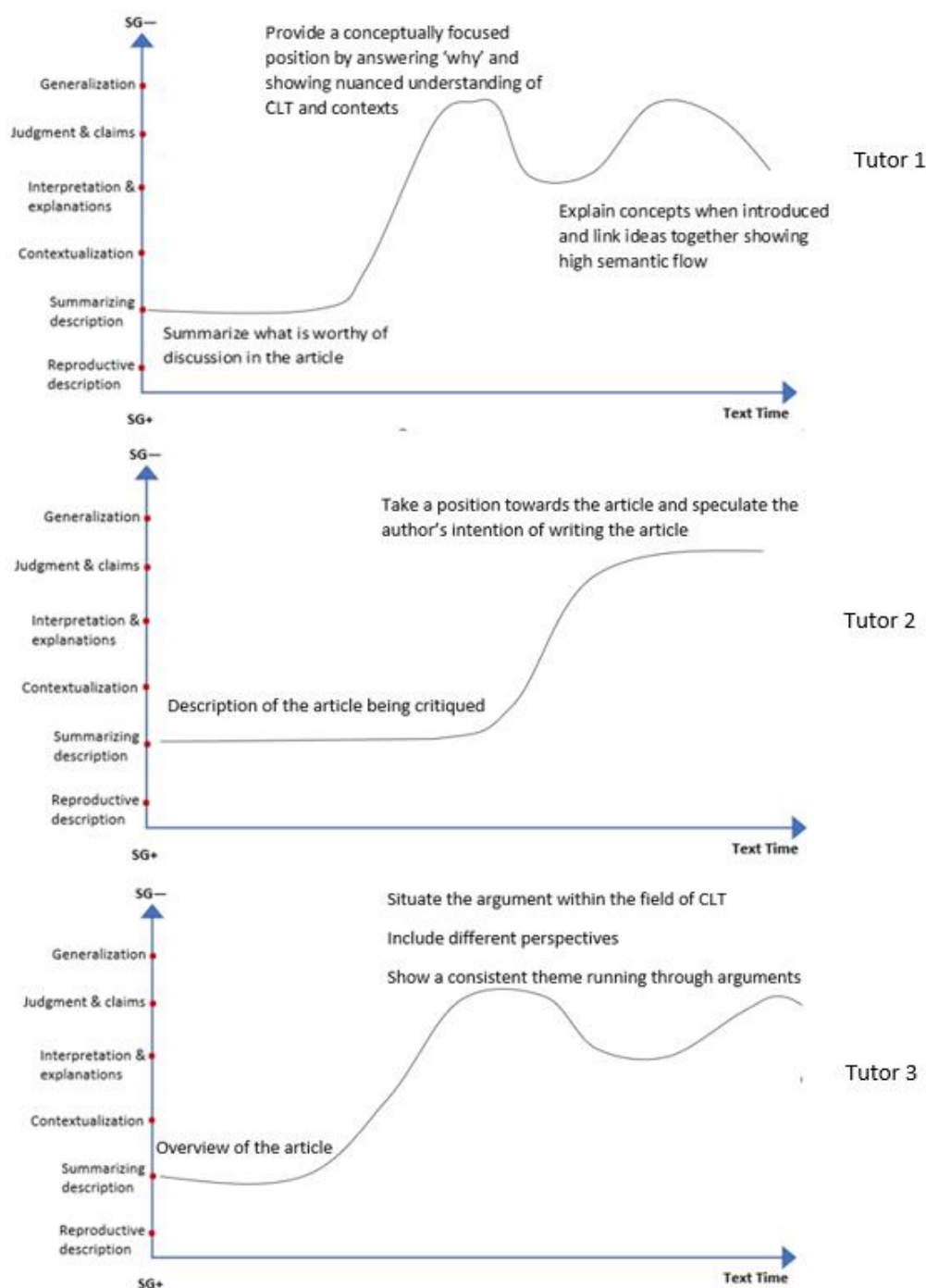
Figure 6.7   Cross-case comparison of semantic profiles of tutors' academic writing expectations in the essay introductions

Tutors also differed in the degree and types of epistemological condensation required. Tutor 1 expects two forms of epistemological condensations. First, he expects coordinating (EC+) which refers to connecting ideas and concepts by expressing similarities and differences with other ideas and concepts from the literature. Second, Tutor 1 expects characterising (EC—) in which students add meanings within concepts and practices such as discussing the various factors and nuances of a specific teaching and learning context and practice, which add to its complexity.

Tutor 3 expects one type of higher epistemological condensation which is coordinating (EC+) in which students situate the arguments in the article within the field of CLT to show different perspectives.

Unlike Tutors 1 and 3, Tutor 2 does not require an essay introduction to show higher epistemological condensation. Assessor 2 expects an essay introduction that is relatively lower in epistemological condensation by simply establishing (EC— —) a description of the article's claims and a clear and simple position or judgment towards it and going into more detail and analysis later in the essay. In establishing (EC— —), students add meanings between ideas but relatively lower than taxonomizing, coordinating, and characterising, thus, the essay introduction remains relatively lower in epistemological condensation. Figure 6.8 below is a comparison of tutors' expectations of epistemological condensation in essay introductions.
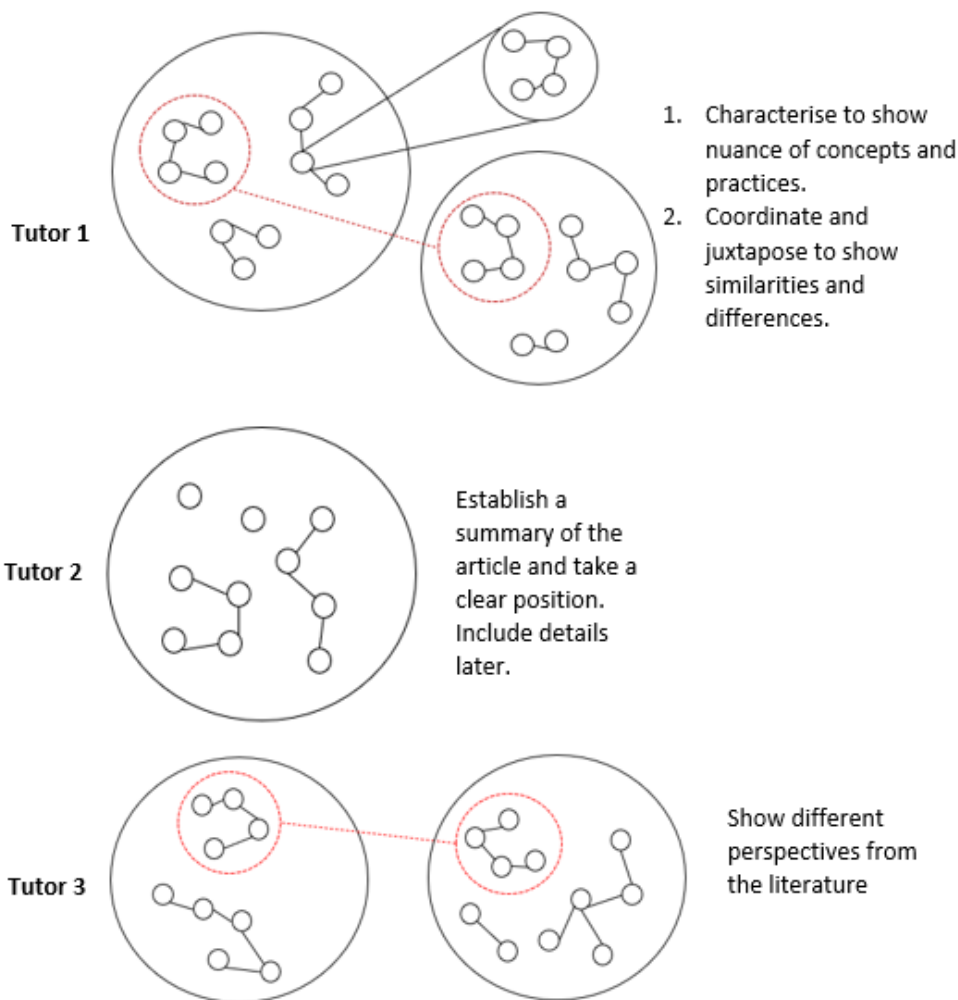
Figure 6.8   Cross-comparison of tutors' expectations of epistemological condensation in the essay introductions

When it comes to students' expectations of valued academic writing practices, sometimes students have differing expectations from their tutors, which can create code clashes. For instance, Yara thought higher epistemological condensation by coordinating (EC+) and showing more similar and different perspectives from the literature was required to make her essay introduction and overall essay better. In contrast, Tutor 2 required further weakening of semantic gravity by speculating on the author's intention (SG↓) and did not emphasise the need to juxtapose and examine the literature in the essay introduction.

Chen reported that this feedback regarding her essay introduction and the early part of her essay writing surprised her as she was not aware that her tutor expected a semantically dense introduction.

6.7 Academic Writing Expectations in the Essay Body

In this section, I analyse all tutors' writing expectations in the middle of the essays for writing task 1 in the MLTM module and the students' writing products. I first analyse Assessor 1 and Zoe's essay body, followed by Assessor 2 and Yara's essay body, and I finish with Assessor 3 and Chen's essay body.

At the end of each section, I explore the tutor's semantic requirements for the essay body and create an approximate semantic profile of what assessors expect to see in the essay bodies. I finish by conducting a cross-case analysis of tutors' perspectives on academic practices in essay bodies.

6.7.1 Assessor 1: Essay Body Expectations

According to Tutor 1, Zoe's essay is marked in the pass range because it showed several issues, which include (1) diverting from the task, which is a discussion of the article's claims, (2) lack of explanations, (3) use of less support from the literature, and (4) use of very specific teaching and learning examples which were somewhat detached from the discussion.   Other issues relate to the rigour of academic writing, which include coherence and structure.

Assessor 1 noted that one of the main issues of Zoe's essay body is that it sometimes fails to focus on the task, which is a critique of the author's claims, thus failing to achieve the epistemological semantic threshold (see Zoe's Essay Body). An example of this is Zoe's choice to discuss the advantages of CLT and its role in the development of students' cognition and metacognition without relating the discussion to Liao's claims regarding CLT in the context of China. Assessor 1 noted:

> It is useful to keep your focus on the task as well as the new topics you are introducing to address the task. The task is to discuss Liao's article, so points should clearly link to that. [Assessor 1 in-text feedback]

When examining Zoe's essay writing, it is apparent that she addressed Liao's article by discussing CLT's advantages and disadvantages. This is apparent in her choice of discussing the advantages of CLT in developing students' cognition and metacognition and later discussing the contextual issues of applying CLT in the Chinese context. Assessor 1 commented:

> I think the advantages versus disadvantages approach is something it's an inheritance of IELTS. It's like: 'Here is a problem. So, we've got this author claiming CLT is good for China. So, I'm going to look at the disadvantages of it and the advantages of it. And that's not actually the task. And that's not really what, you know, I think a teacher, who's experienced and has an understanding of a context wouldn't go in and think, advantages, disadvantages. […] I think it's a bit of a black-and-white discussion. It's not placed at a high level. It's not evaluating those ideas. It's just accepting. [Assessor 1 interview]

Assessor 1 refers to, first, focusing on discussing the article's claims rather than the advantages or disadvantages of language teaching or learning approach per se. This is the required degree of accuracy in the task or the epistemological semantic threshold. Second, by situating the arguments within a particular teaching or learning context. Contexts are less abstract as they are more context-bound or stronger in semantic gravity. Third, questioning and asking 'why' questions instead of accepting the argument as they are. Questioning and making claims are more abstract forms of writing, which is weaker in semantic gravity.

Also, the choice to argue against Liao's claims that CLT is best for China, followed by the advantages of CLT and finishing by discussing more issues with applying CLT in the Chinese context creates breaks in the semantic flow at the macro level of the essay (see Figure 5.13). Likewise, semantic flow is required at the micro level of essay arguments and within each paragraph, where Assessor 1 expects ideas within a paragraph to be linked clearly (see page 189).
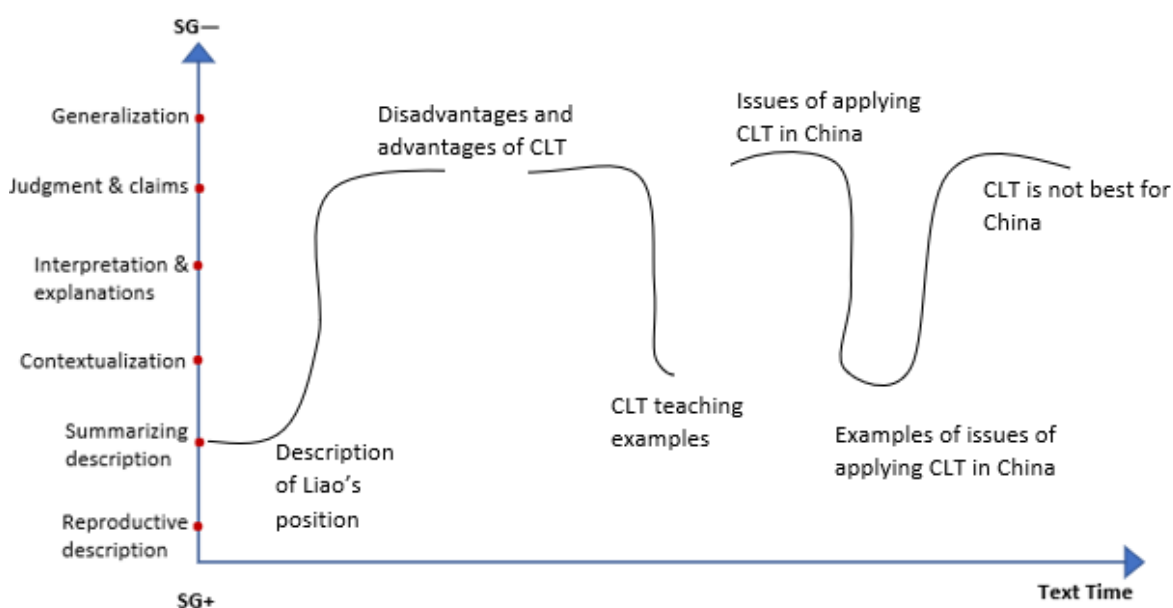
Figure 5.13 Semantic profile of Zoe's essay body

During interviews, I asked Zoe whether she agreed with Assessor 1 that her arguments sometimes diverted from the main task, which is a critique of Liao's (2004) claims. She explained that she was trying to provide as many different perspectives as possible from the literature and supporting evidence for her ideas. Zoe did not perceive her writing to divert from the task requirements:

> It's my divergent. I think it's not. Because I'm also to think about what this author said about, and then I will get my ideas in here. Because as for me, when I write down this essay, I'm more careful about what the author's says. So, I will carefully [comment on] her ideas, and I give my opinions to agree with her […] Because I more focus on my idea I make sure I find some strong evidence to support my ideas […] You need to think something not to one side you need the two side or many sides. To think about it, I think the many perspectives. [Zoe's interview]

At the end of the interview, I explained to Zoe what the marker wanted, which was to link the arguments back to the article. Zoe explained that she then understood what Assessor 1 required. This suggests that Zoe did not understand some of the important requirements of the task beforehand:

> Ah, [now] I feel more understand [what] the teacher means. Because I'm a need to relate it to the article, maybe I forgot the article and to just stated my ideas. I focus on the resource and forget articles. Maybe we'll lose the idea. [Zoe's interview]

When asked about the lack of a consistent theme and coherence throughout her essay, Zoe reflected on the tutor's feedback. She explained that she did not make a conscious effort to link ideas logically and was more concerned about writing her ideas:

> The teacher said, my articles, [do] not [show] the coherence. I like to think what I want to write down [and] not to think about what it's the logical to arrange them. [Zoe's interview]

The second common issue with Zoe's writing, according to Assessor 1, is the lack of explanations, which could create superficial discussions and a lack of coherence. Assessor 1 commented:

> I think the keyword that comes up repeatedly is explain. There's a tendency of this student either not to explain particularly why or what so that they have a lot of statements that are… that if they identify something, but they don't explain how that exists, why that exists, and how we can understand that. It's full of lots of descriptive statements […] where there is a lack of coherence, I think it's because they haven't explained why they've mentioned an idea or what we can understand by what they wrote. [Assessor 1 interview]

Zoe discussed one of the issues of applying CLT in the Chinese context: the lack of professional training and teachers' lack of competence to apply CLT effectively in the Chinese context. However, she did not explain what is unique about CLT and its relation to authenticity, nor does she provide sufficient explanations for why rural tutors cannot produce authentic material (see Zoe's Essay Body). Assessor 1 commented by requesting the student to explain and characterise CLT:

> You need to immediately focus on what is different about CLT in order to make these points clearly. Saying it is difficult to conduct CLT due to a lack of proficiency is not useful unless you can immediately characterize what about CLT requires competence that teacher-centred teaching does not. Pronunciation is very strange as an argument, as more teacher-centred classes put more pressure on the teacher's pronunciation than student-centred classes. [Assessor 1 interview]

When students explain and characterise, the writing becomes more abstract or weaker in semantic gravity (SG—). Also, this lack of explanations resulted in writing where Zoe listed several issues and topics in short paragraphs, which did not allow her to explain those in more detail. Assessor 1 remarked:

> Also related to coherence, you could organise your writing better, and develop clear, more concise paragraphs that cover a topic, rather than producing long paragraphs that cover too many topics for one paragraph. It is better to fully explain a few ideas than to mention too many ideas and not explain them. [Assessor 1 in-text feedback]

The third main issue with Zoe's academic essay, according to Assessor 1, is its lack of support from the literature or its insufficient epistemological condensation. Although Zoe supported her argument with some evidence from the literature, Tutor 1 seems to require more support or taxonomizing (EC++). Taxonomizing occurs when a student establishes an idea and connects it to multiple different ideas to support it. By providing explanations and support from the literature, students' writing will be more abstract and denser. Assessor 1 commented on Zoe's writing:

> You should integrate more support from literature in some areas, especially some things that are taken for granted but still need support (e.g. explaining and framing the principles of the communicative approach). [Assessor 1 in-text feedback]

For example, Zoe claimed there are contextual issues of applying CLT in Chinese classrooms and provided some support for her claim. However, Tutor 1 seemed to expect more support from the literature. Using constellations as a method of visualising epistemological condensation, Figure 6.9 below is a comparison of Zoe's enactment of taxonomizing (EC++) and Tutor 1 possible expectations. This visualisation is approximate and not exact.
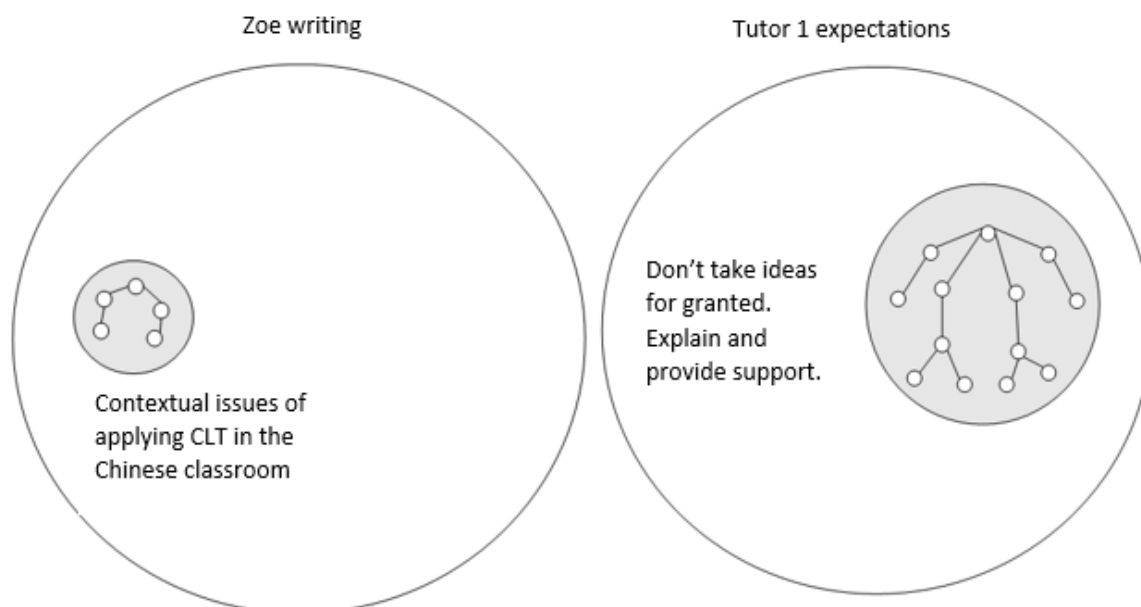
Figure 6.9   Comparison of Zoe's enactment of epistemological condensation in the essay body and Tutor's 1 expectations

Zoe's use of examples tends to be far too specific, or they are more context-bound than what is possibly required (SG+) (see Zoe's Essay Body). Assessor 1 explained that he expects examples to show what is possible or what a concept means and not what happens or must happen specifically in classrooms. Assessor 1 remarked:

> You are using some very specific examples in a strange way. What might happen in class is very varied, but you are using very specific examples to suggest what MUST or DOES happen, when, in fact, classes unfold in different ways. Normally, an example shows what is possible or what a concept means rather than what happens or must happen. [Assessor 1 in-text feedback]

An interview with Zoe shows differences between the student and the assessor regarding what they see as good practical teaching and learning examples regarding how specific or context-bound they should be. Regarding her use of very specific examples, Zoe explained that she did not produce examples as less context-bound because she thought the more context-bound the examples, the more authentic they were. She asserted that her examples were not very context-bound, and they had to be written in a story-like manner to show they

were practical examples. Following the assessor's feedback, she was not sure whether this choice was considered an acceptable academic practice or not:

> The teacher said I'm not write some knowledge more general. To pose my idea [I think] is the more certainly [the specific] makes the real thing […] Very specific no. Because if I give the very specific, maybe I will write down some, you know, like the article, not like the academics do academic work because I will say something like a story or some give some story to explain this, the maybe that it's not like an academic. [Zoe's interview]

Moreover, Zoe defined integrating sources differently from Assessor 1, who used the word to refer to providing more support from the literature. In contrast, Zoe defines it as showing the similarities and differences between different ideas. When I asked Zoe what she meant by the word 'integrate', she responded:

> To get this idea and this idea, and then to put together to think about to write down this author say, and this author says to put it together. I think that is the integration. To find a similar or different about them. [Zoe's interview]

To summarise, Tutor 1 main semantic requirement for a good essay is to 'get it right' and achieve the epistemological semantic threshold by showing an understanding of the article and the field and focusing on critiquing the article's claims.

Unlike Assessor 2, Assessor 1 does not prefer discussing the article or language teaching in terms of pros and cons or advantages and disadvantages but expects to show understanding of the context and situating the arguments within particular teaching and learning contexts, thus going up and down (SG↑↓) by moving between practical examples and arguments from the reviewed text and the field.

In terms of semantic flow, and unlike Assessor 2, Assessor 1 expects a high semantic flow at the macro level of the essay and micro level of an essay by selecting themes that build on each other.

Assessor 1 also requires a lot of weakening of semantic gravity in the form of explanations and interpretations (SG↓) by constantly answering 'what', 'how', and 'why' questions. Assessor 1 also expected students to bring the discussion to the wider language teaching and learning field or move to a weaker semantic gravity, such as 'generalisation' and 'abstraction' (SG−−−), which Zoe did not achieve in her writing.

