A Systemic Functional Approach to Discourse Analysis of Group Interactions

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I would like to thank to my little family for being with me in all my adventurous enterprises. A family is a continuous challenge, but they make me stronger every day.

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Abstract

Discourse analyses of EFL and ESL classroom interactions bring with them the potential to provide insights into the processes involved in the teaching and learning of English an additional language (EAL), a second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL). These processes have been studied from different perspectives, including research which has looked at the structure and the patterns of interactions (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Mehan 1979), as well as research which have evaluated the effectiveness of the interactions in the learning process (Baker 1994; Cazden 1988; Wells 1996). These different foci have had the broad aim of bringing new knowledge and the possibility of improving teaching and learning processes.

The focus of this study is on those interactions which are oriented to academic literacy tasks within one specific context, namely a Pre-Enrolment Program (PEP) classroom at Adelaide University. The PEP aims to develop the academic literacy skills of international students and the class is, therefore, considered an ESL classroom. The study analyses two “group discussions” using tools from the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach to discourse analysis (Martin & Rose 2003; Eggins & Slade 1997). The aim is to understand how learners interact with each as they endeavour to develop their written academic skills. These interactions