When using practical teaching and learning examples, Assessor 1 expects examples to explain what is possible or what a concept means, thus remaining relatively stronger in semantic gravity (SG↑). However, according to Assessor 1, examples should not be too specific. Also, Assessor 1

expects students to link examples to the task and the reviewed text or 'going down' to strengthen SG+ and back up to weaken SG—.

Based on the previous discussion, an approximate semantic profile of what Assessor 1 might want to see in the essay body has been created below:
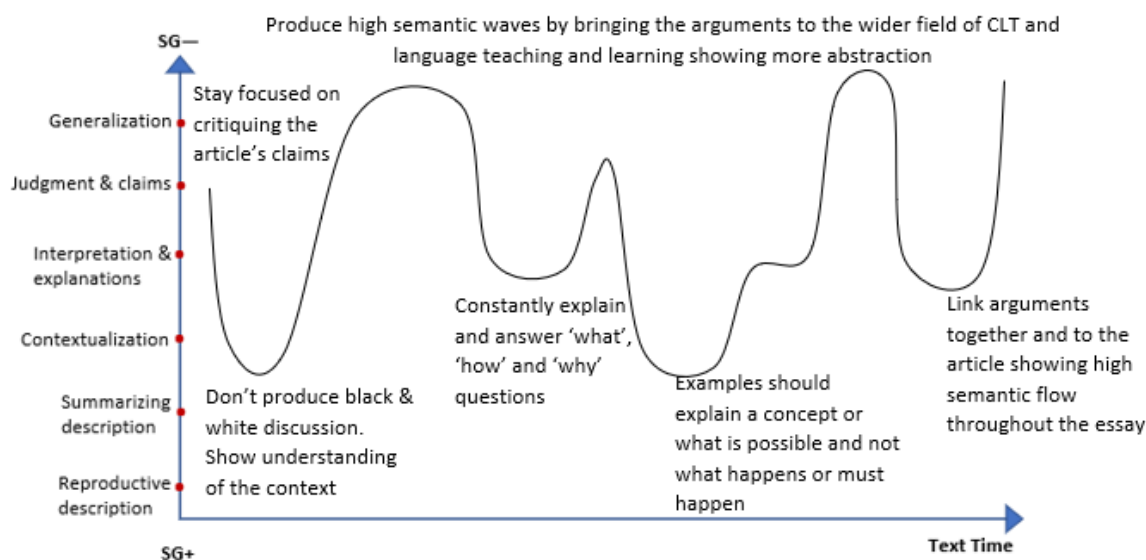
Figure 6.10   Semantic profile of Assessor's 1 expectations of the essay body.

6.7.2   Assessor 2: Essay Body Expectations

According to Tutor 2, Yara's essay is marked as a high-achieving essay due to several factors including the use of correct theories (see Yara's Essay Body).

Referring to Yara's use of the concept of negative washback effects on applying CLT in the Chinese language learning and teaching environment, Assessor 2 commented that one of the main reasons Yara was able to score higher in her assignment is due to the use and correct application of a theory not covered in the module. Assessor 1 stated:

> I think because it was: (1) the novelty, and (2) it was well used. You can use many theories in Communicative Language Teaching. And this student chose this particular theory that was not actually particularly mentioned in during lectures. So, to me, the student went out to do very good research and applied it rather well […] So, it could have been a washback effect, or it could be other things. [Assessor 2 interview]

In LCT Semantics, this refers to achieving the epistemological semantic threshold, which is the correct application of theories and concepts when analysing the article being critiqued and language teaching and learning practices.

Regarding Semantics flow or degree of connections of different ideas, on the one hand, there seems to be a disconnect between the choice of the main arguments Yara presented in her essay. The disconnect occurs between the choice of discussing language testing's negative washback effects on teaching and learning practices, followed by a discussion on the individual differences among Chinese students, parents and administrators' views on language learning and assessment, and finally critiquing Liao's (2004) views on the role of contextual factors on language teaching and learning. These disconnected themes create breaks in the semantic flow of the essay, as shown in the figure below.
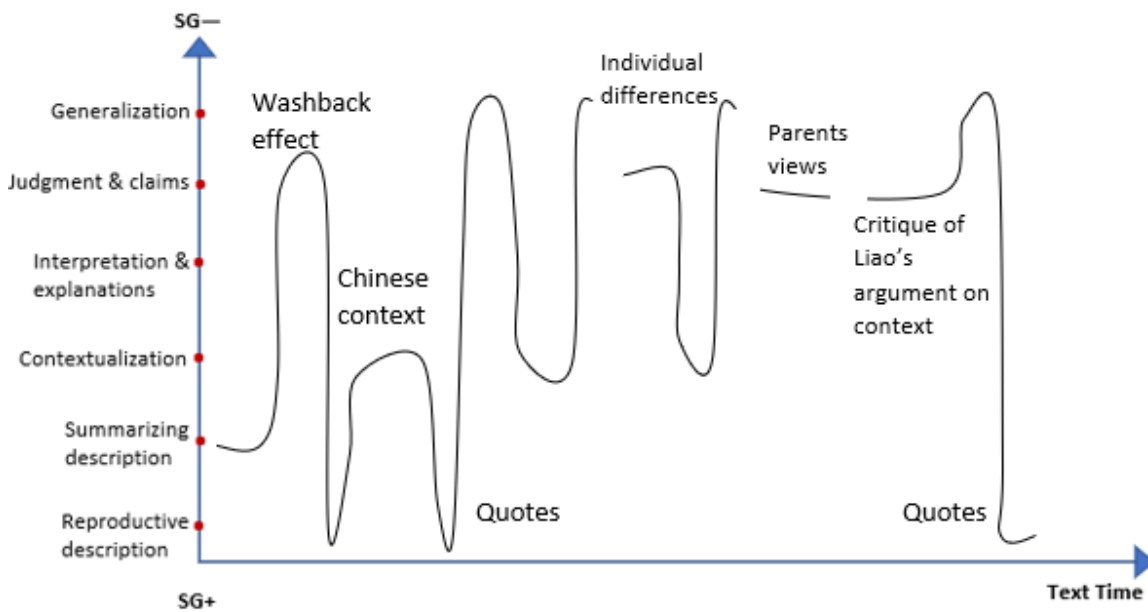
Figure 5.16 Semantic profile of Yara's essay body

This suggests that, for Assessor 2, choosing arguments that build on a consistent theme and thus create high semantic flow may not be an important requirement at the macro level of essay arguments.

What seems to matter for Assessor 2 is a demonstration of the student's ability to critique the author's claims about a specific learning and teaching context. The following interview and in-text feedback extracts show that Assessor 2 was very pleased with Yara's presentation of arguments:

The purpose of this research was to analyse and critique [the text]. So, for me, I needed her to how she is going to draw in her interpretation of Liao, which I thought was quite decent [...] what we want them to do to show that they have a very good understanding of the article. [Assessor 2 interview]

When I asked Assessor 2 whether she thought the discussion of parents' views on the role of assessment in English language teaching in the Chinese context is detached from other factors,

such as individual students' needs, Assessor 2 noted that acknowledging this factor and bringing in other key factors is what is expected. This shows that a high semantic flow between main themes may not be an important requirement for Assessor 2 compared to using multiple arguments and factors to critique the article:

> This is like, for me a totally different component. [..] So I didn't bother too much about it. No, because she didn't, she couldn't have much time to talk a little bit more about it. It's good that she acknowledges a little bit. But that's about it. So, I didn't bother too much about it. Yeah, it's enough for me at this point in time, because it is a 3000-word assignment, then you can bring in more things. But as it is, she brought in some other key things. [Assessor 2 interview]

On the other hand, when it comes to the degree of coherence at the micro level of an essay paragraph, Tutor 2 expects ideas and arguments to be well connected. According to Tutor 2, Yara made a jump in the discussion by discussing individual differences among Chinese students and their needs, followed by the influence of learner personality and its role in the teaching and learning process (see Yara's Essay Body). According to Assessor 2, discussing personality traits after students' needs was not well connected or relevant. This created a break in the semantic flow, as shown in a semantic profile for this extract (see Figure 5.17). Assessor 2 noted:

> So, in this part was all a macro level. But then to suddenly bring in, for example, [a rather private person might be inactive in communicative activities given by teachers] that was actually very abrupt because previously you're talking about [students'] needs and [then] you're suddenly bringing in personal dislikes and personal learning styles, which is different. [Students need to] be very careful, because all of a sudden there's a jump because now, you're talking about learner personalities. [Assessor 2 interview]
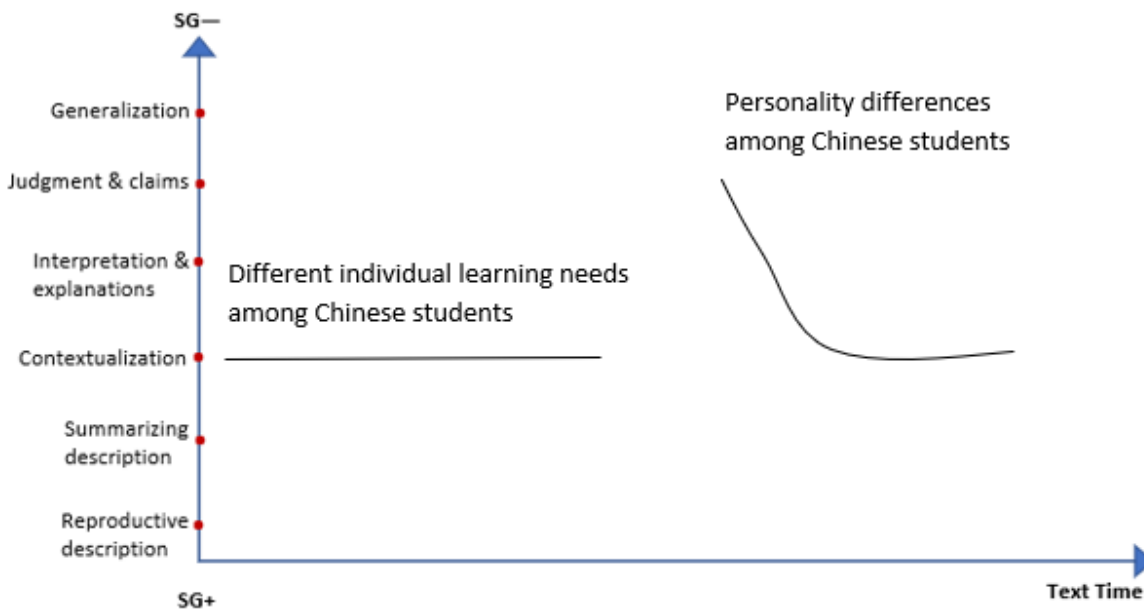
Figure 5.17 Semantic profile of Yara's essay body extract

The previous observations suggest that, for Assessor 2, a high semantic flow may not be required for the overall essay discussion, where students can select different themes to argue for/against the article's claims. However, within each theme in the essay body, a high semantic flow is required, and arguments are expected to link and build on each other. This is unlike Assessors 1 and 3, who expect a high semantic flow at both the macro and micro level of the essay discussion.

The same observation can be put under the lens of epistemological condensation or degree of complexity. Tutor 2 seems to expect students to establish (EC— —) general themes that may have few relations among them, but within each theme, Tutor 2 expects more relations and connections by taxonomizing (EC++) where students establish an idea and connect them to multiple different ideas to support it or characterising (EC+) where a specific teaching practice is nuanced to show the various aspects and properties that characterise it. This can be shown in Tutor 2 interview extracts below:

> So, if students are able to discuss from a broad spectrum like would possibly look at from a materials point of view, from engagement, and possibly to look into interaction, so you have like three different domains, so that would be good. It would be considered highly one-sided if students just talk about interaction throughout. But again, if they talk about interaction, and they're able to move on and talk about the interaction between teachers with students and then among students and how the interaction may be informed by materials or the source or the handouts. You see the discussion being extended. So, to put it simply breadth and depth in a discussion. [Assessor 2 interview]

Using constellations to visualise complexity, Figure 6.11 below shows Tutor 2 expectations of taxonomizing and characterising.
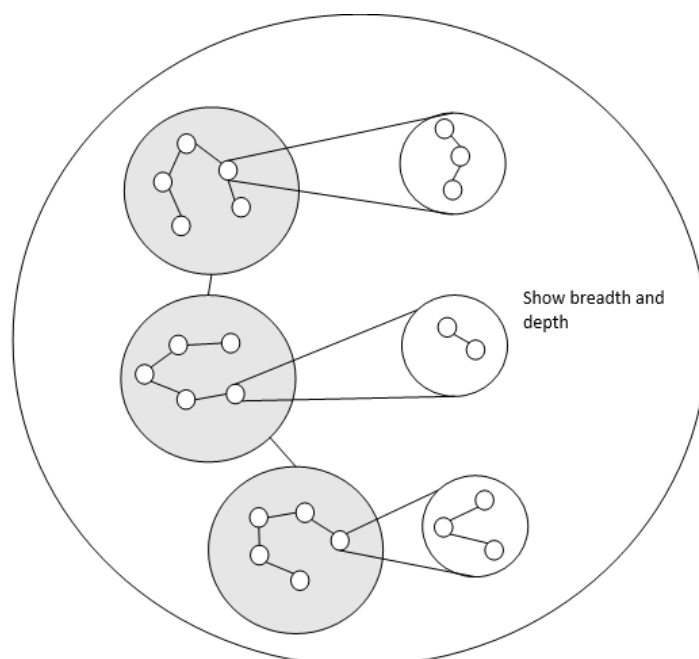
Figure 6.11   Tutor's 2 expectations of epistemological condensation in the essay body

Regarding contextualisation, Tutor 2 was pleased with Yara's demonstration of contextualising the discussion of the article and her arguments within the Chinese learning and teaching context. The student was also aware of the importance of bringing in her experience and the requirement to contextualise the discussion. When I asked Yara how she concluded that CLT cannot be the best teaching approach for China, she referred to her experience:

> Because it comes from my experience when I [was at] high schools, my English teachers tried to make the lesson more like a communicative way, but it failed because some students in my class said that it was a waste of time. And they make a complaint about it. So, the teacher has to change that into a test preparation style. [Yara's interview]

Yara first scored 71 on her assignment, but the module lead downgraded her score to 68 due to multiple uses quotes (SG+++), which either were not cited or paraphrased properly. The constant feedback from Tutor 1 shows an expectation for a student to weaken semantic gravity by summarising and paraphrasing (SG++) compared to much stronger semantic gravity in the form of quotations (SG+++).

When I asked Assessor 2 about the reasons, she did not comment on Yara's poor citations and paraphrasing; she commented that she ignored it as she was more concerned with the arguments and content of the essay discussion, which shows why some assignments can be marked slightly differently than others:

> Actually, I ignored it a little bit because, for me, that argument was so important. [Assessor 2 interview]

To summarise, Tutor 2 main semantic requirement for a good essay is to 'get it right' and achieve the epistemological semantic threshold of critiquing the article's claims within a particular teaching and learning context and uploading correct theories and concepts.

When asked about her general expectations for a good essay, Assessor 2 claimed that she requires a high semantic flow for the entire essay arguments. Still, based on her in-text feedback and interview transcript, she approved of an essay which presented low semantic flow between its main themes (see Figure 5.16). However, within each paragraph, Assessor 2 required students to 'go along' and show a high semantic flow and expected arguments and examples to be linked and create a coherent argument (see page 149).

Like Tutor 1, Tutor 2 required constant 'going up and down' by contextualisation of the arguments within a specific teaching and learning context, thus strengthening semantic gravity (SG↑) or creating recurrent downshifts and upshifts as shown in a semantic scale (see Figure 6.12). Assessor 2 expects the student to weaken semantic gravity by moving from the 'what' (SG++) to answering the 'why' (SG–).

Tutor 1 downgraded Yara's essay because he expected her to summarise texts instead of using quotes which are very context-bound. However, tutor 2 was satisfied with quotes or very context-bound texts. Tutor 1 expected weakening semantic gravity by paraphrasing quotes (SG↓) which was not shared by Tutor 2.

Assessor 2 also expected students to 'go along up and down' by providing a balanced argument in which students take the middle position and strike a balance between discussing the pros and cons of a certain approach. Below is an approximate semantic profile of Assessor 2 expectations:
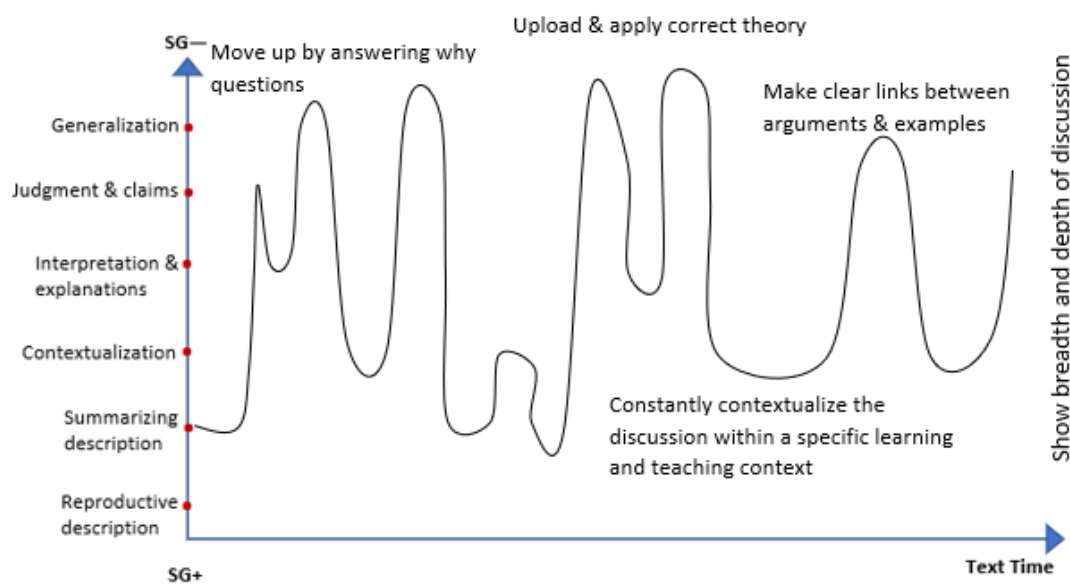
Figure 6.12   Semantic profile of Assessor's 2 expectations of the essay body

6.7.3   Assessor 3: Essay Body Expectations

According to Tutor 3, the main requirement of the task is to critique the author's claims and arguments, presenting well-connected arguments, explanations, support from the literature, and use of cautious language.

Chen discussed the article by first discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the context approach, comparing the CLT approach with the context approach, and finally discussing some issues with Bax's (2003) claims (see Chen's Essay Body).

This choice appears to be fragmented and disconnected. Assessor 3 commented on this choice of arguments as both descriptive and disconnected, thus, failing to show high semantic flow:

> I would like to see [students] organising the assignment into a piece of work where they take a position. And then they argue that position through their sections. I found that this was a collection of isolated descriptions and that there wasn't a consistent theme running through it. That's why it was awarded this score. [Assessor 3 interview]

This fragmentation is also reflected in the semantic profile of Chen's essay body. The student's writing shows a fragmented and disconnected semantic wave. Her writing lacks semantic flow and shows quantum leaps between points (see Figure 5.19).
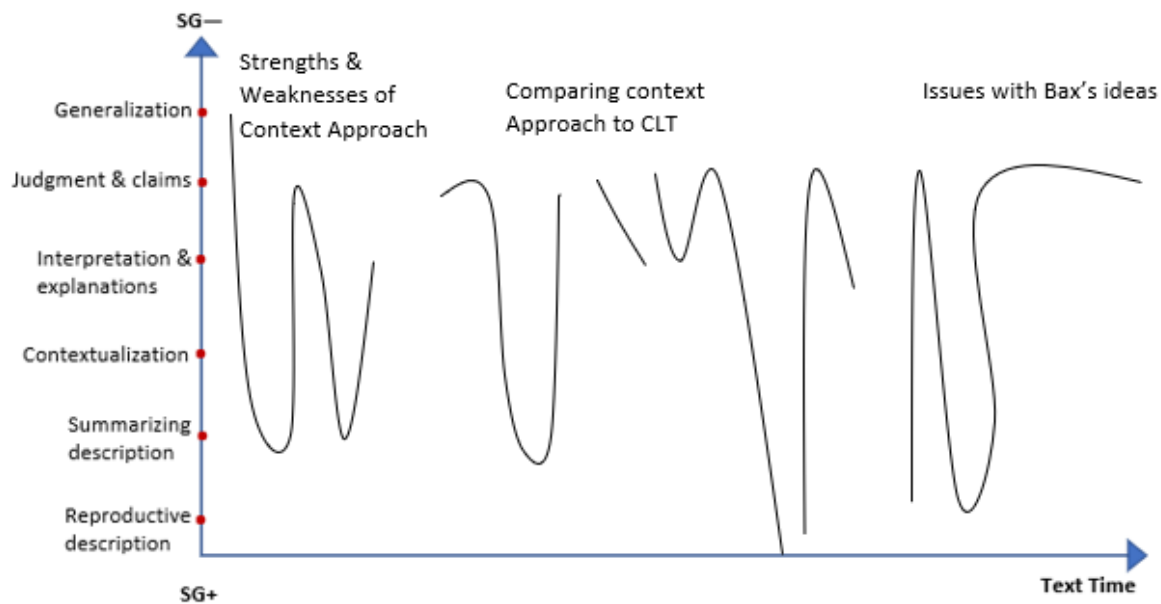
Figure 5.19 Semantic profile of Chen's essay body

Moreover, Chen's essay writing did not achieve main requirement of the task which is to critique the article's claims. When Assessor 3 asked about his evaluation of the student's choice to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the context approach, he noted that it didn't achieve the task requirements, which is to critique the article's claims. Instead, the student diverted from the writing task by discussing concepts and approaches per se rather than critiquing Bax's (2003) arguments and his presentation of those concepts. This means the student did not achieve the semantic threshold, which is the required degree of accuracy. Assessor 3 commented on Chen's arguments:

> Some of this was more a critique of the ideas rather than of Bax's presentation of it. I think the task required the review of the article. So, more analysis on Bax's arguments rather than on pros and cons of the particular approach. [Assessor 3]

Moreover, Assessor 3 explained that he wanted to hear the student's opinions and evaluation of Bax's (2003) arguments, use of examples, and sources. According to Assessor 3, this article's evaluation needs to be compared with other sources and offer different perspectives, showing awareness of what others have said and awareness of issues in the field.

> [The student] could attempt an explanation by offering different perspectives. So that they're looking at the article. But perhaps they could show an awareness of what others have said about similar ideas. And a kind of a wider awareness of what those issues mean in this field [...] assessing Bax's argument I think that's what I wanted to see more of. So, it's not just 'oh Bax talks about the context approach, let's analyse the context approach for and against'. That isn't what I wanted so much as 'let's analyse the pros and cons of how Bax puts his argument across'. Perhaps the student could critique Bax's use of examples or sources. So, I think some of the students misinterpreted the task or interpreted the task in a way they wanted. [Assessor 3 interview]

This means moving from describing the text and concepts (SG++) to producing informed judgments (SG— —) and interpretations supported by research and publications (SG—). This is also referred to as an expectation for higher complexity or epistemological condensation through coordinating (EC+). Coordinating occurs when established meanings are connected to various different meanings to show relations of differences.

He also emphasised achieving the semantic threshold for this task, which required critiquing the article and the author's claims and representation of language teaching and learning approaches.

The interview with Chen showed that the student knew the requirement to challenge the author's claims. Still, her understanding of a critique is limited as she views it as finding faults with Bax's claims rather than providing an informed discussion. When I asked Chen about what is required to produce a good critique of Bax's article, she responded:

> Limitation, and may be challenged this article, challenge the author did he do something wrong, or there was something in his or her research he did not suitable for nowadays, the environment, or something that not that much useful or available nowadays. [Chen's interview]

This student also shows that she struggled with understanding the requirements of this assignment and achieving the semantic threshold by providing a good and valid critique of the article being reviewed. This extract shows that there is a lack of understanding of what is required as a critique:

> No. When I write this article, because the title of this article 'End of CLT', I think 'Wow it can't be like that because we're all learning CLT'. So, there's something wrong with this article. So, I push it so hard, I think, no, is wrong, and I judge him a lot. But according to the feedback I think, it seems like I do something wrong. (Chen's interview)

When I asked Chen what she could have done to get a higher score after reading the tutor's feedback, she noted that her writing shows her personal opinion without enough support from the research, suggesting that she still misunderstood the main requirement of the task even after reading the tutor's in-text feedback:

> I need to give some evidence, the argument to support my ideas. That's only my word my opinion. And I need some maybe other authors research and other people's opinions to support my idea. [Chen's interview]

While it is true that the student needed to strengthen epistemological condensation, the main problem with Chen's writing was her failure to achieve the main semantic threshold, a critique of the author's presentation of ideas instead of critiquing CLT and the Context approach per se.

Chen also introduced debated concepts without relating them to the task/article or explaining them such as the concept of 'authenticity' (see Chen's Essay Body). Interviews and in-text feedback also showed that Assessor 3 wanted students to elaborate on key terms in language teaching and learning, such as 'autonomy' and 'authentic', which means that semantic gravity needs to be relatively weakened by producing interpretations and explanations as well as higher epistemological condensation by coordinating (EC+) or showing the various perspectives and definitions of those terms, thus connecting it to different meanings to create relations of differences:

> They are debated concepts with different usages really. And so, I think that needed explaining. And it's an example of where the student could show their voice by saying 'In this context, my understanding of authentic is x y, z. However, it has also been interpreted in other senses', and the same with autonomy. I thought they were that was a kind of opportunity missed by the student develop those ideas. [Assessor 3 interview]

Moreover, Chen's essay discussion makes limited use of 'contextualisation' or reference to specific teaching and learning contexts to discuss Bax's (2003) article or the principles of CLT. It was noted that interviews with Assessor 3 and in-text feedback did not emphasize or mention relating the article or CLT to contextual teaching and learning examples:

Data collected from Assessor 3, as in interviews and in-text feedback, showed that he stressed the expectation to 'get it right' by analysing the article's claims and relating them to CLT and the wider literature, and no reference was made to the expectation to apply those understandings to practical teaching and learning examples in specific contexts:

> You have produced an interesting account of Bax's contextual approach and discussed its relationship with CLT. You have attempted to create a clear position by outlining limitations in Bax's argument and emphasizing the existing importance of context in CLT. [Assessor 3 in-text feedback]

Likewise, when I asked Chen about her understanding of what is required in this particular assignment, contextualisation and relating the discussion to practical teaching and learning examples were not mentioned during the interview.

Also, Assessor 3 required students to produce a lot of interpretations and explanations in the writing. However, this was vaguely explained through in-text feedback using ambiguous expressions, such as using the phrase 'critical distance'. The critical distance here corresponds to making interpretations of descriptive context or weakening semantic gravity (SG↓). Below are sentences 30 and 31, which Assessor 3 described as showing 'critical distance':

> (29) At the end of the article, he mentioned that continuing to use CLT approach will lead to a continuing underestimation of student's ability (Bax, 2003, p286). (30) This might mean that he does not understand one of the features of CLT -- focus on the needs of learners. CLT is based on

the whole person, which includes cognitive, physical, affective and social. (31) In a real CLT classroom, teachers need to transfer more powers and rights to students and make students become the centre of the class. Students can find and choose the channels of information acquisition, understand their needs and learn independently. [Chen's writing text]

You attempt to show a critical distance to Bax's position. [Assessor 3 in-text feedback]

Interviews with Chen also showed she was unable to understand what was required:

Critical distance? I don't understand. I even don't know I attempt to show of critical distance. [Chen's interview]

Moreover, Assessor 3 was not satisfied with Chen's text and required further explanations and interpretations from the literature. In LCT terms, the tutor requires further weakened semantic gravity by producing interpretations (SG—). He also required coordinating (EC+) or the use of multiple resources to create condensed meanings and show nuance and complexity around certain concepts and ideas:

You could attempt an explanation by offering different perspectives. So, okay, they're looking at the article, but perhaps they could show an awareness of what others have said about similar ideas. And so, a kind of a wider awareness of what those issues mean in this field. [Assessor 3 interview]

Assessor 3 also wanted the student to coordinate and provide explanations to show the various perspectives around certain issues or claims:

You could have created a discussion around certain points such as Fetzer's view of context. By including different perspectives from the literature, you would have been able to create a more powerful voice. [Assessor 3 in-text feedback]

Based on the tutor's perspective, the academic expectation here is to explain concepts and relatively weaken semantic gravity by providing interpretations and explanations but also strengthen epistemological condensation by coordinating and bringing in other perspectives. Explanations and interpretations are also requirements when using quotations. Assessor 3 expected students to elaborate on quotes:

[…] that 'Quote' would have to be further explained. And it needs kind of deconstructing a bit more of what does it actually mean? And if they do think it's relevant, it needs further explanation as it as it stands there. [Assessor 3 interview]

It was noted that other academic writing requirements such as use of language played a role in assessing students' writing. Assessor 3 commented:

One of the elements is the language used and there could be a better use of cautious language. And again, criticality can be expressed through hedging and lack of absolute language. And I think some of the word's choices had a negative impact on the argument. [Assessor 3 interview]

To help students organise their ideas in a logical flow, Tutor 3 suggested a paragraph structure which begins with an introductory statement in which students present a powerful idea (SG↓), a descriptive element (SG↑) followed by an analytical element where they make claims and

judgments (SG↓) and a concluding statement in which they summarise and signpost for the following section (SG↑):

> To help a student organise their ideas in a logical flow, I generally promote the concept of a paragraph structure which has an introductory statement [key or powerful idea introduced at the beginning] and then a descriptive element of what is being discussed, an analytical element where their opinion is apparent, and a concluding statement, which can summarise and link forward. [Assessor 3 interview]

To summarise, this means students are not limited to but encouraged to 'go up and down' at the semantic scale and create semantic shifts by moving from description (SG++) to judgments (SG– –) and interpretation (SG–) and back again to stronger semantic gravity by summarising (SG++).

For Assessor 3, it is also important to 'go along' and produce a consistent theme running through the arguments or showing a high semantic flow.

Explanation and interpretation or weakening semantic gravity (SG↓) are essential, especially when discussing debated concepts such as 'authentic' or 'autonomy', offering different perspectives or showing the depth of discussion and awareness of issues in the field, thus strengthening epistemological condensation through coordinating (EC+). However, referencing and relating the discussion and arguments to contextual teaching and learning practices were not emphasised or mentioned by Tutor 3. (See Figure 6.13).
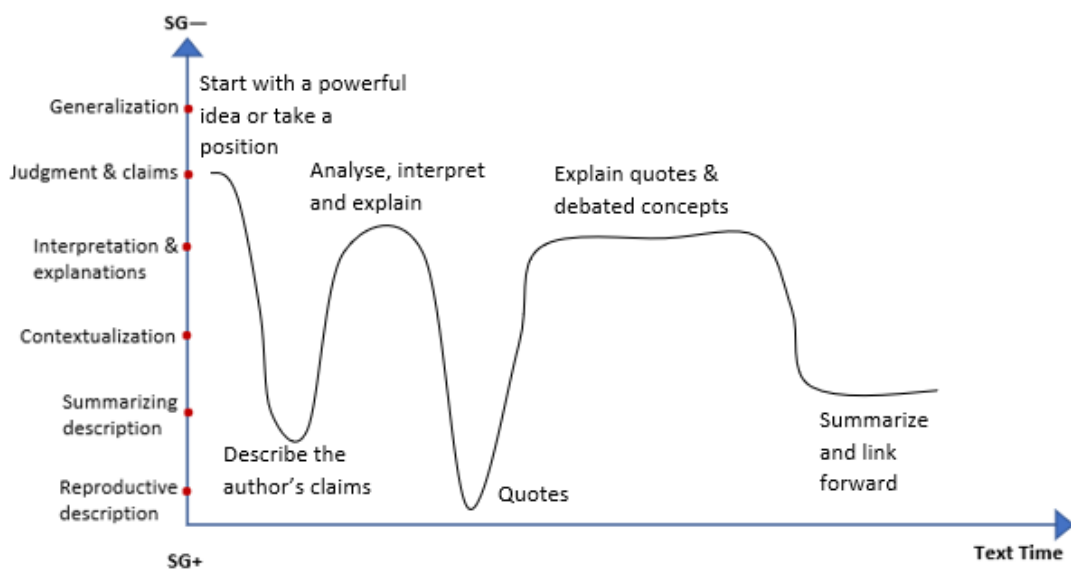
Figure 6.13   Semantic profile of Assessor's 3 expectations

6.7.4   Cross-case analysis

In this section, I compare tutors' academic writing expectations of essay bodies.

Tutors sometimes appear to agree and disagree about valued academic writing practices. They evaluated students' essays differently even when students' writing showed semantic gravity waves and a similar level of semantic flow, for example.

All tutors emphasised the importance of achieving the epistemological semantic threshold, which is a critique of the article's claims and linking topics and arguments back to the article. More specifically, Tutors 1 and 2 did not value students' choice of addressing the task by exploring the advantages and disadvantages of teaching and learning. Tutor 2 also emphasised a different epistemological semantic threshold: accurate use of language teaching and learning theories. She especially valued students' attempts to go beyond the theories covered in the module.

All tutors expected a weakening of semantic gravity in the form of judgements and explanations (SG↓). Tutor 1 expected students to answer 'why' questions and explain claims instead of accepting arguments as they are (SG–). Tutor 2 also expected students to weaken semantic gravity by moving from the 'what' (SG++) to answering 'why' (SG–). Tutor 3 also expected a lot of weakening of semantic gravity (SG↓) by producing informed judgments, interpretations, and explanations supported by research and publications, especially when introducing new concepts.

In terms of contextualisation or strengthening semantic gravity using practical teaching and learning examples (SG↑), only Tutors 1 and 2 emphasised the importance of contextualisation.

As for semantic flow, the data analysis showed that tutors evaluated semantic flow in students' writing differently. For example, Tutor 1 expected student writing to show semantic flow at both the macro and micro levels of essay arguments or between the main themes of the essay and the ideas within a paragraph level. On the contrary, Tutor 2 was tolerant of a lower semantic flow at the macro level of essays by allowing students to discuss different topics in the essays. However, she expected more semantic flow at the micro level of an essay by expecting ideas to show coherence at the paragraph level.

These varied academic expectations show different semantic profiles (see Figure 6.14). What is common among these semantic profiles is that tutors expect students to move from stronger semantic gravity through descriptions, quotes, summaries, and practical teaching examples to weaker semantic gravity through explanations, interpretations, judgments, generalisation and abstractions. All tutors expect a high semantic flow and stronger semantic density.

SG—

Produce high semantic waves by bringing the arguments to the wider field of CLT and language teaching and learning showing more abstraction

Generalization

Judgment & claims

Interpretation & explanations

Contextualization

Summarizing description

Reproductive description

Stay focused on critiquing the article's claims

Don't produce black & white discussion. Show understanding of the context

Constantly explain and answer 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions

Examples should explain a concept or what is possible and not what happens or must happen

Link arguments together and to the article showing high semantic flow throughout the essay

Tutor 1

SG+

Text Time

SG—

Upload & apply correct theory

Generalization

Judgment & claims

Interpretation & explanations

Contextualization

Summarizing description

Reproductive description

Move up by answering why questions

Make clear links between arguments & examples

Constantly contextualize the discussion within a specific learning and teaching context

Show breadth and depth of discussion

Tutor 2

SG+

Text Time

SG—

Generalization

Judgment & claims

Interpretation & explanations

Contextualization

Summarizing description

Reproductive description

Start with a powerful idea or take a position

Analyse, interpret and explain

Explain quotes & debated concepts

Describe the author's claims

Quotes

Summarize and link forward

Tutor 3

SG+

Text Time

Figure 6.14 Cross-case comparison of semantic profiles of tutors' essay body expectations

Regarding complexity or epistemological condensation, all tutors seem to require it. Tutors explained this in the following extracts:

> You should integrate more support from literature in some areas, especially some things that are taken for granted but which still need support (e.g. explaining and framing the principles of the communicative approach). [Assessor 1 in-text feedback]

> Basically, [I want to see] breadth and depth of discussion. [Assessor 2 interview]

> [The student] could attempt an explanation by offering different perspectives. So that they're looking at the article. But perhaps they could show an awareness of what others have said about

similar ideas. And a kind of a wider awareness of what those issues mean in this field. [Assessor 3 interview]

However, tutors seem to emphasize different forms of epistemological condensation. On the one hand, Tutors 1 and 2 emphasized taxonomizing (EC++) and characterizing (EC—). Taxonomizing occurs when a meaning is established and connected to multiple different meanings to support it. Characterizing (EC+) means adding details to a teaching and learning practice or a concept to show the various aspects and properties that characterize it. Tutor 3, on the other hand, emphasized coordinating (EC+) more. Coordinating occurs when established meanings are connected to different meanings to show relations of differences. It occurs when students show different perspectives and points of view.

When it comes to students' expectations, students have differing expectations from their tutors, which creates code clashes. For instance, Tutor 1 thought that Zoe's arguments diverted from the main task, which is a critique of Liao's (2004) claims. However, Zoe did not perceive her writing to divert from the task. She justified her choice to discuss arguments in terms of advantages and disadvantages of CLT in China as an attempt to show as many different perspectives as possible and to provide supporting evidence to her arguments.

Moreover, Zoe thought that good practical teaching and learning examples should be more specific or context-bound. She thought that very specific examples were more authentic and real. In contrast, Tutor 1 wanted teaching and learning examples to be less specific.

Also, Tutor 3, on the one hand, defined a good critique as addressing the author's claims, showing awareness of what others have said about similar ideas, and showing wider awareness of those issues in the field. Chen, on the other hand, understood a critique as finding faults with Bax's claims rather than providing an informed discussion.

Yara's writing was downgraded due to inappropriate paraphrasing and citing. When I asked Yara whether she expected to get negative feedback on her citations, she responded that her previous educational experience required different writing skills. She claimed was trained to use exact texts without paraphrasing, suggesting that she had different academic writing expectations.

These differences in tutors' and students' expectations are echoed in previous research (Lea and Street, 1998, Alharbi, 2017). It is essential for tutors within the same module to reflect on their expectations and assessment practices as they can differ from those communicated through module documents and task guidelines. It may be worth investigating whether these differences in assessment practices may come from different epistemological and disciplinary underpinnings given the fact that some of the tutors have backgrounds in literary studies and others in linguistics (Lea and Street, 1998).

6.8   Academic Writing Expectations in the Essay Conclusion

In this section, I analyse all tutors' writing expectations for the essay conclusions writing task 1 from the MLTM module. I provide examples of students' writing products. I first analyse Assessor 1 and Zoe's essay conclusion, followed by Assessor 2 and Yara's, and I finish with Assessor 3 and Chen's. At the end of the section, I provide a cross-case analysis to compare tutors' perspectives.

When I asked Assessor 1 about his expectation for a good essay conclusion, he remarked:

> It should flow from the position, the discussion and the explanation that's above. It should elaborate, and it shouldn't divert. […] It should be consistent all the way through. I think it should give the final key points and why they're the key points of that discussion. A bad conclusion is that it diverts from what they've said above.

Based on this extract, Assessor 1 expects a conclusion that summarises the final key points discussed in the essay. Summaries are meanings more connected to a particular context, the written essay. Therefore, these meanings are stronger in semantic gravity (SG++).

Tutor 1 also expects students to explain 'why' those points make the final key points of the discussion. Explanations and interpretations tend to be more abstract than summaries; thus, they are weaker in semantic gravity (SG–).

Additionally, Tutor 1 expects the conclusion to show arguments that build on each other and are well-connected. In LCT Semantics, this refers to a high semantic flow.

Referring to Zoe's overall essay conclusion and the new claims she made which were not supported by her previous discussion (see Zoe's Essay Conclusion), Assessor 1 commented that Zoe succeeded in producing some summaries and explanations but failed at creating a high semantic flow by avoiding the introductions of new unsupported claims:

> This is a clear conclusion that draws together most of your ideas from the essay well. Try to avoid adding new ideas that would require support and discussion in the conclusion and try to commit to discussing the task and focus and not ending with a point that goes beyond the task. [Assessor 1 in-text feedback]

The interview with Assessor 1 and in-text feedback revealed that he mainly expects the essay conclusion to go out low at the semantic scale by summarising key points discussed in the essay (SG++) and going back up to explain why those points are considered the main or key points of discussion (SG—). A high semantic profile is required where ideas 'go along' and are consistent throughout without introducing new ideas which creates diversion and breaks in the semantic flow (see Figure 6.15).
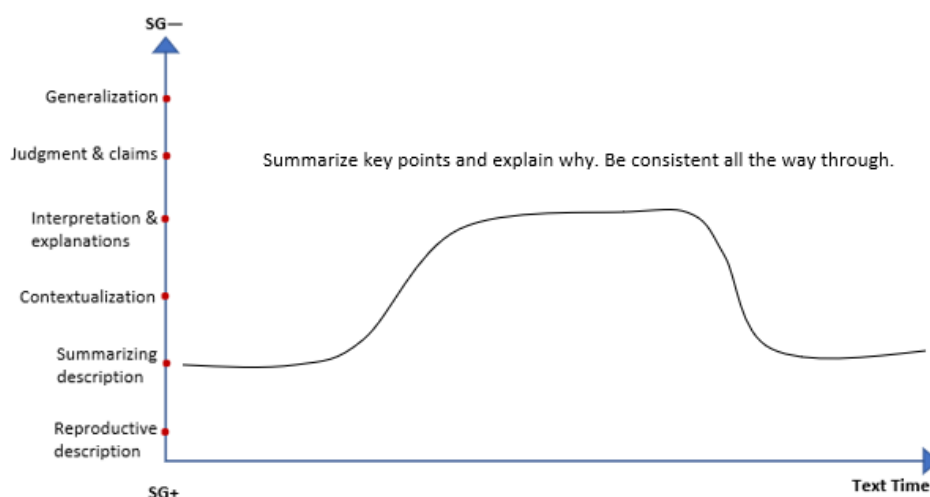
Figure 6.15 Semantic profile of Assessor's 1 expectations of the essay conclusion

In terms of complexity or relations among ideas, it seems that Tutor 1 expects more relations among ideas or higher epistemological condensation. He stated that the conclusion 'should elaborate and it shouldn't divert'. It seems that Tutor 1 expects more taxonomizing (EC++) or building different ideas that support each other to create a constellation of similar ideas. He also seems to expect less establishing (EC— —) of ideas that are less connected and divert from the discussion. By failing to connect between ideas, Zoe's essay conclusion was lower in complexity or epistemological condensation. Figure 6.16 below is an approximate comparison of Zoe's writing and Tutor's 1 expectations of the degree and form of epistemological condensation required.
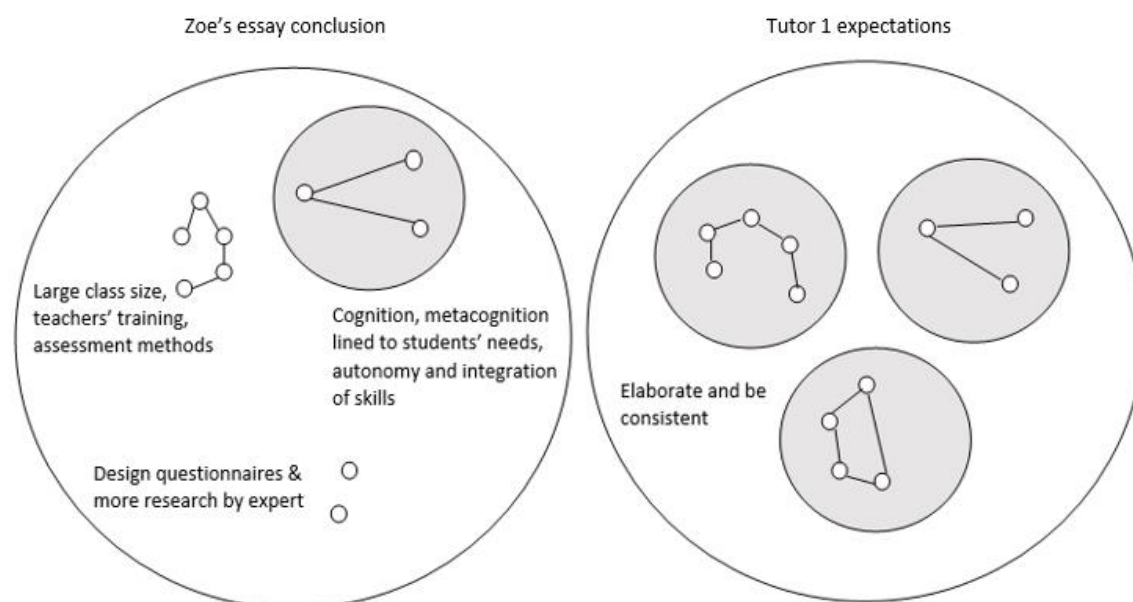
Figure 6.16 Comparison of epistemological condensation in Zoe's essay conclusion and Tutor's 1 expectations

Moving to Assessor 2, when asked about her expectations for a very good conclusion for this assignment, Assessor 2 responded:

> A very good conclusion will be one where you just read the conclusion and you understand the main argument, main points, and the position. [Assessor 2 interview]

Assessor 2 noted that she was satisfied with Yara's essay conclusion (see Yara's Essay Conclusion):

> I thought was quite a very nice and nicely summarised. And all the key points which the student has done. This is master's level [so it is] quite well written very easy to understand. I thought it was sustained and extended, and it was quite clear. [Assessor 2 interview]

In terms of complexity, Yara's conclusion was relatively higher in epistemological condensation since she established some claims and provided more support them. Thus, building the complexity of those claims through taxonomizing (EC++). Perhaps we can infer that Tutor 2 is satisfied and expects a conclusion that is higher in epistemological condensation.

Interview with Assessor 2 and in-text feedback showed that the overall essay, including the conclusion, could be improved by speculating the author's intention for taking an absolutist position in their article, thus further weakening semantic gravity (SG↓) by making further claims and judgments. Using Maton's 7Gs, Assessor 2 expected the conclusion to go in low at the semantic scale by providing summary of key points (SG↑) and then going back up by speculating the author's intention (SG↓).

> You have summed it well – though if there is space, you might want to speculate the reasons why Liao has chosen this absolute assertion. [Assessor 2 in-text feedback]

When I asked Yara whether she understood the in-text feedback, which required her to speculate the author's intention, she responded that she couldn't understand what was required from her:

> Honestly, I cannot understand this, but I think while Liao says that CLT is best for China, for me, it's too absolute. But here Liao just mention that the Chinese education government support CLT like that. So, I think it's really poor evidence for that. So, I, honestly, I have nothing to say about why I don't know how to explain why. [Yara's interview]

To summarise, an interview with Assessor 2 revealed that she expected a longer conclusion in which students provide summaries, explanations, and speculations or claims about the author's intention. In LCT Semantics, this refers to creating semantic shifts between texts which are stronger in terms of semantic gravity, such as summaries of the stated position (SG++) and semantically weaker texts, such as explanations (SG−), and much semantically weaker texts by speculating or making claims about the author's intention (SG− −). Thus, semantic upshifts and downshifts are created over a longer text time. (See Figure 6.17).
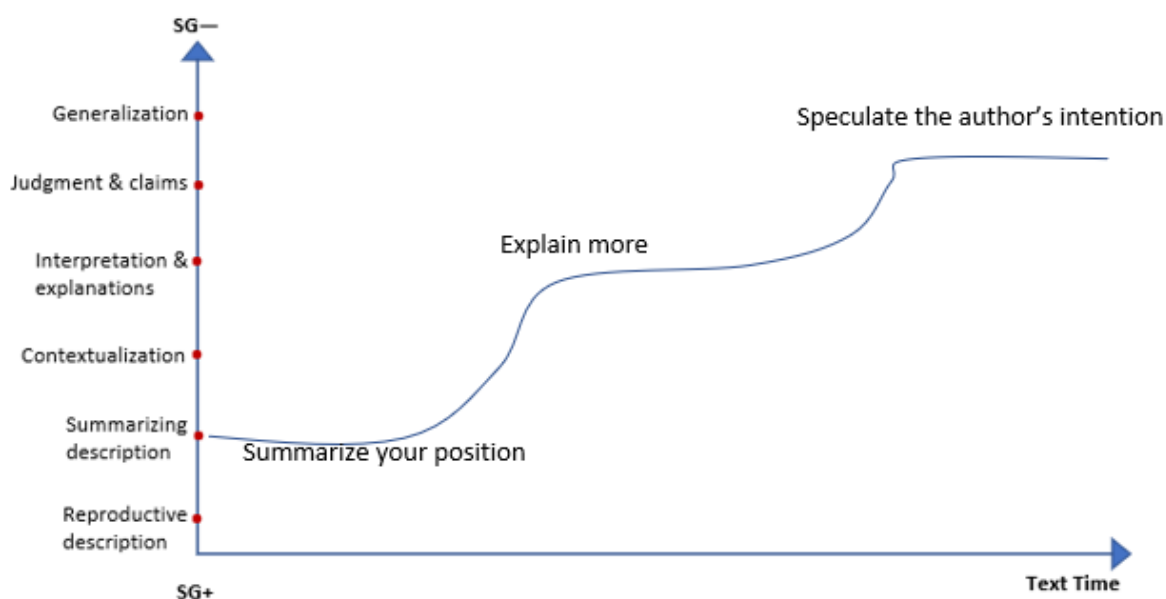
Figure 6.17   Semantic profile of Assessor's 2 expectations of the essay conclusion

Regarding Tutor 3 expectations for the essay conclusion, Tutor 3 expects students to 'go out low' by providing a summary of key points and a degree of sophistication. Referring to Chen's essay conclusion (see Chen's Essay Conclusion), the summary produced was not in line with Assessor 3 expectations of a good conclusion:

> I would expect to see a summary of key points raised. And, again, a restatement of what has been argued throughout. [There is] a kind of lack of sophistication in expressing different sides of the argument. As a conclusion, I'm not very satisfied with it. [Assessor 3 interview]

According to Assessor 3, the conclusion is also expected to be higher in complexity or epistemological condensation by showing sophistication in expressing different sides of the argument. This is referred to as coordinating (EC+) in which multiple meanings are connected to show different relations. Figure 6.6 below is a visualisation of epistemological condensation as presented in Chen's essay conclusion compared to Tutor 3 potential expectations.
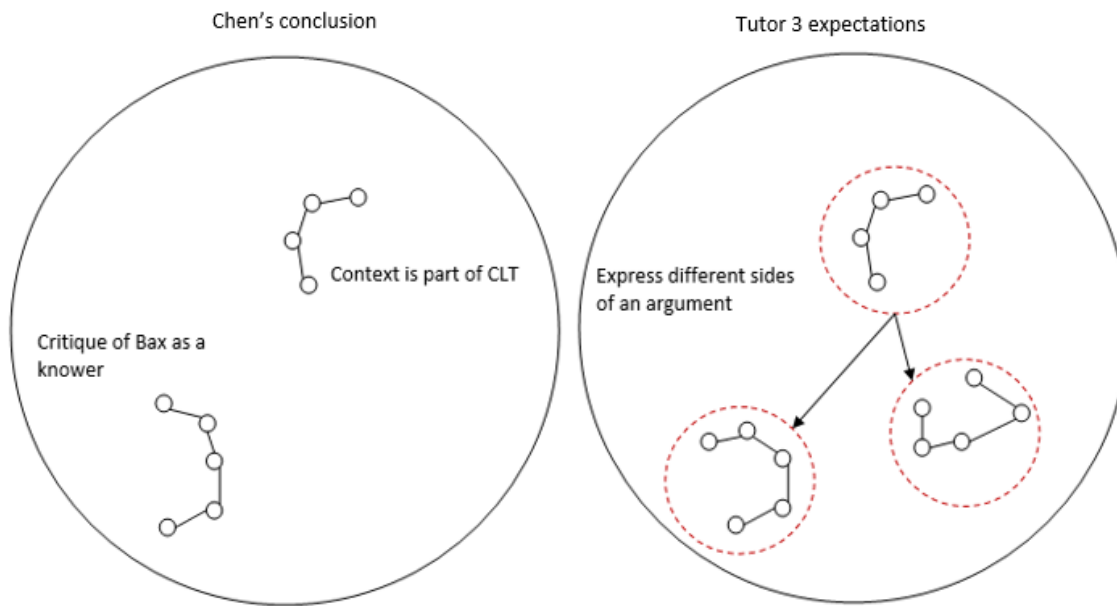
Figure 6.18   Comparison of Chen's enactment of epistemological condensation and Tutor's 3

expectations

Also, choice of language appeared to be one important criterion for assessing student work.

Chen used inappropriate language in her writing such as 'Bax probably did not know as much

about CLT as he thought'. Assessor 3 commented:

> It is not very good choice of expression really 'Bax properly did not know as much about CLT as he thought'. I mean it's quite insulting really. So, that the expression is kind of detracting from the from the position. [Assessor 3 interview]

Another requirement of a good essay conclusion, according to Assessor 3, is to provide a

summary of the previous discussion without introducing new ideas:

> A point I always make is that the conclusion should never be a surprise. And it's a logical restatement of what has come before. [Assessor 3 interview]

Another possible explanation for the differences in expectations between Chen and Tutor 3 is

perhaps a related misunderstanding of the concept of 'critique'. The tutor expected a knowledge-

focused critique of the article by focusing on the strengths of the author's argument, while Chen

perhaps understood 'critique' as knower-focused by focusing the critique on the author and his

intentions. This shows in some of her arguments where she directs the criticism to the author's

knowledge and approach of convincing the readers instead of the author's actual arguments, as

in:

> Bax probably did not know as much about CLT as he thought [...] In order to convince readers, he used many unquestionable statements and vague arguments (which should not appear in academic papers), but the lack of evidence made his arguments seem too much strong and unconvincing. So, no matter how unmistakable his tone, his arguments for lack of evidence does not hold water. [Chen's writing product]

This has important implications for teaching and learning as students and tutors can have code clashes. Students and tutors may not have the same understanding of the task, resulting in writing that doesn't meet the task's requirements. It is important that students are scaffolded appropriately towards the task and that such differences in academic writing expectations are made explicit and addressed.

To summarise, Tutor 3 expected the essay conclusion to provide a summary. This is not a summary of the article being critiqued but rather of the previous essay discussion and the position taken. This means that sentences in the essay conclusion would summarise the judgments, claims, interpretations, and contextualisation made previously. Moreover, Assessor 3 expected higher condensation by coordinating (EC+) and expressing different kinds of arguments. (See Figure 6.19).
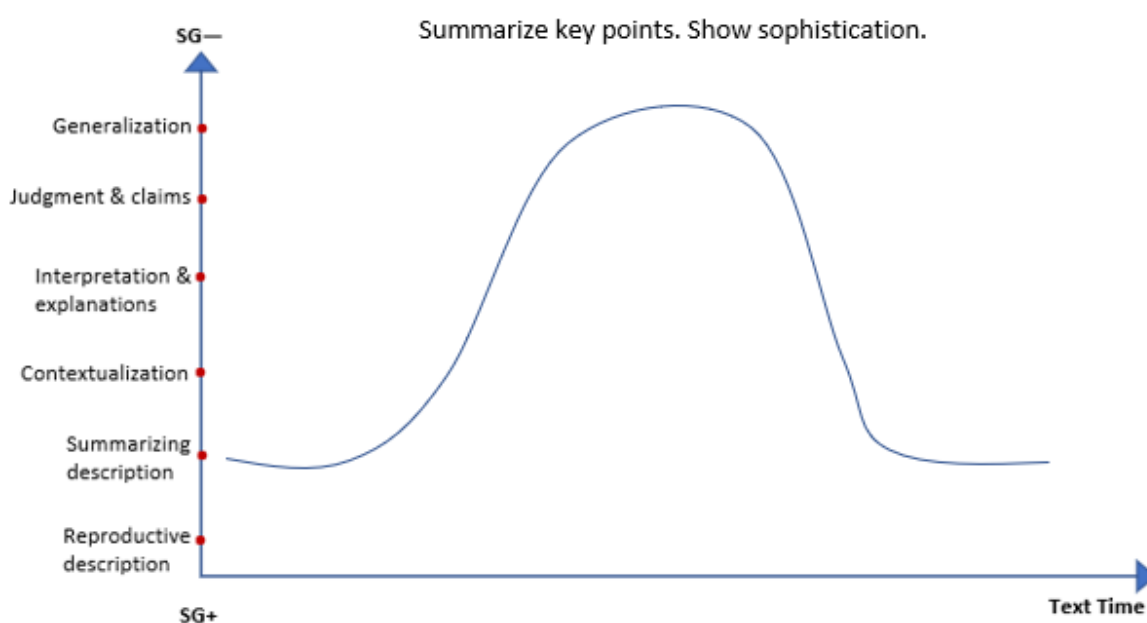
Figure 6.19   Semantic profile of Assessor's 3 expectations of the essay conclusion

By comparing tutors' academic writing expectations of essay conclusions, tutors appear to agree about the valued academic writing practices in essay conclusions. However, some tutors had expectations that others did not emphasise.

In terms of semantic gravity, all tutors expect a movement from stronger semantic gravity to weaker semantic gravity in which students restate key points of discussions and explain them; thus, moving from summaries (SG++) to interpretations and explanations (SG−) (see Figure 6.20). There are some slight differences in tutors' expectations. Only Tutor 2 emphasised weakening semantic gravity in the essay conclusion by speculating about the author's intention in writing the

article (SG↓). Tutors agreed that students should produce a high semantic flow in their conclusions by not introducing new ideas.

Regarding complexity or epistemological condensation, all tutors expect epistemological condensation either through taxonomizing (EC++) or coordinating (EC+). Taxonomizing occurs when different meanings are connected to support one main idea, thus increasing the complexity of it and creating a constellation of similar ideas. Coordinating occurs when different meanings are connected to show differences among them as in expressing different sides of the argument. While Tutors 1 and 2 emphasised taxonomizing, Tutor 3 emphasized coordinating in the essay conclusion.

LCT Semantics reveal the underlying principles structuring academic writing practices as they relate to abstraction, concreteness and complexity. Viewing academic writing from this perspective reveals some hidden features of successful and unsuccessful academic writing and offers tutors and students a different language to talk about academic writing practices (Grange and Blackie, 2021). Semantic profiles and constellations offer visual aids and help explain what is happening in student work compared to what tutors value as good academic writing (Rusznyak, 2021, Lambrinos, 2019).
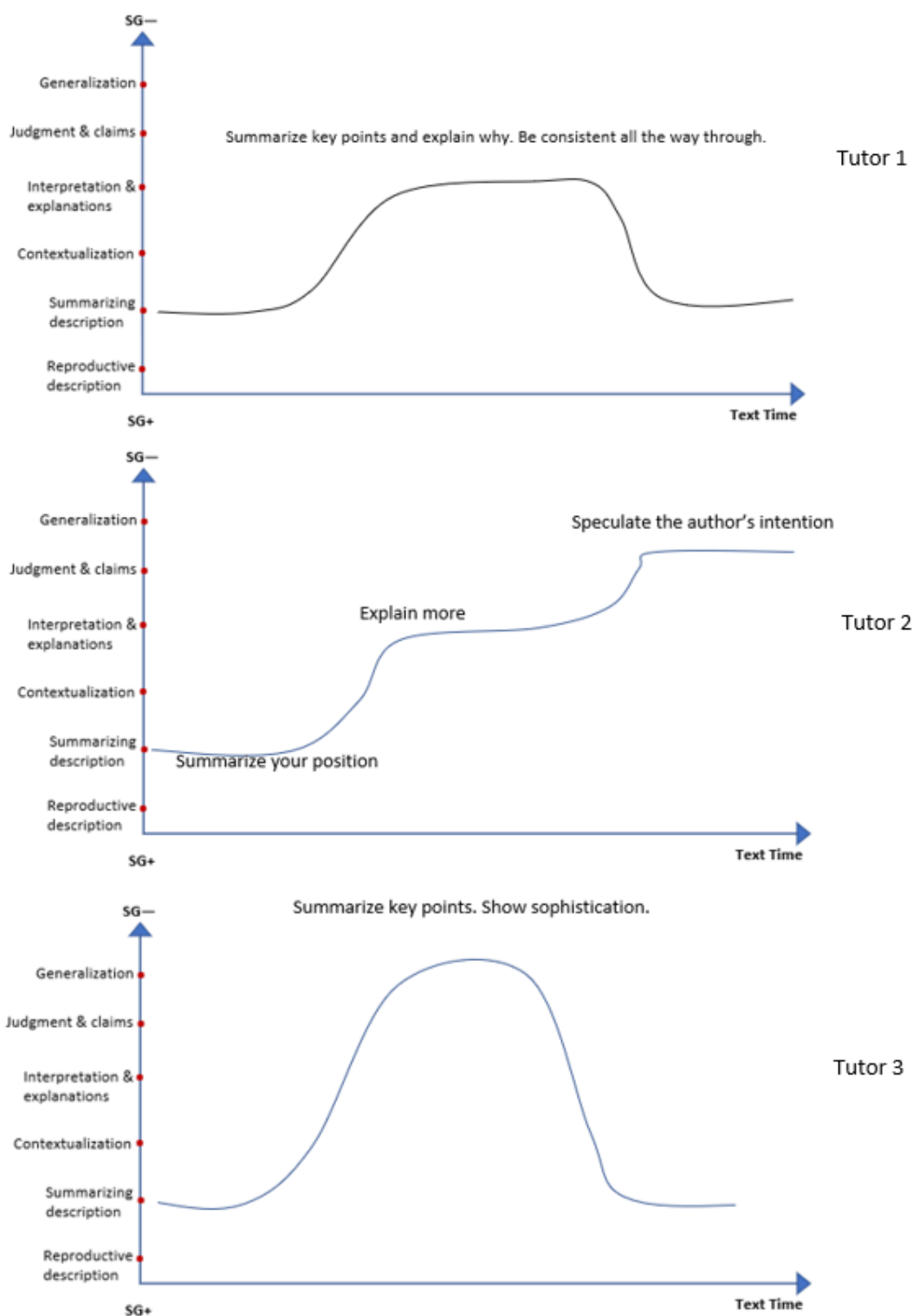
Figure 6.20   An approximate semantic profile of all tutors' expectations of the essay conclusions

6.9   Chapter Summary

The chapter explored the academic writing expectations of academic tutors and students. I used

two strategies: a zooming-out strategy to examine tutors' overall expectations for task 1 in the

MLTM and a zooming-in strategy to examine their perspectives for three marked essays in the essay introductions, essay bodies and essay conclusions.

The analysis aimed to answer the questions:

> How are the disciplinary expectations of postgraduate writing in Applied Linguistics understood by students and lecturers in terms of their context-dependence and context-independence and condensations of meanings?
>
> What makes a good essay in terms of context-dependence, context-independence and condensation of meanings based on tutors' perspectives?

Findings of tutors' overall expectations showed that tutors expected a level of abstraction in student writing by producing claims, judgments, and generalisations. What is unique is that each tutor defined abstraction somewhat differently, from bringing the discussion of the academic paper to the broader field of language teaching and learning to answering 'why' questions and taking a position towards the article and the literature. This means that how semantic gravity is expected to be weakened differs among tutors.

Certain expectations seemed to be emphasised by some tutors but not by all. While the assignment called strongly for contextualising the discussion of the essay by use of practical teaching and learning examples (SG+), only two tutors stressed the importance of this requirement. Tutor 3 almost completely ignored it during interviews and in-text feedback suggesting that it may not have been an essential criterion for marking students' essays for him.

Moving to the findings of the zooming-in strategy analysis of essay introductions, I found that even though all three essay introductions showed similar use of context-dependence and context-independence, the tutors marked them differently. The tutors seemed to agree that essay introductions need to have some description of the article being discussed or stronger semantic gravity (SG++) followed by weakening semantic gravity (SG↓). Still, they differed in how semantic gravity needs to be weakened, but they agreed on the importance of having a high semantic flow or degree of connectedness between ideas.

Likewise, the tutors agree and disagree about valued academic writing practices in the essay body. All tutors emphasised the importance of achieving the epistemological semantic threshold, which is a critique of the article's claims and linking topics and arguments back to the article. Tutor 2 also emphasised a different epistemological semantic threshold: accurate use of language teaching and learning theories. She especially valued students' attempts to go beyond the theories covered in the module and expected students to use concepts and theories not covered in the module accurately.

All tutors expected a weakening of semantic gravity in the form of judgements and explanations (SG↓). In terms of contextualisation or strengthening semantic gravity using practical teaching and learning examples (SG↑), only Tutors 1 and 2 emphasised the importance of contextualisation.

As for the semantic flow, the data analysis showed that tutors evaluated semantic flow in students' writing differently. For example, Tutor 1 expected student writing to show semantic flow at both the macro and micro levels of essay arguments, or the main themes of the essays and the ideas within paragraphs. In contrast, Tutor 2 was tolerant of a lower semantic flow at the macro level of essays or students' choice to discuss different topics in their essays, but she expected more semantic flow at the micro level of the essay, where ideas need to link clearly to each other at the paragraph level.

Regarding essay conclusions, the tutors appear to agree about the required academic writing practices in essay conclusions. However, some tutors had expectations that others did not emphasise or mention. Only Tutor 2 emphasised weakening semantic gravity in the essay conclusion by speculating about the author's intention in writing the article (SG↓).

When it came to students' expectations of valued academic writing practices, sometimes students had differing expectations from their tutors, which created code clashes. For example, students seem to have different understandings of the concept of 'critique' from their tutors. Chen seemed to understand a critique as 'knower-focused' by criticizing the authors' knowledge, intentions and use of language. In contrast, Tutor 3 understood 'critique' as knowledge-focused by evaluating the authors' arguments in relation to the wider literature. Also, some expected their writing to show a relatively lower degree of semantic gravity and density than their tutor. For example, Zoe expected to produce practical examples which are relatively stronger in semantic gravity than what was required by the tutor.

Moving to complexity or epistemological condensation, tutors overall expect students to make connections between concepts and contexts and between the text and other texts. However, there appear to be some differences in the forms of epistemological condensation expected in certain parts of the essays, and some forms are more emphasized than others.

For essay introductions, Assessor 1 and 3 expects higher epistemological condensation than Assessor 2. On the one hand, Assessor 1 expects coordinating (EC+) by juxtaposing and showing similarities and differences among meanings. He also expects characterizing (EC—) concepts and practices by adding more meanings within to show the nuance and complexity of those concepts and their applications. Tutor 3 also expected higher epistemological condensation in the essay

introduction by coordinating (EC+), that is, connecting meanings by creating a discussion from multiple sources to show different perspectives around highly debated concepts. On the other hand, Assessor 2 does not require an essay introduction to be highly semantically dense by creating a dense discussion around certain concepts or ideas. Assessor 2 expects an essay introduction that is relatively lower in epistemological condensation by simply establishing (EC——) a description of the article's claims and taking a clear position or judgment towards it.

Regarding complexity in essay bodies, all tutors require epistemological condensation. However, they differ in the forms required. On the one hand, Tutors 1 and 2 emphasized taxonomizing (EC++) and characterizing (EC—). Taxonomizing occurs when a meaning is established and connected to multiple different meanings to support it. Characterizing (EC+) means adding details to a teaching and learning practice or a concept to show the various aspects and properties that characterize it. Tutor 3, on the other hand, emphasized coordinating (EC+) more. Coordinating occurs when established meanings are connected to different meanings to show relations of differences. It occurs when students show different perspectives and points of view.

It was noted that sometimes tutors use the exact phrases to mean different things. For example, Tutor 1 and Tutor 2 require a discussion in which students do not produce a 'superficial answer'. For Tutor 1, this meant strengthening epistemological condensation by characterizing (EC—) and offering a complex discussion in which students consider the factors contributing to effective or ineffective teaching. Tutor 2 used the exact phrase to refer to an expectation to move beyond the 'what' or stronger semantic gravity in the form of descriptions (SG++) to weaker semantic gravity by answering 'why' questions or providing explanations and interpretations (SG–).

Regarding complexity or epistemological condensation in essay conclusions, all tutors expect epistemological condensation either through taxonomizing (EC++) or coordinating (EC+). Taxonomizing occurs when different meanings are connected to support one main idea, thus increasing the internal complexity of it and creating a constellation of similar ideas. Coordinating occurs when different meanings are connected to show differences among them as in expressing different sides of the argument. While Tutors 1 and 2 emphasized taxonomizing, Tutor 3 emphasized coordinating in the essay conclusion.

When it comes to students' expectations, students appear to have different expectations from their tutors regarding the complexity of their writing. For example, thought higher epistemological condensation was required to improve her essay introduction compared to Tutor 2. Chen also expected the essay introduction to show lower epistemological condensation compared to Tutor 3. This suggests a code clash between students and tutors.

Why these findings are important?

The findings showed different expectations between tutors and students in terms of relative degrees of context-bound meanings and semantically sense meanings. LCT Semantics tools were successful in making these expectations more explicit.

This has important implications for teaching, learning and assessment. Different expectations can affect the writing production and the evaluation of students' writing. When students and tutors have code clashes, it means they may not have the same understanding of the task, resulting in writing that doesn't meet the task's requirements.

Students and tutors may not be aware of these different expectations. By making these expectations more explicit, students and tutors can reflect on those expectations, challenge them or make them clearer for teaching and assessment purposes.

Since students come from different cultural backgrounds and may not have the same access to the rules of academic discourse, this may affect their learning and performance. This poses a social justice issue in higher education. Therefore, it is important that students are scaffolded appropriately towards the task and that such differences in academic writing expectations are made explicit and addressed.

LCT Semantics tools can be used by researchers and teaching practitioners to achieve social justice. They can use the tools to analyse their expectations and students' products in order to enhance the teaching and learning process. As Rusznyak (2021) notes, higher education should prioritize finding ways to support the academic success of students and make knowledge accessible to all. If lecturers want to support the academic success of students, they need to make explicit how knowledge is structured and built into their courses (Rusznyak, 2021).

Chapter 7   Implications and Conclusions

7.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, I looked at students' written work and tutors' and students' disciplinary expectations of academic writing in an Applied Linguistics module named Modern Language Teaching Methods. I sought to answer three main questions and a fourth secondary question:

1. How does a high-achieving writing task use meanings in terms of context-dependency and condensation of meanings compared to lower-achieving essays?
2. What makes a good essay in terms of context-dependency and condensation of meanings based on tutors' perspectives?
3. How do tutors' views of valued academic writing practices compare to those of students?

In this chapter, I answer a fourth secondary question:

4. What are the pedagogical implications of the research findings?

The use of LCT Semantics revealed various academic writing disciplinary expectations among tutors and students in the MLTM module. The high-achieving essay also showed characteristics not shared by the lower-achieving essays in terms of semantic gravity and density. The purpose of this discussion chapter is to explore and understand those expectations in relation to the literature on the field of LCT Semantics and academic writing in HE.

First, I discuss the findings of the present study in relation to the literature on LCT Semantics and academic writing in HE. Second, I discuss the practical implications of the research findings, which is a secondary aim of this study. Third, I mention the limitations of the research and future research opportunities. I finish the chapter by making concluding remarks and a summary of the research.

7.2   Summary of Findings and Implications

In this section, I present the main findings of the study along with findings from the wider literature which employed LCT Semantics to analyse academic writing in HE. First, I present the main findings and key messages of the study followed by an in-depth interpretation of more specific findings relating to different forms of semantic gravity waves and tutors' disciplinary expectations of the written work of students in the MLTM module.

To begin with, the present study found that both waving and weaving of knowledge are essential in successful student writing. Semantic waving occurs when students move recurrently between theories and concepts of communicative language teaching and practical teaching and learning examples while semantic weaving refers to the transformation of these different forms of knowledge. That is, the essays weave together meanings of greater and lesser context-dependent, empirical examples and theoretical constructs, and experiential and academic forms of knowledge and transform them by theorizing concrete examples and exemplifying concepts.

All the examined discussion essays in the MLTM module showed a semantic wave, however, not all of them showed successful weaving of knowledge in which the theoretical is successfully connected and integrated with the practical and vice versa. On the one hand, Yara's, which is the highest achieving essay, showed better knowledge building as the student successfully connected the theoretical concept of the 'washback effect' to the Chinese teaching and learning context. On the other hand, Zoe's writing, which is a low-scoring essay, showed semantic waving, but very little weaving in such a way that practical examples were not integrated and connected successfully to the theoretical examples provided; thus, resulting in knowledge that is segmental (Maton, 2019). Similarly, when it comes to complexity, Yara's essay showed the use of different forms of complexity ranging from higher epistemological condensation to lower. Chen's writing showed the lowest epistemological condensation as the student mostly established ideas but failed to provide enough support from the literature. She also presented teaching and learning examples superficially without showing nuance and awareness of different factors and scenarios that could affect those practices.

This is an important finding because research suggests that knowledge building involves semantic waves (recurrent shifts in context-dependence and complexity) that weave together different forms of knowledge (Maton, 2019, Wolff and Luckett, 2013). A range of studies explored the bases of achievement in education by analysing the semantic profiles of student assessments. This research increasingly suggests that knowledge practices expressing semantic waves as in strengthening and weakening of context-dependency and complexity are rewarded across subject areas and levels of education. In contrast, writing that demonstrates 'flatlines' (by remaining confined to anecdotal examples or abstractions) is not rewarded in the same way (Maton, 2019, Kristin, 2018, Wolff and Luckett, 2013, Szenes et al., 2015).

Moreover, the present study found that a high-achieving assignment showed more use of weaker semantic gravity in the form of generalizations (SG– – –) compared to lower-achieving assignments. They also showed a higher semantic range as the writing moves between theoretical concepts and teaching and learning approaches, claims and judgments (SG– –), explanations and

interpretations (SG−) to more practical teaching and learning examples (SG+). A higher-achieving essay showed better use of contextualization than other essays or better strengthening of semantic gravity (SG↑) by demonstrating sufficient and successful attempts to contextualize the discussion of an academic article to a specific teaching and learning context. Thus, producing a high range in which there are recurrent movements between context-dependent meanings and context-independent meanings that weave together. Studies suggest that semantic waving, weaving and a high range could be a generic attribute of knowledge practices associated with successful academic writing across disciplines (Szenes et al., 2015, Maton, 2019, Balawanilotu-Roach, 2017, Shay and Steyn, 2015, Wolff and Luckett, 2013, Tan, 2013).

The key message here is to view student academic writing through a different lens, which offers us a different consciousness of the nature of student academic writing. Student writing can be discussed not only in terms of its linguistic and socio-cultural features or genre moves but also through the lens of abstraction, concreteness and condensation of meanings. Semantic waving and weaving in students' work was found to be valued across disciplines and could be taught to students by academic specialists and EAP courses as a generic attribute of successful academic writing across disciplines.

Regarding other attributes of academic writing practices, the findings of this study show that these academic writing practices are valued and assessed differently by tutors. For example, tutors had different expectations about semantic range, semantic threshold, semantic flow, and epistemological condensation at different stages in student work. In the essay introductions, for instance, tutors agreed that students need to show complexity or higher epistemological condensation. However, they differed in the degree and types of epistemological condensation required. Tutor 1 expected both coordinating (EC+) and characterising (EC—) while Tutor 3 expected coordinating (EC+) only. Tutor 2 expected students to establish ideas (EC— —), which is the lowest form of epistemological condensation.

Moreover, although the present study confirms that semantic gravity waves in student writing in which they move from the theoretical to the practical and transform the practical into the theoretical is generally expected in the MLTM module and communicated through its guidelines and documents, it was not valued equally by all assessors. Assessor 3, in particular, valued the weakening of semantic gravity by engaging with the literature on language teaching and learning and gave much less value to the strengthening of semantic gravity by reference to practical teaching and learning examples. This suggests that creating semantic gravity waves is not sufficient to produce a high-achieving essay and that understanding the semantic codes that assessors bring to the evaluation process is necessary. It also suggests that module guidelines may

not be sufficient to communicate tutors' expectations and that those guidelines could be interpreted differently by tutors. It is useful for tutors to be aware of the ways their semantic codes differ and how they could affect the assessment of students' writing.

Likewise, the findings of this study showed that when it came to students' expectations of valued academic writing practices in discussion essays, sometimes students had differing expectations from their tutors, which created code clashes among them. For example, when students expect their writing to show a relatively lower degree of semantic gravity and density compared to their tutors. For example, Chen expected the essay introduction to be lower in epistemological condensation compared to the tutor, and Zoe expected to produce practical examples which are relatively stronger in semantic gravity than what was required by the tutor.

I suggest that awareness of students' and tutors' disciplinary expectations of valued academic writing and knowledge practices is essential for our understanding of the teaching, learning and assessment of successful academic writing in the disciplines. That is, both the 'knowledge' and the ways 'knowers' define valued practices are equally important in our understanding of successful academic writing in the disciplines. As Chen and Maton (2016) noted that practice is a meeting of two sets of codes: those defining the context and those characterizing actors' beliefs. Given the fact that previous studies which used LCT Semantics to analyse student writing in the disciplines neglect the role of actors' beliefs and disciplinary expectations on the production and evaluation of student texts, I suggest that without an understanding of assessors' disciplinary expectations, our understanding of the evaluation of valued academic and knowledge practices in student work is limited. Moreover, by making these disciplinary expectations more explicit, students and tutors are allowed to reflect on those expectations, challenge them or make them more explicit for teaching and assessment purposes.

Next, I summarise the specific findings that relate to the different forms that semantic gravity waves take. I interpret the findings as they relate to semantic entry, semantic range, semantic shifts, semantic flow, semantic threshold and semantic exist. I interpret the findings of this study in relation to findings from similar research. I mainly drew on Maton (2019) and Balawanilotu-Roach (2017) findings. I refer to other studies as well such as Georgiou et al. (2014), Shay and Steyn (2015), and Martin et al. (2010), which examined semantic waves across disciplines and educational contexts.

Semantic entry refers to how meanings begin on the semantic scale as in the introduction section of written work. In terms of context-dependence and condensation of meanings at the semantic entry point, students' written work for the MLTM module started with both strengthening and weakening of semantic gravity at the entry point or essay introductions by describing the research

article and taking a position towards it. All three essay introductions showed similar use of context-dependency and condensation of meanings with movement from stronger semantic gravity to weaker semantic gravity or vice versa and the use of lower epistemological condensation.

Despite showing the same level of semantic gravity and epistemological condensation at the semantic entry point, the three essay introductions were valued and marked differently by the three tutors. Some tutors also had expectations which were not emphasized or mentioned by the others. The tutors seemed to agree that essay introductions need to have some description of the article being discussed or stronger semantic gravity (SG++) followed by weaker semantic gravity, but they differed in how semantic gravity needs to be weakened. They also differed in the degree of epistemological condensation required at the semantic entry point.

Tutors within the same subject area and module had slightly different semantic codes and expectations for how abstract and dense meanings should be at the semantic entry. Research also showed that semantic codes and waves do not always look the same across disciplines and they begin and end at other points on the semantic scale (Maton, 2019). For example, practically oriented subjects, such as vocational education, often begin and end with concrete examples and simpler meanings, creating bell-shaped waves (Maton, 2019). Balawanilotu-Roach (2017) also found that tasks from two different modules, Political Science and Business, showed different expectations at the entry point on the semantic scale. In the Political Science task, students were more restricted and required to not reformulate the question, choose the preferred political argument, and upload the right theories. The Business task, however, expected students to provide a discussion of definitions at the entry point and to state the phenomenon being discussed, with the second stage only being compulsory. Being aware of the different semantic codes, and expectations within the same discipline, module and across disciplines offer us important insights into the nature of academic writing and how to open access to these differing practices by making both tutors and students aware of them.

In terms of semantic range, semantic range refers to the degree of movement (up and down) on the semantic scale. There are the highest strengths and lowest strengths in a semantic range. When writing does not move between the theoretical and practical, flatlines are created. If a student engages in the theoretical and abstract only, this is depicted as a high flatline on the semantic scale. When the writing dwells only on the personal and practical with little to no engagement with theories in the field, this is depicted as a low flatline on the semantic scale.

In the present study, the highest point of the semantic range for the MLTM discussion essay was a reference to the principles of communicative language teaching and other approaches to

language teaching and learning whereas the lowest semantic range was a reference to practical teaching and learning examples in specific context and from own personal experience. Generally speaking, the appropriate semantic range for the discussion essay for the MLTM is a balance between the abstract and the concrete; thus, avoiding high flatlines or low flatlines. Students were expected to bridge the gap between the principles of communicative language teaching and general theories of language teaching and learning, and practical teaching and learning examples. The high-scoring essay written by Yara showed a high range in which the student was able to move successfully and repeatedly between the notion of the washback effect and the Chinese learning context.

Generally, it is found that the limited nature of flatlines in academic writing could be problematic (Maton, 2019). However, in successful academic writing, it is not a simple case of the higher [on the semantic scale] the better (Maton, 2019). For example, research into undergraduate physics reveals that students may reach too high up the semantic scale in their assessed work, using concepts, principles, equations or laws that are overly generalizing or condense more meanings than appropriate to their assignment (Georgiou et al., 2014). This suggests that one facet of being trained to write successfully for a subject area is learning the semantic range appropriate to addressing different kinds of writing tasks (Maton, 2019).

Also, the nature of the lowest and highest semantic ranges differs from one task to another and from one discipline to another. Balawanilotu-Roach (2017) found that semantic range mattered significantly in what was assessed as critical thinking in writing. In the Political Science task, the highest strengths were the theoretical principles, and the lowest strengths were the case studies. For the Business task, the highest strengths were the arguments, conclusions or generalisations, and the lowest strengths were the students' opinions. These differences in the nature of the lowest and highest semantic ranges offer insights into the nature of subject-specific differences in valued knowledge and academic practices across disciplines.

Moreover, interviews with tutors showed that not all tutors value the same semantic range. Interview with Tutor 3 and his in-text feedback, for example, suggest that he may not expect a high semantic range. Instead, he may expect generally a high semantic wave in which students mostly engage with generalization, abstraction and condensation from the literature on the field of language teaching and learning. Tutors' interviews reveal that even within the same module tutors may value different semantic ranges which can affect the teaching and assessment practices. Revealing those differences is essential to achieving social justice in HE and making students from all backgrounds aware of how their tutors value academic writing practices differently.

In terms of semantic shifts, there are two types of semantic shifts: upshifts and downshifts. Upshifts refer to upward movement on the semantic scale as a result of the weakening of semantic gravity or strengthening of semantic density (SG↓SD↑). Downshifts on the semantic scale relate to the strengthening of semantic gravity or weakening of semantic density (SG↑SD↓). In the present study, downshifts in student writing for the MLTM pertained to references to practical teaching and learning examples or specific teaching and learning contexts while upshifts pertained to references to the principles of communicative language teaching or teaching and learning approaches and theoretical concepts. Both upshifts and downshifts were significant for the MLTM module and this requirement was communicated clearly through module documents and classroom instruction. However, when it came to assessment practices, only Tutors 1 and 2 gave equal importance to both upshifts and downshifts where students move from the theoretical and practical repeatedly during their assignment while Tutor 3 valued upshifts and engagement with the abstract and the theoretical more than downshifting and applications of language teaching and learning approaches to specific teaching and learning contexts.

Analysis of upshifts and downshifts reveal the subject-specific differences among disciplines and writing tasks. Maton (2019) explains that even though both upward and downward shifts are required for cumulative knowledge-building, the directions of semantic shifts may play different roles across academic subjects. For example, research into professional education suggests that downshifts may be crucial in teaching and learning appropriate ways to select, recontextualize and enact abstract and complex knowledge within concrete and specific cases of professional practice (Shay and Steyn, 2015). Maton (2019) states that where the key is the application of knowledge in specific contexts, downshifting may be crucial.

In the academic discipline of Business and Political Science, both downshifts and upshifts are important but understood and realized differently across the two disciplines and writing tasks (Balawanilotu-Roach, 2017). In the present study, the module documents gave equal importance to both upshifts and downshifts, but interviews with assessors revealed that they were valued differently. This is an important finding as it not only shows the differences across disciplines but also among tutors within the same discipline and module. This insight can be used for pedagogical purposes to inform academics about the differences in their expectations and how they affect the assessments of students' texts. Module guidelines and documents may not always reflect tutors' beliefs and assessment practices, and being aware of the differences in actors' beliefs can improve teaching and assessment practices.

Moving to semantic flow which refers to the degree of connectedness between different points that the students write. High semantic flow means it flows smoothly; low flow means it jerks up and down; and no flow means it quantum leaps between points on the semantic scale. There is a close relationship between semantic shift and semantic flow. Semantic flow refers to the coverage and logical connectedness of those points covered. In the present study, low-scoring writing products such as that of Zoe showed very low semantic flow, in which frequently arguments and examples were disconnected from one another. Thus, creating occasional jumps between points as was shown in students' semantic profiles. Zoe employed practical teaching and learning examples that were far too specific or stronger in terms of semantic gravity (SG↑↑) than was required by the tutor (SG+). The examples she used appeared far too specific that they failed to explain the theoretical notions or exemplify the arguments made. This made the knowledge in her writing appear segmental and lacking knowledge-building. This can offer insights into, for example, problems experienced in successfully integrating theory and examples by students in assignments. In contrast, higher-scoring essays such as Yara's writing task showed a balance of reference to theoretical concepts and literature and the use of exemplifying teaching and learning examples. The examples she used were stronger in semantic gravity (SG+), but not so detailed and specific that they became irrelevant and needed further explanation.

While a high semantic flow is generally preferred, the nature of semantic flow in academic practices can vary across disciplines (Maton, 2019). On the one hand, the present study found that semantic flow pertained to how learning and teaching examples from specific contexts are used successfully to exemplify theoretical notions and arguments of language teaching and learning. It also refers to whether arguments and themes build on one another to create cumulative knowledge building in students' texts. Balawanilotu-Roach (2017), on the other hand, found that in the Political Science task, semantic flow involved depth or detail and breadth of coverage of a case study while in the Business task, it pertained to a balance between positive and negative impacts of the factors on the validity of research results. These differences in the nature of semantic flow across disciplines could be attributed to the different epistemological underpinnings of each discipline (Lea and Street, 1998). Being aware of the epistemological underpinnings of feedback and making them more explicit is essential for the academic achievement of students.

Unlike Balawanilotu-Roach (2017) who found that a high semantic flow mattered significantly for assessors from both modules, the tutors in the present study evaluated semantic flow in students' writing differently. For example, Tutor 1, on the one hand, expected student writing to show a high semantic flow at both the macro level of essay arguments and the micro level of essay arguments. That is, Tutor 1 expected student writing to show connectedness between the main

themes of the essay and the ideas within a paragraph level. On the other hand, Tutor 2 was tolerant of a lower semantic flow at the macro level of essays or students' choice to discuss different topics in their essays. Tutor 2 encouraged students to make use of multiple arguments and factors to critique the article as long as they do not present a scattershot approach. However, she expected a high semantic flow at the micro level of the essay where ideas need to link clearly to each other at the paragraph level. This shows that analyses of students writing using LCT Semantics need to be combined with analyses of assessors' beliefs and assessment practices to bridge the gap between the evaluation practices and realization practices or actual student work. It also echoes the importance of making those differences between tutors more explicit to improve teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Finally, the concept of semantic threshold, or the extent to which accuracy matters and the practices that students had to 'get right' reveal important insights into the nature of academic writing. There are two types of semantic thresholds. Epistemological thresholds refer to getting it right regarding one's facts, and axiological threshold pertains to getting one's politics or moral view right. Epistemological forms concern epistemic relations and axiological forms concern social relations. Ongoing research suggests that the degree of this threshold differs across subject areas and through stages of education (Maton, 2019). In the present study, all tutors emphasized the importance of achieving the epistemological semantic threshold which is a critique of the article's claims and linking topics and arguments back to the article being discussed rather than discussing language teaching and learning approaches per se. However, this is a Masters level course and this level of accuracy may be within the bounds of the semantic threshold at this level. Too much accuracy such as critiquing the actual principles of communicative language teaching as proposed by Brumfit (1984) and proposing alternative principles to teaching and learning a second language may require considerably more knowledge and could become very challenging for students at this point. Other institutions and learning contexts may require a higher or lower level of semantic threshold.

Moreover, tutors can differ in what they consider the appropriate strength of epistemic semantic gravity or epistemological condensation. Tutor 2, for instance, emphasized a different kind of epistemological semantic threshold, which is the accurate use of language teaching and learning theories. She especially valued students' attempts to go beyond the theories covered in the module and expected students to make accurate use of concepts and theories not covered in the module. Additionally, the concept of semantic threshold offers the valuable lesson that semantic gravity waves may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for success, and that 'getting it right' may be crucial. That is, while a student may engage with theory and practice successfully, if they do not engage with theories outside the ones covered in the module, they may not be

awarded a high mark according to Tutor 2. This also highlights the significance of working with subject specialists, and that building knowledge requires mastering both its form and its content.

Also, the nature of the semantic threshold may change. This present study discussed only epistemic-semantic gravity and epistemological condensation, where knowledge comprises formal definitions, theoretical concepts, and empirical teaching and learning examples. In this study, semantic threshold concerns epistemological accuracy. However, there are other forms, such as axiological-semantic gravity and axiological-semantic density based on affective, aesthetic, ethical, political or moral stances (Maton, 2014). In these cases, having the right political or moral attitude may be crucial. For instance, Martin et al. (2010) found that analyses of History lessons reveal the moral meanings condensed within such terms as 'colonialism', 'nationalism' and 'imperialism'. By bringing together the Semantics dimension of LCT with that of the Specialization dimension, Martin et al. (2010) were able to give insights into the epistemological and axiological underlying principles of classroom practices.

The use of LCT Semantics can reveal the nature of valued academic and knowledge practices in the disciplines, which otherwise may remain hidden from actors in the field. More insights into the nature of academic writing in HE could be understood by exploring the epistemic and social relations within knowledge or the epistemological and axiological forms of knowledge, and actors' beliefs in the field. This is an opportunity for future research in the area of academic writing in HE.

Also, given the fact that the findings of the present study showed that tutors and students bring different semantic codes which affect the teaching, learning, production and assessment of writing, I suggest that more research using LCT Semantics is required into coding the beliefs that students bring to the contexts by virtue of their past experiences, to reveal who is predisposed to succeed or not and to suggest ways forward to achieve greater social justice in education (Chen and Maton, 2016). More specifically, I recommend that future research explore the role of different entry and exit points in student assignments and how tutors' semantic codes of entry and exit points may affect the assessment of students' texts.

It may also be worth investigating how semantic threshold is understood across disciplines and educational contexts. Further research may show the different levels of accuracy required at different stages of education and as students progress through their research degrees, thus, raising the semantic threshold. Some institutions may require higher or lower levels of semantic threshold and it is worth investigating the nature of semantic threshold across different contexts and institutions.

7.3   Pedagogical Implications

Since LCT Semantics can make visible the valued academic and knowledge practices in student writing, it can be used to guide teachers and students in the fields where academic writing is an important assessment (Brooke, 2019).

Examples of using insights from LCT Semantics research on academic writing include showing students and tutors that semantic gravity waves are a general characteristic of successful academic writing. However, not all students recognize that semantic gravity waves are a crucial aspect of assignments and/or realize such a profile in their written assessments or are equally capable of enacting the semantic codes required for academic achievement (Maton, 2019). Maton (2019; 2020) states that mastery of semantic waves may underlie achievement in education, but it is unevenly distributed across society. Students from different social backgrounds come to education with attitudes that encompass different semantic ranges. Maton (2014, p.204-5) reanalyses Holland's study using Bernstein's concepts (1981) to show how students from social classes have different semantic coding orientations. Students differ in their capacity to successfully realize practices that embody different semantic codes. Research reveals the ability to move between concrete, simpler meanings and abstract, generalized, and complex meanings is associated more with socialization practices in cultural middle-class families than those of working-class families (Hasan, 2009). Likewise, international students have their own dispositions since they come from different educational and cultural backgrounds with different coding orientations. Such students need to be socialised into the new academic cultures in the UK HE and other tertiary institutions so they can understand the academic requirements of those educational systems. LCT Semantics analysis can open access to all students at the postgraduate level. This is an important social justice issue in all higher education contexts (Wilmot, 2017).

We have also seen through the previous discussions how semantic gravity waves alone are not sufficient to produce successful academic writing. Understanding the required semantic range, semantic threshold, and degree of epistemological condensation in academic fields is very important for academic achievement. We have also seen how tutors vary in their definitions of semantic threshold and semantic range. Raising tutors' and students' consciousness of the required semantic codes and relations within knowledge in academic practices becomes very important for pedagogy. Findings from this study could be used to provide strategies for scaffolding discussion essays. For example, tutors could examine both the expected range of semantic gravity and epistemological condensation in student writing and ask whether they are sufficiently excavating the range of both of these dimensions. This can help students gain greater

insight into the access of the underlying principles of writing practices in their field so that they begin to write confidently.

Semantic gravity might provide students and tutors with new insights into how they are working and how they might work differently in the future. For example, through the concept of semantic flow, tutors and students can begin to see how students were able to construct knowledge cumulatively (or not) in their academic writing (Clarence, 2017). Tutors also can begin to see the degrees of cumulative knowledge building they expect in student writing and whether they vary in their expectations of knowledge building or not. The concept of semantic flow can offer academics and students a way to be more conscious of how texts are structured and add depth to conversations between students and tutors on how to construct knowledge cumulatively.

Moreover, students may not be aware of the varying levels of abstractions, concreteness and condensation of meanings required and present in their writing. Their awareness of these varying levels could be achieved through both classroom interventions and the development of Translation Devices. First, similar to Kirk (2017), who used the tool of semantic gravity and semantic gravity waves within an EAP context to examine and help teach reflective writing, the tool could be used as a teaching intervention to help students visualize the selection and arrangement of knowledge through a piece of academic writing. For example, students could be shown that recounting personal experience is seen as exhibiting stronger gravity while drawing on theoretical concepts from the course reading is seen as exhibiting weaker gravity. Students can be shown how narrating only personal experience in their writing may be insufficient for obtaining higher grades and that interpretations of personal experience need to be pushed higher by engagement with academic theory. Thus, weakening semantic gravity. Classroom intervention practices like the one presented in Kirk (2017) are useful to help students recognize the importance of integrating theory and practice in their writing, especially in modules and writing tasks which require such movement between the abstract and concrete.

Second, the development and use of Translation Devices or semantic gravity and density continuums such as the adapted semantic gravity Translation Device used in this study (see Table 3.3) and the epistemological condensation Translation Device (see Table 3.4), can help students become more aware of the relative strengths of semantic gravity and density required from them. These Translation Devices enable students' writing practices to be mapped across texts as they move from theoretical to practical application of knowledge and from lower epistemological condensation to higher epistemological condensation of meanings. They could be used as pedagogical tools that provide a scaffold for students on how to bring theory and data into a genuine dialogue by stepping through the different semantic gravity and density. It is a useful tool

to show how their knowledge practices develop over text time. Furthermore, it can be used as a shared metalanguage in classrooms and tutorials or through written feedback as a way for tutors to explain what is needed in a text as well as provide more explicit feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of students' work. For example, Tutor 2 used the vague phrase 'critical distance' to refer to the weakening of semantic gravity by providing interpretations and explanations of arguments and statements. This phrase proved to be confusing to the student. Using a Translation Device as a shared metalanguage provides a practical and meaningful alternative to vague metaphors by providing an explicit scaffolding framework for tutors to work with without being prescriptive (Wilmot, 2021).

Mapping student texts using semantic gravity continuum or Translation Devices also enables the different types of knowledge in texts to be illustrated using "profiles" and constellations of meanings as visual representations. Profiles and constellations are useful because they provide an immediate visual of what is going on in a text, in terms of how the student is building knowledge (Wilmot, 2018). These profiles and constellations are not prescriptive, and students need to be aware that more than one profile may be valued. Moreover, semantic profiling and constellations of meanings can help tutors make visible their academic writing expectations, which can potentially resolve discrepancies between expectations and assumptions. These expectations could also be negotiated among tutors teaching in the same module and shared with students to help resolve the discrepancies between tutors' and students' expectations.

Furthermore, similar to Monbec et al. (2020), findings from my study could be used to design a new rubric which makes visible what is highly valued in discussion essays. However, this rubric is not a template but a road map for students to use creatively as they become confident academic writers. The rubric should not restrict the learners but scaffold the skills entailed in discussion essays. Also, because sematic waving and weaving are shown to be characteristics of successful student work, it becomes important to ask whether classroom practices help model semantic waving and weaving to all students and, if not, academics are encouraged to think about how they can do so (Maton, 2019, Szenes et al., 2015). If semantic waves are key to knowledge-building and achievement in education, and if the ability to wave is not equally shared among learners of different backgrounds, then teaching students how to master semantic waves can be very important.

Finally, it is important to note, though, that some work is required for the recontextualization or translating between LCT Semantics research insights and tools into pedagogic tools for use with students and staff. This may include replacing technical concepts with more accessible ones for

students as in replacing 'weaker semantic gravity' with 'use of theory' or 'stronger semantic gravity' with 'use of practical examples' or 'applications'.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

I recognize the limitations of this study, and I address them here as future research opportunities. To begin with, the research started as an investigation of the notion of critical thinking in postgraduate academic writing. By 2018 and before conducting interviews, I came across Legitimation Code Theory. My first encounter with LCT was through Szenes et al. (2015) who argued that there is a need for the study of knowledge practices in critical thinking to complement the existing focus of research on exploring cognitive processes of knowing.

Szenes et al. (2015) study inspired me to use LCT semantics to analyse critical thinking in student writing in the disciplines. The interview questions and the data collected were shaped by a focus on critical thinking. However, during the data analysis process, I found the limited capacity of the writing tasks I gathered in terms of understanding criticality because these tasks were not designed specifically to elicit critical thinking. Critical thinking also comprises one component of the marking criteria in the module I examined; thus, the writing tasks investigated are not ideal for investigating the notion of critical thinking. Additionally, the theoretical and analytical lens of LCT Semantics does not by itself capture the knowledge practices associated with criticality. LCT Semantics does not have the capacity to determine whether assignments demonstrate criticality or other cognitive processes that are 'critical'. Rather, the aim of using LCT semantic gravity and density is to illustrate the nature of what has been judged by teaching professionals in HE as valued academic writing practices. Therefore, I directed my focus to examine the valued academic practices in students' texts in terms of context-dependence and context-independence and condensations of meanings using LCT Semantics as the theoretical and analytical lens to examine these knowledge forms.

There is no doubt the early decision I made to focus on critical thinking in student academic writing influenced the research methods, interviewing techniques and the data gathered. For example, I limited the study to the genre of Evaluative Account. However, the genre of a lesson design could have been equally useful to study the use of theoretical and practical knowledge. Also, the focus on students' and tutors' perceptions of critical thinking led me to have insufficient data to compare tutors' and students' perspectives of actual student writing. To avoid this problem, I could have interviewed tutors and students about more specific examples from student work relating to the use of theory, practice and complexity. Tutors could have been interviewed before students about valued practices in relation to theory, practice and complexity

to be used later as a guide for students' interviews about how they evaluate their practices and why. Piloting LCT Semantics analysis of students' texts and tutors' interviews could have helped me avoid some of these problems. However, COVID-19 caused an 11-month delay in the data collection procedure, and it was difficult to conduct the piloting of data analysis.

Regarding the research methodology, this case study was originally intended to be a multiple-case design since I gathered data from three modules in Applied Linguistics, interviews with six tutors in the field, classroom observations of all three modules, documents of all modules, fifty students essays and thirty students' interviews. However, due to time limitations and to conduct an in-depth analysis, the case study was changed to a single case study with an embedded unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). That is, it is a single case because I examine one module in the field of Applied Linguistics and it is embedded because it explores tutors' disciplinary expectations, students' disciplinary expectations, students' writing, and module documents within the case. Future research could explore and compare practices in more than one module from the same degree programme.

Moreover, I have used ESP genre theory to understand the social function of the essays and understand the rhetorical moves employed by students before carrying out an LCT Semantics analysis of gravity and density. Further research in the context of academic writing in Applied Linguistics can make use of more SFL genre-based resources, which provide insights into the use of language resources and linguistic practices in academic writing for a range of functions: for example, positioning theories and actors, expression levels of agreement and generalization as well as opening up a space for different positions and voices. One can explore more language resources that successful students use to demonstrate their understanding of theoretical concepts and how they apply these to practice while developing successful arguments throughout their written analyses. Examples of those studies which used LCT Semantics for analysing student work by incorporating analyses of both linguistic features and visual elements include (Brooke, 2020, Irwin and Liu, 2019, Svensson, 2019).

Semantic density was explored in this study in both student writing and tutors' disciplinary expectations, but only at the level of epistemological condensation that appeared in students' texts and what tutors value as examples of complexity. This is because of the time limit and word limit of the thesis. Semantic density could be analysed in student writing by using Systematic Functional Linguistic resources which show condensation of meanings combined with an LCT Semantics density analysis. Researchers could use concepts from SFL such as technicality, grammatical metaphor, and periodicity to identify and analyse the linguistic realisation of

semantic density in academic discourse (Martin, 2013, Huang and Chen, 2017, Maton and Doran, 2017a).

Moreover, the concept of voice appears consistently in interviews with tutors and students. LCT could be used to interpret and understand the concept of 'voice'. This could be achieved through the use of SFL as a means of 'translating textual data' (Maton & Doran, 2017, p. 611) into forms that then use LCT concepts as a broader theoretical scaffold for interpreting and understanding this data (Brooke, 2016; Kirk, 2017; Szenes, Tilakaratna, & Maton, 2015; Tilakaratna & Szenes, 2017; Tilakaratna & Szenes, forthcoming). Researchers can use the SFL tool of 'appraisal' to analyse 'voice' in student writing and later use the concepts of 'gaze' and 'epistemic relations' and 'social relations' from the Specialization dimension of LCT to interpret and explain it (Cheung, 2015, Hood, 2012). However, due to time and word limits on this thesis, analysis of 'voice' in student writing was not covered in this study. Future work could expand on this study by analysis of voice in student writing through a combination of SFL and LCT tools.

The robustness of my findings might also have been affected by the relatively small number of participants representing one field of study and one module, which could weaken the generalizability of my findings to the discipline involved. I examined one essay genre in one module within one discipline. Practices in other disciplines may also differ considerably. Researchers interested in comparing knowledge forms across disciplines might wish to conduct comparative studies in which two or more disciplines are cross-examined. Second, my data come from a single university, and given the situated nature of assessment and feedback, my findings may not be generalizable to other educational contexts. Therefore, similar studies could be conducted in other settings to check for similarities and differences in the findings. By examining the specific semantic profiles and constellations of meanings of different subject areas and stages of the curriculum, studies like this can begin to offer insights into the generic and subject-specific practices among disciplines. Also, the trustworthiness of the data of this study could have been enhanced through member-checking both in the narrative accounts of interview data and in the semantic profiles of tutor expectations. Delays caused by COVID-19 and losing contact with participants were a major reason for not being able to carry member-checking.

This study is also limited to theoretical tasks in the MLTM module and did not examine the practical tasks of the module in which students were asked to design a lesson plan and provide a rationale for the design. It is equally important to examine the different theoretical and practical knowledge forms and how they are reflected in practical tasks such as lesson designs. This is not to say that theoretical tasks such as a discussion essay do not involve an engagement with theory and practice. Practice and application also link to theory and being about the relationship

between theory and practice. That is, application also refers to the evaluation of theories and application of theoretical constructs in actual practice and discussion of pedagogical issues when applying theoretical knowledge. This decision still posits a limitation in my study as practical assignments in which student reflect on a lesson design and support it with theory could have been useful to examine using LCT Semantics for their valued academic practices in relation to theory and practice. That being said, and to cover a wider range of writing tasks and to better understand the nature of assessment of theoretical and practical knowledge forms in practical assignments, I recommend that future studies explore knowledge practices in practical assignments in which students reflect on a lesson design.

Since this study presents an analysis of the kinds of knowledge practices and academic practices that are valued and existent in Evaluative Accounts, more research is required to determine the extent to which these resources and practices predominate in these tasks in the field of Applied Linguistics. These kinds of studies may be used to make students and academics more aware of the practices that need to be enacted to demonstrate mastery of Evaluative Accounts. Moreover, more research is needed to gain a better understanding of the range of assessment tasks in which Evaluative Accounts manifest, and how assessment expectations may change from one task or another or between different modules and similar disciplines and among assessment practices of the same module and writing tasks. It is important to ask whether valued academic writing practices are depicted differently or similarly in their disciplines. This could perhaps be an interesting way forward for this developing field.

Finally, LCT Semantics can explain knowledge in terms of context-dependency and context-independency and condensation of meanings; however, knowledge can still be viewed and analysed in many different ways.

7.5   Summary and Conclusions

In this present study, I sought to understand the academic practices in student academic writing in UK HE by examining students essays and tutors' and students' disciplinary expectations of academic writing in the field of Applied Linguistics using the lens of LCT Semantics from the Legitimation Code Theory as an analytical and theoretical framework.

The main contribution of this study is the use of a theoretical and analytical lens to examine the academic writing of students in the disciplines as well as the actors' beliefs in the field and the role those beliefs have on the production and assessment of academic writing in the field of Applied Linguistics. By examining both underlying principles of academic practices in terms of context-dependence and condensation of meanings as well as actors' semantic codes, this

research avoids the limitations of previous studies (Lan, 2015, Shaheen, 2016) including those which used the same theoretical lens of semantic gravity (Szenes et al., 2015, Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2017). Also, the adapted Translation Device forms a contribution to knowledge since this device can be used by researchers to cross-examine the findings of the study as well as adapt it to examine student academic writing in their area of discipline or use it as a pedagogical tool for the teaching and learning of academic writing in their fields. Thus, the contribution of this study is theoretical, methodological and contextual.

The literature on academic writing in higher education often approaches issues in the field by examining the challenges students face in their academic writing based on the perceptions of students and tutors in the field or by examining the rhetorical, linguistic, and socio-cultural aspects of student academic writing (Shaheen, 2012, Li, 2021, Polio, 2003, Hyland, 2016). The use of LCT Semantics and especially the tool of Semantic gravity and epistemological condensation allowed me to examine academic writing in HE in the disciplines using a lens which offered me a different consciousness about some of the underlying principles of academic writing practices in the discipline of Applied Linguistics. It also offered me a different perspective on actors' semantic codes or the beliefs actors bring to the field. The use of this tool revealed important information about high-scoring student writing versus low-scoring student writing. A high-scoring text showed a higher semantic range, better semantic flow, more abstractions, successful movement from the theoretical to the practical, and more condensations of meanings.

By analysing assessors' disciplinary perspectives, the tool of semantic gravity and density offered me a different consciousness of the role of assessors' semantic codes in the assessment and evaluation of student's texts. Tutors sometimes appeared to have different semantic codes from one another, which made them evaluate students' texts differently. The students also appeared to have different semantic codes from those of their tutors, which could result in a code clash and learning challenges for tutors and students. This present study sought to overcome the limitations of previous studies which used LCT Semantics to examine the knowledge practices in students' texts without understanding the beliefs that actors bring to the field.

I discussed how waves can take many forms not only in terms of their shape but also in terms of what kinds of knowledge are involved. Previous studies suggest that semantic waves differ between subject areas, kinds of assignments, and levels of education (Georgiou et al., 2014, Shay and Steyn, 2015, Martin et al., 2010, Balawanilotu-Roach, 2017, Maton, 2019). By comparing the findings of this present study with similar studies which used LCT Semantics to examine student writing in the disciplines (Balawanilotu-Roach, 2017, Maton, 2019), this study shed some light on the generic and subject-specific nature of academic and knowledge practices in the field. In

addition to that, the findings of this present study showed that semantic profiles of successful students' texts can also differ within the same module and the same writing task. Likewise, tutors' semantic profiles of valued academic writing practices in student texts differ from one another and the same tutor can value more than one semantic profile. More research is required into the specific semantic profiles of different subject areas, writing tasks and stages of education as well as semantic profiles of tutors within the same discipline and modules.

Although semantic gravity waves in which students move from the theoretical to the practical in recurrent movements creating waves on a semantic scale may be a characteristic of successful academic writing, I must remind the reader and practitioners in the field of HE that semantic profiles generated from this study do not have to be followed per se, but they can be used to inspire tutors and students to think about their assessment practices in a different way and use the semantic tool to understand aspects of what is considered valued academic practices. The findings of this research are not intended to be an 'ideal' way to write academically in the discipline of Applied Linguistics. Different tasks will enact knowledge in a variety of nuanced ways. Moreover, because Applied Linguistics is varied, complex and context-dependent, there is no 'one size fits all' way of enacting theory and practice.

The field of LCT research is still growing and more research on student writing using concepts from LCT can begin to reveal the diverse nature of semantic gravity waves generated by a series of features, including range, directional shifts, entry and exit points, semantic flow, and semantic threshold (Maton, 2019). There is still more to be discovered especially in relation to Semantic Density in student academic writing in HE (Maton and Doran, 2017a, Maton and Doran, 2017b).

Appendix A   Information Sheet

A.1   Lecturer Information Sheet

Study Title: International Students at UK Higher Education: Critical Thinking Related Challenges to Academic Writing

Researcher: Jabrah Alharbi

ERGO number: 44404

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This study is aimed towards fulfilling the requirements of PhD degree. I am a PhD student in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Southampton. The study I am conducting aims to investigate students' experiences with academic writing and critical thinking in the disciplines of Applied Linguistics and Education in UK higher education. In order to explore students' experiences with academic writing and critical thinking, the content materials of specific modules will be examined, lecturers will be observed during classroom and the classroom will be audio-recorded as I'm exploring the methods in which lecturers deliver the content of the module, how they address the assignments of the module, how they develop students' understanding of subject knowledge and critical analysis of the content materials, how they link theory to practice, and the nature of the interaction between them and students whether they play the role of guide, facilitator or information provider etc. I'm less interested in student-student interaction. Lecturers will be interviewed in order to find out more about their understanding of the concept of critical thinking in their own disciplines, they will be asked to reflect on the students' assignments which they have marked in relation to students' demonstration of critical thinking and the written feedback they have given to the students, and what possible suggestions would help to improve students' criticality in academic texts.

Why have I been asked to participate?

Appendix A

You have been asked to participate because you are a lecturer in the discipline of Applied Linguistics or Education in order to explore international and home postgraduate students' experiences with academic writing and critical thinking in your disciplines.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the study, first you will be contacted by email in order to give me access to blackboard materials for the module you are teaching. Your classroom will be observed, and audio recorded. You will also be contacted by email at the end of the semester to conduct face-to-face interviews. The interview will last for a duration of one hour and will address your understanding of the concept of critical thinking in general and in relation to specific students' assignments which you have marked. The interviews will be tape-recorded.

Are there any benefits to my taking part?

You may benefit by reflecting on your understanding of the concept of critical thinking in your subject area and more specifically in the module you are teaching. The study also explores students' demonstration of critical thinking and lecturers' assessment of critical thinking in your discipline; therefore, the results of the study could be used to improve teaching and assessment of critical thinking in your discipline.

Are there any risks involved?

There is very low risk involved in the study. You have the right to refuse to answer questions which you do not feel comfortable with.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation will be confidential. Your name will be anonymised by replacing it with a pseudonym or a code. This present study complies with the Data Protection Act as stated by the University of Southampton. The data collected will be stored for the duration of the research project and afterwards using the researcher's personal Google Drive account. Only me and my supervisors will have access to the data and any third party when required by the University of Southampton. Your contact details will be retained for future contact, which will be stored in the researcher's personal Google Drive account, which no one has access to with the exception of the account holder.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You should respond to me by email stating that you are willing to take part in the study to arrange for next data collection procedures.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw at any time without your rights be affected. When you decide to withdraw from the study after already taking part in it, the data collected will be destroyed. If you decide to withdraw through the research process (during interviews), again any data collected will be destroyed. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you can contact me by email at jka1g15@soton.ac.uk

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of the study will be published once the research project is finished. You will receive a copy of the results when the study is published. The anonymised research data may be available for future research projects. The research data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years as per the University of Southampton policy.

Where can I get more information?

To answer any further questions that you may have after reading this information sheet, you could contact my supervisor Karin Zotzmann.

Building 65 Faculty of Humanities University of Southampton Avenue Campus Highfield Southampton SO17 1BF United Kingdom

Room Number:65/3047

Email Address: k.zotzmann@soton.ac.uk

What happens if something goes wrong?

In case of concern or complaint, you could contact the Research integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you.

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in the research.

A.2   Information Sheets for Students

Study Title: International Students at UK Higher Education: Critical Thinking Related Challenges to Academic Writing

Researcher: Jabrah Alharbi

Appendix A

ERGO number: 44404

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This study is aimed towards fulfilling the requirements of PhD degree. I am a PhD student in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Southampton. The study I am conducting aims to investigate academic writing and critical thinking performance of postgraduate students in the disciplines of Applied Linguistics and Education in UK higher education. In order to find out more about students' experiences with academic writing and critical thinking, specific modules will be examined. Students' assignments which they have submitted for those modules will be analysed and students will be interviewed in regards to the assignments they have written. The classrooms will be observed. My focus is on how the lecturers deliver the content of the module, how they address the assignments of the module, how they develop students' understanding of subject knowledge, critical analysis of the content materials, how lecturers link theory to practice, and the nature of the interaction between teachers and students whether they play the role of guide, facilitator or information provider etc. I'm less interested in student-student interaction. The content of the module in addition to the voice of the lecturer and your voice will be audio recorded.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been chosen for this study because you are student taking an MA module in the department of Applied Linguistics and TESOL/Education. You have been asked to participate in the study to find out more about your experience with academic writing and critical thinking in UK higher education and in relation to the assignments you have written for specific modules.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will also be contacted by email and asked to send copies of some of your written assignments along with the written feedback you have received on them. You will be contacted by email to conduct face-to-face/skype interviews. The interviews will take place only once for a duration of approximately 30 minutes. The lecture you attend will be audio recorded and if you speak or participate in the class, your voice will be also audio-recorded.

Are there any benefits to my taking part?

You will benefit by identifying your understanding of the concept of critical thinking. You may also benefit by identifying the possible challenges you encounter with critical thinking and academic writing, which may enhance your learning experience. Additionally, your input could help contribute to the current knowledge in terms of students' experiences with academic writing and critical thinking in UK higher education.

Are there any risks involved?

There is very low risk involved in the study. You may experience discomfort or distress while talking about your written assignments and your academic writing experience. I will ensure that that no personal questions are asked and any questions, which may cause discomfort, will be avoided. You also have the right to refuse answering questions, which you don't feel comfortable to answer. I will ensure that any information you share during classroom interaction will be treated with confidentiality and your name obtained from audio recording will be anonymised by replacing it with a code or pseudonym.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation will be confidential. Your name and ID as obtained from interviews, self-reports, written assignments and audio recordings will be anonymised by replacing them with pseudonyms or codes. Any information you disclose during the classroom observation will be treated with confidentiality. This present study complies with the Data Protection Act as stated by the University of Southampton. The data collected will be stored for the duration of the research project and afterwards using my personal Google Drive account. Only me and my supervisors will have access to the data and any third party when required by the University of Southampton. Your contact details will be retained for future contact, which will be stored in my personal Google Drive account.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You should respond to me by email stating that you are willing to take part in the study to arrange for interviews and other forms of data collections (self-reports, obtainment of written assignments). You should sign the consent form handed to you during the lecture for the purpose of audio-recording the classrooms.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw at any time without your rights be affected. When you decide to withdraw from the study after already taking part in it, the data collected will be destroyed. If you

decide to withdraw through the research process, again any data collected will be destroyed. To withdraw from the study, you need to contact me by email at jka1g15@soton.ac.uk

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of the study will be published once the research project is finished. The anonymised research data may be available for future research projects. The research data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years as per the University of Southampton policy.

Where can I get more information?

To answer any further questions that you may have after reading this information sheet, you could contact my supervisor Karin Zotzmann.

Building 65 Faculty of Humanities University of Southampton Avenue Campus Highfield Southampton SO17 1BF United Kingdom

Room Number:65/3047

Email Address: k.zotzmann@soton.ac.uk

What happens if something goes wrong?

In case of concern or complaint, you could contact the Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you.

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in the research.

Appendix B   Consent Forms

Study title: International Students at UK Higher Education: Critical Thinking Related Challenges to Academic Writing

Researcher name: Jabrah Alharbi

ERGO number: 44404

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet dated 03/07/2018 version no. 1 and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time for any reason without my rights being affected. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you can email the researcher at jka1g15@soton.ac.uk and inform her of your decision to withdraw from the study.	

Name of participant (print name) …………………………………………………………………………

Signature of participant………………………………………………………………………………………….

Date………

Name of researcher (print name) …………………………………………………………………………

 Signature of researcher …………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date……..

Appendix C   Pilot Study

C.1   Pilot Study Interview Questions

What is your understanding of the concept of critical thinking? Define critical thinking in academic writing or in general.

What is critical thinking in Applied Linguistics?

What does academic writing mean to you? Define academic writing.

How important is criticality in academic writing?

How would you describe your experience with critical thinking and academic writing?

How satisfied are you with your critical thinking skills in your academic writing?

How did the pre-sessional course prepare you for academic writing?

What suggestions would you give to improve students' critical thinking in their writing?

What has your tutor done to help you improve your critical thinking?

What factors influenced critical thinking in your academic writing?

Questions related to the assignments in particular:

What is this task asking you to do?

What is criticality in this particular assignment?

Do you feel you understand what is required from you to be critical in this assignment?

What is critical thinking in this particular assignment?

On a scale of 1-10 (10 is highest) – what mark would you give you for critical thinking for this work before receiving the final mark and why?

What could you have done to get a better score?

Based on your knowledge now that you have gotten feedback, what could you have done to get a better score?

What is the difference between the first and second assignments which made you score differently?

In this assignment, they are asking you to link theory to practice. Do you want to comment on this?

Appendix D   Interview Guides

D.1   Interview Guide Sheet for Lecturers

What is the particular procedure for students to achieve a high level of 'critical thinking' in this writing task?

What is critical thinking in this writing task?

What could students do to score higher for 'critical thinking' in this task from you?

What is critical thinking in the introduction, body, and conclusion of this writing task?

What would you answer if a student asked you 'What critical thinking practice involved in writing in the field of Applied Linguistics?'

D.2   Interview Guide Sheet for Students

Tell me about your educational background. How were you taught and assessed previously? How critical thinking was taught in your previous educational experience?

Why do you think your teacher gave you this particular kind of assignment to do?

What is the professor's purpose in assigning it?

What does the professor want you to learn from it or get out of it?

What is critical thinking in this particular task?

Are you aware that the authors in this assignment have different views?

What is the question in this writing task asking you to do?

Have you seen the assessment guidelines? Were the guidelines and instructions on writing the assignment clear and helpful to you? And why?

Have you made use of tutorials? What questions have you asked? Were they helpful to you?

Have you looked at the criteria? What does it tell you about getting a good grade?

How much time did you spend on this assignment? How many sources have you read?

How many drafts have you written? Have you planned, or drafted your work? How many sources have you read?

What could have done to get a higher mark for 'critical thinking' in this task?

Why do you think the assignment was evaluated the way it was?

Was the written feedback useful to you? How?

What challenges did you face when writing this assignment? What academic writing challenges did you face in general?

Appendix E Coded data from interviews

E.1 Coded data from tutors' interviews

Coding	Tutor 1	Tutor 2	Tutor 3
Criticality in MLTM			
• Understanding of the topic	√		
• Applying understanding of the topic to a context	√		
• Expressing voice			√
• Engagement with the subject from different perspectives			√
• Nuanced position			√
• Weighing up ideas			√
• Don't offer a superficial answer	√	√	
• Explore underlying causes		√	
Criticality in task 1			

• Understand the article and the author's intention	√		
• Breadth and depth of discussion		√	
• Balanced argument		√	
• Awareness of factors affecting language teaching and learning contexts	√	√	
• Having a complex discussion about the article	√		
• Question the article claims	√		
• Well-argued strong position throughout			√
• Support arguments with logical examples		√	
Task 1: essay introduction expectations			
• Introduce key ideas	√	√	
• Focus on specific aspects of the article	√		
• Suggest how to discuss the article and why	√		
• Investigate and juxtapose with other ideas	√		
• Speculate the author's intention		√	
• The position needs to be strong, clear and evaluative	√	√	√

• Position needs to show a complex understanding of the topic	√		√
• Position the argument in the field			√
• Show issues in the article's claims			√
• Describe the article		√	
Task 1: essay discussion expectations			
• Establish a background	√		
• Demonstrate understanding of the article	√		
• Show explanations and a strong voice	√		
• Show understanding of context	√	√	√
• Use theories and concepts not covered in the module		√	
• Use theories and apply them well		√	
• Restate the position throughout		√	
• Speculate the author's intention		√	
• Relate arguments to the task and the article being critiqued	√	√	√
• Avoid descriptive writing and produce more evaluations	√		√

• Link examples to issues addressed in the article and CLT	√	√	√
• Consistent theme and writing			√
• Evaluate the article and compare it to other ideas	√		√
• Show broader awareness of the issues in the field			√
• Explain debated concepts			√
Task 1: essay conclusion expectations			
• Provide a summary of key points	√	√	√
• Provide sustained and extended conclusion	√	√	
• Conclusion shouldn't surprise	√		√
• Show the final position and message	√		
Stylistics			
• Use titles	√		
• Use hedging		√	√
• Signposting is essential	√	√	
• Use qualifiers		√	

	Chen	Zoe	Yara
• Careful paraphrasing of quotes	√		
• Careful citations	√	√	
• Structure and coherence	√		√

E.2   Coded data from students' interviews

Coding	Chen	Zoe	Yara
Criticality			
• Nothing is wrong or right. Think of two sides		√	
• Show evidence from different perspectives		√	
• Critical thinking is difficult		√	
• Argument and evidence, not just description	√		√
• Show limitations in the author's arguments	√		
• Show an alternative point of view		√	√
• Show balanced arguments of positives and negatives		√	
• Logical writing and clear structure		√	

Task 1 requirements			
• Read the article and judge it	√		
• Read the article and discuss it		√	√
• Not sure about showing one's opinion	√		
• Show the limitations of the article	√		
• Show agreement and disagreements		√	
• Opinion needs to be backed up by evidence	√	√	√
• Relate ideas to the article			√
• Show understanding of the article	√		
• I misunderstand Task 1	√		
• Task 1 description is very clear			√
Task 1: pre-writing work			
• I read task 1 guidelines		√	√
• I made use of MLTM tutorials	√	√	√
Task 1: Academic Writing Challenges			

• Lack of understanding of the requirements of Task 1	√		
• Lack of confidence in one's academic writing skills	√		
• Ideas are very general and need to be more specific		√	
• English writing style is different from Chinese writing style		√	√
• Difficulties with new concepts			√
• I did my BA in English Translation			√
• I did not relate points to the article		√	
• Engaging with different perspectives is challenging		√	
• Integrating sources with CLT is challenging		√	
• Lack of language proficiency		√	
Contextualization			
• CLT is difficult to apply in the Chinese context	√		
• Lack of teaching experience makes it difficult to critique	√		
• Teaching examples need to be too specific		√	
• Integrating sources with teaching examples is challenging		√	

• I fail to link examples to the article's main arguments		√	
• You need to choose a familiar context			√
Feedback learning points			
• More support and evidence are required	√		
• Paraphrase and cite better			√
• Integrate sources to critique the article		√	
• Lack of coherence due to lack of structure		√	
• Relate examples to the article		√	
• Careful understanding of the article	√		
• Requesting more literature in the essay introduction is unexpected	√		
• Provide a balanced argument	√		
• I don't understand 'critical distance'	√		
• I don't understand 'speculate the author's intention.'			√
Academic Support			
• I received one-to-one academic tutorials from the university library			√

• I had support on essay structure			√
• Tutors in MLTM provided a lot of support			√
• I had support for the use of different sources			√
• Tutorials helped me find my academic voice			√
• Task 1 guidelines need more explanations		√	
Stylistics			
• My writing is incoherent		√	
• Differences between Chinese writing and English writing	√	√	√
• More use of academic vocabulary	√		
• More use of cautious language	√	√	
• Paraphrase well			√
• I need a clear structure		√	

Appendix FAssignment 1 Discussion of an Academic Paper

Select an academic paper from Blackboard. This is an area that is relevant to particular aspects of communicative language teaching. You can focus on any areas of the paper and topics of teaching language communicatively if you feel they are relevant, **but it must link discussion of contextual teaching practices with discussions of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching** (e.g. the 10 principles proposed by Brumfit, the idea of language being more than features and structures, and the communicative competence framework).

Please note that you should include in your own reference list **only those publications that you have read.** You should not (normally) include authors discussed elsewhere if you have not read them (unless you are using secondary referencing of a quotation). Since you are supposed to discuss the article from a particular perspective, it would be effective if you also included publications that are not mentioned in the original article **(e.g. comparing to another study or comparing different writers' ideas).**

Develop a discussion of your topic in terms of its relevance to both theoretical notions and practical applications of language teaching. Your discussion should be based on the paper but should be supported by other academic research available in journals and books. You should try **to develop a particular viewpoint and position rather than simply summarising**. Some of the issues you may want to address in your discussion are:

> Why is this topic important? Who is it important to? Why should we care?
>
> Are there any controversies within this topic? If so, where do you stand? Why?
>
> What does the paper set out to do?
>
> What approach does the paper take to the topic?
>
> What assumptions are the authors making about the topic?
>
> How is it relevant to language teaching? Why should teachers be interested in this topic?
>
> Does context (the learners, the location, the teacher, the purpose) influence the potential usefulness of this approach (in relation to the principles of CLT)?
>
> When would these insights be most useful? Is there any caution that some teachers might need to consider so that they do not accept a complete change in practice and lose benefits of other approaches? e.g. is anything lost by adopting the ideas of this article completely?

Your discussion should include reflection on how theory and practice interrelate.

Appendix G   Zoe's academic discussion essay

Discuss the Application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in China from its Pro and Con

Article: Liao, X. (2004). The need of Communicative Language Teaching in China. ELT Journal, 58(3), pp. 270-273.

Introduction

Liao (2004), in this research paper, states that CLT is the best for China because the government supports to implement CLT, applying CLT will has good impact on English teaching as well as learning and contextual approach is unpractical in China. His claims are based on the State Education Development Commission (SEDC) that is the official authoritative representative and using CLT in English classes, teachers will change traditional teaching and students can develop communicative ability. In addition, Liao notes that using CLT no needs to consider "Contextual approach" from three reasons, such as teachers being fond of CLT, difficulty to re-train and contextual approach as an eclectic approach. His goal is to highlight CLT is suitable for all Chinese English class while the western "relativism" is not workable in China. As a matter of face, CLT is not only benefit to English teaching and learning, but also it is conducive to the development of student's cognition and metacognition because of paying more attention to the needs of students as well as its features of learner autonomy and integrated skills. However, to some extent, the issues with contextual influence in Chinese English classes are due to large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction.

Liao's approach to support his argument

As for government's position, in 1992, the SEDC promoted a teaching syllabus and needed that the purpose of teaching English is "communication" as well as the People's Education Press edited an English textbook for middle school students to develop their communicative competence. In 2001, the task-based teaching was asked to use in all the middle schools and its related books were used in some schools. In terms of English teaching and learning, in order to catch up with foreign English teaching method, teachers will use CLT method to pay less attention to grasp grammar and vocabulary in English classes. Besides, students need to communicate with others to improve their oral English ability by CLT classes and they will be cultivated to be good communicative people.

Not clear evidence for CLT

Appendix G

In Liao' (2004) essay, he holds an assumption that CLT is best for China since the government supports to use CLT, difficulties, such as large size classes and exam form, can be overcome as well as CLT can do well any situation without context, which do not clear alight with the principle of CLT. In addition, he also presents the communicative features: teaching functional language, pair group work, and communicative activities. He only lists them and do not give detail explanation, which results in unclear evidence to support his argument.

The advantages of CLT

It is argued that CLT is contributed to the development of students' cognition in virtue of it paying more attention to the needs of students (Munby, 1978). In China, the teaching model more focus on learning rather than teaching, which results in more power of classes changing from teachers to students (Barr and Tagg, 1995). According to Xiao (2015:12), the effective English teaching needs to more emphasize that students are subject position while teachers serve as instructors, which can more caters for the demands of students. For instance, teaching plural form of English, the English teacher speaks some nouns without any plan, such as a cat, vegetable and fruit, to ask the students to discuss what are their plural forms. The students as central roles in the English classes by observing and discussing the contents from last lesson that the plural forms of "apple and dog" were "apples and dogs" can shout out the answers "cats, vegetables and fruits". During this process, it demonstrates the dominant position of students as well as a wider range of needs of students since the students acquire grammatical knowledge by themselves while their teacher plays a facilitator role. At the same time, this English lesson process using CLT to teach grammar shows the procedure of assimilation mentioned by Wadsworth (2006:43), whose book notes a Piaget's opinion that the assimilation of cognitive theory is to apply the old knowledge structure into the new. In addition, he (2006:44) also stated that stimulated by external environment, students will change their original cognitive structure, which is named compliance. An example can be seen that, in CLT classes with food topic, when the teacher asks their students "what is your favourite food", the students' answer is "my favourite food is tomatoes/sandwiches". Then, the teacher will recast this sentence "your favourite food is tomatoes/sandwiches". Only are they corrected by their teacher; they can recognize that the plural form of those words should turn "s" into "es" in the end. In the class, the teachers also play an instructor role to give the learners appropriate instructions and then the students can correct their errors by themselves, which is able to respect the centre position of students and be contented with the students' requirement for self-correction. Both assimilation and compliance come from cognitive theory. Therefore, CLT concerning the demand of students drives forward the development of students' cognition. However, to some extent, if they use the above method in CLT classes for the children, such as

kindergarten, the teachers' effort will may be in vain in that a lot of kids have not enough competence to do them.

There are some alignments with the development of students' metacognition in CLT on account of its features of learner autonomy (Brumfit, 1984) as well as integrated skills (Whong, 2013). As Cross and Paris (1988:131) noted that metacognition is to control learners to learn and think by themselves. Generally, it argued that one of characteristics of CLT is promotion of learner autonomy, which help students to develop the students' metacognition (Xiao, 2015:53). For example, in CLT classes, sometimes, the teachers will set up a task that is authentic material for their students and then clarify what should they do before the task. Then, they need to finish this task by themselves or groups. Engaging with this task, the students are encouraged to autonomously use previous knowledge to learn new knowledge and achieve the goal. That is reason why CLT is advantage to the development of learners' metacognitive. What is more, it stated that self-assessment is a part of integrated skills (Sarason et al, 2009:77). After CLT classes, the teachers use assessing strategy to ask their students what is difficulty for you in these classes as well as what do you need to improve? Whereas, when the learners give their own answers, it is important for them to cultivate self-assessment abilities. Through self-assessment in CLT classes, students can constantly know themselves and improve their comprehensive skills. Namely, it promotes the metacognitive development of students. Nevertheless, different CLT models are used in different level students. In terms of autonomic learning and self-assessment, learners with high level of English maybe can do well. On the contrary, students who have lower abilities in English are fail to do it because they lack of enough English language to support them to do them.

Some issues with contextual influences (large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction)

To the begin with, issues with contextual influences also present a problem with large-size classes in China. The one of vital shortcomings of implement CLT in Chinese English classes is large-size classes (Ye, 2007). Generally speaking, Chinese classes size normally have more than 40 learners. If teachers divide them into several groups to communicate each other, it will be difficult for the teachers to observe each group whether the students use authentic materials in communication. Similarly, if each student wants to have chance to perform their speaking in CLT classes, they will be allocated little time no more than 1 minute for each class with only 45 minutes. In this situation, the main obstacle of applying CLT in China is class size. In addition, teachers lacking professional training also is a big problem of contextual influences. Hu (2010:3) convinced that a lot of Chinese English teachers have no enough communicative ability adopts CLT. In Chinese rural, a large number of English teachers lack professional training. Thus, not only are they not

ability to ask some questions that are no in their plans, but also, they are no able to answer spontaneous questions. Sometime, even if they can speak English fluently, they maybe get wrong in pronunciation, which will have a great influence on their learners and cause their pronunciation out of standard. Namely, CLT cannot effectively be used by these English teachers because authentic materials are their stumbling blocks for them to apply it. Some teachers who are at lower language competence often complain that: "I can teach English to some extent, but it is quite beyond me if I am asked to give more explanations on language and cultural differences" (Hu, 2010:2). However, some people will argue that English teachers who teach grammar, vocabulary and writing also lack of professional training but they can do it well. As a matter of fact, if they make a full preparation or plan before those classes, they are easy to finish their teaching target since compared with CLT classes, grammar, vocabulary and writing classes use less authentic communication. What is more, the traditional way of correction is regarded as an issue of contextual influences. As Alam (2014: 2) pointed out, CLT more focuses on the fluency of conversation. As for English teachers with old age, who think they are authority and students should listen to them, many of them prefer to use the traditional way of correction which is correct students' mistakes immediately while young teachers give more respect to learners and they are willing to try the new correction methods, such as recasting. It can show with example that if students say: 'Lili go to Hartley Library with her best friend yesterday', normally, in China, the older teachers will point out their mistakes 'You need say went not go' while the young teachers or the teachers without the traditional way of correction will recast the sentence 'you mean: Lili went to Hartley Library with her best friend yesterday'. Therefore, using traditional way of correction in CLT classes will affect the fluency of student' communication and cause them discouragement to continue conversations. In fact, the teachers from countryside probably hold the misconception that when students make mistakes, they need to help their learners correct themselves instantly. That is reason why the traditional correction way in China impedes the application of CLT.

To sum up, this essay focus on discussing CLT is advantage to the development of student's cognition and metacognition from two aspects. On the one hand, CLT pays more attention to the needs of students, which can help the development of students' cognition. On the other hand, the development of students' metacognition in consequence of its characteristics of learner autonomy and integrated skills. However, this article also reveals that some issues are about contextual influences in Chinese English classes, and they are large-size classes, teachers lacking professional training and the traditional way of correction respectively. As a matter of fact, in this essay, the authors should design some questionnaires or interviews with Chinese teachers from different regions and educators, which could know their views about CLT to support the argument

of the article. In the future, CLT should be researched by more experts since it plays a significant role in teaching and learning.

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Appendix H   Yara's academic discussion essay

Introduction

Xiaoqing Liao (2004), in this article, argues that the adoption of CLT will bring advantages to English teaching and learning in China. Based on his article, Liao approved the adoption of CLT in China by showing Chinese government's supporting attitude on CLT. He mentioned that some problems caused by situational constraints could be overcome by teacher by giving a case study. What's more, context approach, suggested by Bax (2003), according to Liao, is not useful for Chinese schools. Although, there is no denying that CLT would bring in benefits in some aspects, there are still some issues which make Liao's statement debatable. My paper will argue that Liao's position regarding 'CLT is best for China' is not realistic, given that could be problematic when it comes to the assessment criteria and individual differences among students.

Washback Effect

Liao (2004) showed the supportive attitude from the State Education Development Commission (SEDC), the official department for designing educational system in China. They hold that introducing CLT will help Chinese English learners to develop greater oral competence by adding 'teaching English for communication' to teaching syllabus and introducing a serious of textbooks which give more paragraphs on student's language oral skills. However, the assessment criteria have not changed accordingly, which causes 'Washback Effect'.

'Washback effect' refers to the influence that language testing has on curriculum design, teaching practices, and learning behaviours (McKinley & Thompson, 2018). This effect, in some extent, has influence on how teachers design their teaching methods and what students expect to achieve in their learning. Negative washback occurs when there may be a mismatch between the stated goals of instruction and the focus of assessment; it may lead to the abandonment of instructional goals in favour of test preparation (McKinley & Thompson, 2018). For example, under exam-oriented education, teachers may teach students with the aim of preparing them to examinations, and learners may pay more attention to how to get high marks in assessments rather than language using skills.

Both learners and teachers are affected by the impact that caused by washback. According to leaners, it may result in different preparations for the test and leaning outcomes. An example is a study of the washback on learning by introducing a speaking test in Hong Kong (Andrews, Fullilove, & Wong, 2002):

There was evidence of positive washback on learners as they focused on speaking and oral communication. However, in preparation for the test, the study also showed that student preparation may have relied on superficial memorization of phrases for the test (i.e., negative washback).

For teachers, it may have influence on various areas of language teaching, such as assignment forms, curriculum design, context analysis and materials selection. A study of the impact of university exams in Japan (Watanabe, 2004) found that:

Both positive and negative washback was noted in an observation of five teachers' exam-oriented classes. The impact of tests on methodology can be contradictory: some teachers focused on grammar-translation due to test preparation (i.e., a factor influencing negative washback) while others used test preparation materials to encourage authentic, communicative English. (pp.19-36)

Washback effect shows that language testing does have influence on language teaching. In this study, teachers changed their teaching method in some cases.

Another drawback that negative washback could bring in is its impact on materials. Tests can influence materials negatively when the textbook is the result of washback effect targeting unrealistic language use (Saville & Hawkey, 2004). The power of textbook writers and publishers was noted in the Hongkong study (Andrews, Fullilove, & Wong, 2002). Teachers in Hong Kong made responds to a new speaking test by using published materials that were focused on the specific skills and format needed for the exam. In this way, teachers may encourage students to use self-learning materials that focus on test skills.

In the past years, the increase in internationalization of higher education resulted in a mushrooming of international students. The international tests of English emerged, such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). In addition to this international English language assessment, China has many national English language tests, such as Gaokao (the National College Entrance Examination), College English Test Band 4 and Band 6 (CET-4 and CET-6), and Test for English Majors Band 4 and Band 8 (TEM-4 and TEM-8). There is no doubt that language test acts as an important role in language education, especially when it is used as criteria for further studies. However, if the language test form that adopted by the government runs counter to its original teaching goals, it might course negative washback effect and language skills might be suffered due to the impact. Chinese educational department, as Liao mentioned in his paper, introduced CLT into national teaching syllabus, but they did not adjust the assessment

criteria accordingly. If the government wants to apply CLT in Chinese English teaching curriculum, the English test should consider adding practices that require more communicative competence.

Individual Differences

According to an argument which is against the use of CLT in China by saying that Chinese teachers should develop a method that suits for Chinese teaching contexts instead of adopting CLT directly, Liao thought that limitations caused by situational constraints such as class-size and grammar-oriented exams can be overcome if teacher pay attention to it by showing one of his case studies (Liao 2003). In this case study, Ms Huang, a secondary school teacher, was able to use CLT successfully in a large class. He also suggested that such constraints can be overcome in many ways, such as re-training Chinese teachers, revising textbooks and changing class size. However, what Liao did not mention is that there are individual differences among students.

One important characteristic of Communicative Language Teaching is 'Concern for the needs of the learners, and attempts to define them' (Munby, 1978). Student needs should be taken as the first priority in teaching activity. The variety of student needs can be reflected in their ultimate goals and expectations in language learning. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China showed that in 2018, the total number of Chinese students studying abroad was 662,100. Compared with the statistics in 2017, the number of overseas students increased by 8.83% (53,700). From 1978 to the end of 2018, the total number of all kinds of overseas students reached 5.8571 million. From the above numbers, it is clear that more and more Chinese students choose to study abroad, and the number of overseas students is expected to grow year by year. English learners, who want to go abroad for further studies, are likely to turn their eyes to overall language skills instead of focusing on test form only. They might be willing to accept CLT as a creative way in learning English. Thus, students who appreciate CLT might have more engagement in CLT class. It must be noted, however, that not all learners could get accustomed to the approaches that teachers take in CLT class. Every teacher has his or her own understanding of CLT and thus, the way he or she presents the class could be different from each other. For those students who focus more on test skills, the communicative activities in class, which are regarded as 'waste of time', might cause disaffection among them. Also, there are some learners who have already got into job, who might not have enough time to engage in a long language training course. So, the short-term language training courses which directly focus on test skills might be better for those learners who want to achieve a specific goal or relatively high marks in assessments in a short period. Students' needs should always be considered when teachers design their teaching methods. Another factor is learner's personalities, which largely decide how

the learners react to CLT class. For example, a rather private person might be inactive in communicative activities given by teachers.

A rich examination of classroom culture should include consideration of the views of parents and administrators as well (Brumfit, 2001). Parents, absolutely, care about their child's learning. Taking and preparing for tests or English training courses might, to some degree, increase financial burden on parents. Parents have the right to know what their children are being taught in class. In China, the teaching content and pedagogical methods are mostly controlled by local governments and school administrators, which means that teacher do not have so much freedom in teaching. Teachers should follow the ultimate goal that set by administrators. When deciding teaching methods, the views from administrators should be considered as well.

Besides teacher's ability and situational limitation, the differences between student's needs and individual personalities should be discussed as well. The views from parents and administrators also matter.

Context Approach

Liao argued that the context approach, suggested by Bax, is not practical in China by saying that his approach requires teachers to analysis first and then create an appropriate pedagogical method for students, which makes great demands on teachers' ability and has no specific 'model', making it difficult to follow. Also, no one knows how many years will be spent on re-training so many teachers. Personally, I think CLT, and the context approach should not be placed in an opposite position, because they share similarities in features.

Bax (2003) claimed his view on context approach procedure:

> In the context approach procedure, the first priority is the learning context, and the first step is to identify key aspects of that context before deciding what and how to teach in any given class. This will include an understanding of individual students and their learning needs, wants, styles, and strategies, which are treated as key aspects of the context.

Bax argued that the main problem of CLT is its very emphasis on communication, and implicitly on methodology, which relegates and sidelines the context in which we teach (Bax, 2003). However, CLT is not an approach that concerns communication only. One of characteristics of CLT is 'Concern for the needs of the learners, and attempts to define them' (Munby, 1978). When using CLT in class, teachers should always focus learner's needs rather than just following the CLT model

and providing communicative activities blindly. In this case, CLT and context approach share similar features.

Language teaching has been discussed in different countries for decades and, in the past years, many teaching methods and theories emerge. However, there is not an approach or method that can suit to all contexts. When discussing language teaching methodology, there are numbers of variables should be considered. Brumfit (1980) listed national variables in which teaching take places:

> At the most general level the situation will be constrained by national variables. These will directly affect the teaching-learning situation and will be major indirect influences on the personal characteristics of both teacher and pupils. The major factors relevant to language teaching will be:
>
> (a) National educational aims (in general)
>
> (b) National educational aims for language teaching
>
> (c) The nature of the social situation which causes particular languages to be taught.
> (p.17)

CLT has served the language teaching well for decades and it has a lot of advantages. But, when Chinese education departments or local administrators attempt to introduce a new theory or pedagogical method into Chinese schools, they should think about the national educational aims and local contextual factors. Briefly, it is hard to say that which approach is best for a specific context. In most case, language teaching involves more than one approach or method.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Liao (2004) article supports the adoption of CLT in China, in which he claims 'CLT is best for China'. Although CLT helps students develop oral competence in using English for communication, there are still problems in the assessment criteria and individual differences. Mismatching between national teaching goal and test form will cause washback effect, which has negative impact on teaching process. As an essential feature in CLT, student's differences in needs should be taken into first consideration. Context approach and CLT both care about learners and it is hard to say that which approach is best for a specific context. In most case, language teaching involves more than one approach or method. Liao's 'CLT is best for China' is too absolute.

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Appendix I   Chen's academic discussion essay

Article: Stephen Bax. (2003). The end of CLT: a context approach to language teaching. ELT Journal Volume. Oxford University Press. 278-287

Introduction

This discussion is mainly related to Bax's article on the relationship between Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Context Approach. Bax held the view that CLT is not conducive to the development of language teaching and should be replaced by the context approach. However, the author does not agree with this view and is going to use the characteristics of CLT (Put forward by Brumfit) to argue that context is included in CLT.

This paper mainly includes four parts: briefly discussion of the viewpoint of Bax's article, advantages and disadvantages of context approach, demonstrating the relationship between CLT and context, and discussing some other problems in Bax's article.

Bax's opinion of CLT and Context Approach

In the past five decades, after the emergence of the communicative language teaching approach in the 1970s and 1980s, CLT approach gradually is recognized and be used in language teaching by many people. Until today, nearly fifty years later, CLT become a symbol of the "modern approach" and "advanced approach". But Bax does not think so. In Bax's article, he set out a method named context approach which is different from CLT approach. This approach discarded methodology and claimed that there is a large amount of method to learn a foreign language, but context is the key to successful language learning. And Bax claimed that context approach should be put into the most important position of language teaching. He believed that the context approach should replace the current position of CLT as the approach that language teachers consider in the first place in a teaching environment.

Bax enumerated four examples of a teacher from the Czech Republic, a teacher trainer from Holland, a teacher from Taiwan and a famous ELT author to prove the attitude towards CLT. As he mentioned, many teachers, writers and trainers believe that CLT is an integrated solution of language teaching, and this method is better than other "traditional approaches". However, he also expressed that CLT neglect and ignore teachers' and learners' requirements and the local context. Besides, Bax stated that the solution to the drawback of CLT is "to demoted CLT to second place" (Bax, 2003).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Context Approach

Compared with the traditional language teaching method, context approach has many advantages. Especially in some counties where compulsory education is mainly exam-oriented education, such as China and Japan. "It appears that the compulsory education of the target learners has trained them as if they are linguists, studying about language, rather than as language users" (Opitz, T.A., 2016). On this occasion, the introduction of context approach can change the phenomenon of students' lack of communication intention and extend periods of silence.

When people talk about the context in a real class, it should be related to individual, classroom culture, local culture and even national culture (Holliday, A., 1994). The context is very complex. "Context is seen as a dynamic construct which is interactionally organized in and through the process of communication" and Fetzer likened the context to an onion (Fetzer A., 2007). So, because of the heterogeneous nature and the context-dependence feature of the concept itself, it is hard for the people to give a standard definition. Just because of this, it is difficult to give a detailed scope about what is the specific context in an authentic class.

Compare CLT Approach with Context Approach

The context approach has its own merits and demerits as CLT approach does. However, it is not necessary to replace CLT approach with context approach as Bax's point of view. Foremost, they are not opposites. Bax regarded context method and CLT as two isolated and unrelated individuals, but in fact context and CLT are closely related, and it can even be said that CLT contains context to some extent, as can be proved by Brumfit's the Principles of Communicative Language Teaching.

Focus on discourse, not isolated language forms

In Bax's article, he mentioned that nowadays even many people are starting to think that maybe CLT is not the best method and looking for new approaches, but "there may be no single best method, the answer must still be a methodological one" (Bax, 2003, p284). Which means that he treated CLT as a form rather than a language teaching method. But in fact, CLT emerged in the 1970s because of more dissatisfaction with previous approaches--the traditional methods which focus on isolated language forms. The core of CLT in the process of development is around the context of the dialogue--learners learn a language through using it to communicate. Within a CLT class, it is impossible to discuss the dialogue out of context, because there will not be isolated discourse irrelevant in the real classroom.

Emphasis on meaning rather than on form

In CLT approach, the meaning is more important than form. There are many formalized things in language teaching under traditional methods, as Abbott mentioned, teachers were not concerned with real-world communication purposes, which led to the acronym" for ... teaching English" (1980, p22). However, language teaching in CLT is based on the idea that learning is a process and not a product, which means that teaching with CLT approach is a long-term and meaningful activity. The "meaning" in the real classroom means context in more cases. Because communication in CLT involves the comprehensiveness of different language skills, such as lexis, phonology, or grammar.

Use of "authentic" materials

Authentic material is another aspect that can prove that CLT approach includes context approach. Using authentic materials in CLT means that all the conversations, dialogues, discourses and discusses happened in a CLT classroom are related to the context. This also serves the purpose of class activities--authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities. The introduction of CLT in language classrooms   is a great help to new teachers because most new teachers overemphasize grammar rules, lexis, and phonology without notice. CLT helps them relating teaching materials with daily experiences, context of articles and survival context because without those materials communication is hard to generate among students -- even though controlling such classes can be challenging for new teachers. It is still a hard thing to see what Bax said: ". Novice teachers, as we have seen, fight against context when they should be working with it." (Bax, 2003, p286)

A supportive and participatory environment

According to Bax's statement, the environment plays an important role in context approach. Classroom environment, school environment, local environment, and national environment-- these four areas are essential in the context approach. However, CLT also asked a supportive and participatory environment and obviously, those four areas are included in CLT. There is evidence that CLT is more than just a teaching approach, that is CLT guided, facilitated and accompanied teaching activities through a process. It shows that CLT pays attention to the long-term development of students and creates a learning environment with a sense of participation for students. So that students can not only learn the relevant knowledge of a certain language but use the language in their daily life.

Focus on the needs of learners

At the end of the article, he mentioned that continuing to use CLT approach will lead to a continuing underestimation of student's ability (Bax, 2003, p286). This might mean that he does not understand one of the features of CLT -- focus on the needs of learners. CLT is based on the whole person, which includes cognitive, physical, affective and social. In   a real CLT classroom, teachers need to transfer more powers and rights to students and make students become the centre of the class. Students can find and choose the channels of information acquisition, understand their needs and learn independently.

Needs analysis is not only important in CLT but also important in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Martins, 2017). It should be noted that, during the 1920s, Michael West (1994) was the first person to come up with the concept of the analysis of needs concept. He mentioned that needs analysis is focused on improving learning and training and these activities are aligned to the students' needs. Needs analysis is to facilitate discovery, evaluation, and implementation of learners' needs, which would contribute to successful learning. And according to needs analysis, teachers will know what students want and need. The needs which be added into CLT classrooms solve another problem that Bax mentioned: teacher in CLT training courses is not taught how to localize and they learn about students' needs through self-study (Bax, 2003, p282). The trainees learn needs analysis skills that they analyse and understand students'   needs and apply them to the classroom.

Some issues in Bax's article

First of all, Bax always emphasized that the current position of CLT should be replaced by context approach, but the problem lies in that context approach itself is included in CLT. Bax has been trying to convince readers of the importance of context approach with strong emotions, but he has not fully defined what is context approach. Instead, he used a relatively vague scope to persuade others, including everything he thought was good in the context approach. This does not convince others but makes people with a certain understanding of CLT more convinced that CLT is the right direction to go.

Second, Bax used many ambiguous phrases in his essay, such as "sake of teacher", "teacher's ability", "local variable" and "irrelevant". He just lists words without explanation, such as not defining the scope of these phrases and not explaining some confusing words, which leaves a lot of room for misunderstanding for readers and makes this article not particularly convincing.

Finally, Bax's argument was too much strong. He used a lot of absolutist statements in his argument, such as "the context is a crucial determiner", and these absolutist views are not supported by evidence and arguments, which makes his article seem unquestionable at first

glance, but full of holes in careful research. And the author not quite sure that this type of absolutist words is appropriate in an academic paper.

Conclusion

In a word, I agree with Bax's emphasis on the importance of context. No matter what kind of language learning method, learning without context makes learning becoming superficial. However, this does not justify Bax's opposition to CLT, as a new approach of opposition to traditional teaching methods, CLT always emphasizes the importance of context for real communication.

Bax probably did not know as much about CLT as he thought, because many of the arguments in his essay that he thought belonged to context approach were included in CLT. This can be proved by the 11 characteristics of CLT of Brumfit, Canale and Swaine. In order to convince readers, he used many unquestionable statements and vague arguments (which should not appear in academic papers), but the lack of evidence made his arguments seem too much strong and unconvincing. So, no matter how unmistakable his tone, his arguments for lack of evidence does not hold water.

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Appendix J   **Maton's '7Gs': Tutors' academic writing expectations in MLTM**

J.1 Assessor 1 academic writing expectations of Task 1 in the MLTM module

Essay	Introduction	Body						Conclusion
LCT Semantics Descriptor & 7Gs	Semantic entry	Semantic shifts	Semantic threshold	Semantic flow			Semantic range	Semantic exit
Indicator	Provide a description of the article and suggest how to discuss it. Investigate and juxtapose the article's claims with other ideas. Provide a position showing how and why you look at something.	Show understanding of the article and the field of CLT and apply it to teaching and learning practices. Explain by answering questions about what, why and how.	Contextualize the article and the principles of CLT and provide a conceptual discussion. Show an accurate understanding of both.	Link examples to the task and the article's claims	When ideas are introduced, explain them soon after to create coherence.	Don't show black-and-white thinking. Show awareness of context, differences, similarities, & variables. Show depth & breadth, explanations, & link ideas to the article and CLT.	Summarize and don't introduce ideas that divert from the discussion
Semantic requirement (7Gs)	Go in low to strengthen SG+ by describing then go in high to weaken SG- by explaining and interpreting and making judgement.	Go up and down (SG↓↑)		Get it right by focusing on the article's claims and CLT principles	Go down to strengthen SG+ and back up to weaken SG—	Go along	Go down and up (SG↑↓)	Go out low by strengthening SG↑

J.2 Assessor 2 academic writing expectations of Task 1 in the MLTM module

Essay	Introduction		Body					Conclusion
LCT Semantics Descriptor & 7Gs	**Semantic entry**	**Semantic threshold Epistemological**	**Semantic shifts**	**Semantic flow**	**Semantic range**	**Semantic threshold Epistemological**		**Semantic exit**
Indicator	Give a brief overview of the article and have a clear position	Speculate the author's intention in writing the article	Go back and forth between the article's claims, theory and supporting examples. Use examples that are not too specific.	Use examples that connect to the overall argument. Examples should not be too specific and relate to individual cases	Provide a balanced argument/assessment and show depth and breadth of discussion	Go beyond the material covered in the module and show a good understanding and applications of theories not covered in the module	Reference and paraphrase correctly	Summarize key points
Semantic requirement (7Gs)	Go in low by describing the article and back up to make interpretation and judgement and take a position. (SG↑↓)	Get it right by making a value judgment & claim. Weaken (SG↓)	Go up and down and keep examples relatively weaker in terms of semantic gravity (SG↑↓)	Go along and create a connected semantic wave	Go along up and down (SG↑↓)	Get it right upload the theory and show it application. weaken and strengthen (SG↑↓)	Get it right by paraphrasing correctly	go out low by strengthening (SG↑)

J.3   Assessor 3 academic writing expectations of Task 1 in the MLTM module

Essay	Introduction		Body				Conclusion
LCT Semantics Descriptor & 7Gs	**Semantic entry**		**Semantic threshold Epistemological**	**semantic shifts**	**Semantic flow**	**Semantic range**	**Semantic exit**
Indicator	Provide an overview and context of the question.	Position the argument in the field using other sources and show your voice.	The task requires a review of the article and its arguments rather than on pros and cons of a particular approach.	Move between describing the article's claims and explaining, interpreting, and critiquing them using other literature. Use examples that reflect CLT general practices and don't use too specific examples.	There needs to be a consistent theme running through the arguments and not a collection of isolated descriptions. Connect arguments to the article being reviewed and overall discussion.	Examine the article and show wider awareness of those issues in the field by offering different perspectives. Interpret and explain concepts in depth.	Provide a summary of key points raises and a restatement of what has been argument throughout. It shouldn't surprise me.
Semantic requirement (7Gs)	Go in low (SG+)	Go up (SG–)	Get it right by critiquing the article's claims. Go Up (SG–)	Go up and down. (SG+ SG-)	Go along	Weaken semantic gravity throughout (SG↓↓) Stay relatively high	Go out low by strengthening SG↑

Glossary of Terms

The purpose of this section is to explain some of the terminology used in this thesis. It functions as a glossary of terms and concepts especially with regards to Legitimation Code Theory. Some of the following definitions are adopted from (Maton, 2016)

Axiological semantic density   refers to the axiological condensation of affective, aesthetic, ethical, political or moral stances.

7-Gs .... mnemonic for attributes of semantic profiles: going in (semantic entry), where profile begins on semantic scale), going up (semantic upshifts, where profile moves upwards), going down (semantic downshifts, where profile moves downwards), gamut (semantic range), going along (semantic flow or degree of connectedness between points along profile), going out (semantic exist, where profile ends on semantic scale), and getting it right (semantic threshold or degree of accuracy, epistemological or axiological, is deemed to matter).

Code clash/code match ...... refers to relations between modalities of a legitimation code, which can be a match or clash of varying degrees rather than categorical (e.g. tutors emphasize weakening semantic gravity and student emphasizes strengthening semantic gravity; thus, indicating a code clash and vice versa).

Cumulative learning .... refers to students' ability to transfer knowledge across texts and through time. Cumulative learning occurs when learning activities have positive effects that extend beyond the initial learning.

Epistemological condensation refers to different processes of strengthening epistemic semantic density (ESD).

Epistemic semantic density refers to a form of condensations of meanings. Epistemic semantic density is based on the epistemological condensation of formal definitions and empirical examples. This form can be distinguished from, among other kinds, axiological-semantic density based on axiological condensation of affective, aesthetic, ethical, political or moral stances (Maton, 2014, p.153-170). For example, defining a concept is considered a form of epistemic semantic density while describing a concept as 'beautiful' would be considered a form of axiological-semantic density (Maton and Doran, 2017b).

External language of description   a form of translation device for relating theory to empirical data within a problem-situation of a specific study.

External Language of enactment   a form of translation device for relating theory to practices, showing how concepts generate explicit or tacit practices.

Glossary of Terms

Knowledge Blindness ....a term coined by Karl Maton to refer to research's tendency to pay less attention to knowers or knowledge, and to attempt to categorize knowledge but fail to analyse the underlying structures of knowledge. It refers to a tendency in educational studies to focus on knowing processes and on knowers, but neglect knowledge.

Language of description ......builds on Bernstein (2000) who distinguished internal languages of description (L1), or how concepts interrelate within a theory, from external language of description (L2), or how concepts relate to referents. LCT defines the external language of description as a translation device that explicitly relates concepts to empirical data within the problem-situation of a specific study. LCT extends the model to describe mediating languages (L1.5) and external languages of enactment.

Language of Legitimation ....understands and interprets practices and beliefs as reflecting messages concerning the nature of achievement, e.g. whether they are legitimate/illegitimate. They concern the focus of practices (e.g. content) whereas legitimation codes conceptualize the basis of these languages.

Legitimation Code Theory ...an explanatory framework or conceptual toolkit based on Bernstein's code theory and Bourdieu's field theory.

Legitimation codes ....conceptualize organizing principles of practices, beliefs and contexts. Each LCT dimension is centred around one kind of legitimation code. Each is referred to as, for example, semantic codes of legitimation or simply specialization codes.

Legitimation Device ....is a hypothesized generative mechanism underlying social fields of practice over which actors cooperate and struggle for control in order to establish relations (of dominance, visibility, centrality, etc.) among legitimation codes. Each dimension captures one aspect of the Legitimation Device, e.g. Semantics captures the semantic device.

Packing/unpacking..............packing occurs when meanings are condensed and abstracted again, and unpacking occurs when technicality is changed into a more familiar and common-sense language.

Recontextualization of knowledge refers to taking knowledge out of one context and placing it in another leading to the transformation and transmission of knowledge.

Segmentalism ....refers to a situation in which knowledge or knowing is so strongly tied to its context that it is only meaningful within that context. In intellectual fields, segmentalism arises with the accumulation of new ideas or approaches that fail to integrate existing knowledge. Such segmented knowledge-building constrains explanatory power and cumulative progress in research. In educational fields, segmentalism is reflected in curricula or teaching and learning practices that comprise a series of discrete ideas or skills rather than

cumulatively building on previously encountered knowledge. Such segmented learning can constrain students' capacities to extend and integrate their past experiences and apply their understandings to new contexts, such as later studies, everyday lives, or future work.

Semantic codes................... comprise strengths of semantic gravity (SG) and semantic density (SD). Central to the dimension of Semantics, four principal modalities: rhizomatic codes (SG-, SD+), which refer to more complex and more abstract meanings such as specialist ways of thinking and theoretical and abstract knowledge and decontextualised knowledge, prosaic codes (SG+, SD-), which refer to more simple and more context-bound meanings such as non-specialist ways of thinking and contextual and experiential knowledge that relate to students lives or day to day life, rarefied codes (SG-, SD-), which refer to more simple and more abstract meanings, and worldly codes (SG+, SD+), which refer to more complex and more context-bound meanings. Rarefied codes and worldly codes are between the first two.

Semantic density .... is a degree of condensation of meaning described as relative strength along a continuum. It forms semantic codes and semantic profiles when used with semantic gravity. The strengthening and weakening of the semantic density of specific units of meaning are termed condensation and rarefaction, respectively.

Semantic downshifts .... movement from abstract, generalized and condensed meanings to more concretised, specified and simpler meanings. Recurrent downshifts occur when there are repeated movements from generalized, abstract and highly condensed meanings towards more context-dependent and simpler meanings.

Semantic flatlines .... used to refer to writing that remains confined to anecdotal examples or practical applications (low semantic flatline) or confined to more abstract and theoretical meanings (high semantic flatline).

Semantic gravity.................. is the degree of context-dependence of meaning described as a relative strength along a continuum. Forms semantic codes and semantic profiles when used with semantic density. Strengthening and weakening of semantic gravity specific units of meaning are termed gravitation and levitation, respectively.

Semantic profile .... is shown by tracing semantic gravity and density over time (including text-time). Two basic kinds are semantic waves and semantic flatlines. Names are adjusted if only one concept used: e.g. gravity profile, density flatline etc.

Semantic range................... is the distance between the highest and lowest points traced by semantic gravity and semantic density on a semantic profile, which can be relatively low or high. Referred to as gravity range or density range when discussing only one attribute. Semantic ranges are not all alike and they may take subject-specific forms. For example, as students progress

through a curriculum, semantic waves may reach higher through research suggesting that these may have upper limits appropriate to each educational level.

Semantic scale ....is a name for the y-axis on a semantic profile. These is where semantic gravity and semantic density moves inversely creating different semantic codes.

Semantic threshold ....the degree of accuracy expected. For instance, a detailed unpacking of the concept of 'authenticity' may not be necessary at one level or specific task but becomes necessary at another stage or task.

Semantic upshifts.................a movement from concretised, specified and simpler meanings to more abstract, generalized and condensed meanings. Recurrent upshifts occur when there is repeated movement from context-bound meanings to more generalized meanings.

Semantic waves ....denote a semantic profile that traces movements up and down (or down and up) over time (including text time). It shows the recurrent shifts in the degrees of context dependence and condensation of meaning. Put another way, it is a recurrent weakening and strengthening of semantic gravity by moving between concrete examples and abstract ideas. It is usually contrasted with semantic flatlines that exhibit relatively little movement.

Semantic weaving ....refers to the weaving together of different knowledge forms leading to their change and transformation.

Semantics...........................is a dimension of LCT which explores practices in terms of their semantic structures whose organizing principles are given by semantic codes that comprise strengths of semantic gravity and semantic density. These are mapped on the semantic plane and traced over time on semantic profiles to explore the workings of the semantic device, one aspect of the Legitimation Device. It aims to conceptualize and empirically explore the ways in which knowledge is built by actors in social contexts and how it may be developed and transformed over time.

Strengthening semantic gravity   it occurs, for instance, when introducing the more abstract term first and then defining or illustrating it (SG↑)

Telephoto analysis ....is a type of analysis of more delimited instances with greater precision. It provides a rigorous study of specific examples and enables a more precise understanding of the diverse realization across the data of the codes and concretizes the more holistic picture (also referred to as zooming into).

Translation device...............is a means of relating concepts to something beyond a theoretical framework. Forms include external language of description for translating between theory and data within a specific problem-situation; external languages of enactment for translating between

theory and practice; and mediating languages for translating between theory and all empirical forms of a phenomenon.

Weakening semantic gravity a movement from the more concrete meaning 'cutting down trees' to the more abstract meaning 'deforestation' is an instance of weakening semantic gravity.

Wide-angle analysis............ . refers to a research strategy that looks at the bigger picture of a phenomenon (also called zooming out).

Zooming into/out............... is a research strategy comprising movements in either direction between wide-angle analysis of the bigger picture and telephoto analysis of a more limited phenomenon such as a specific instance.

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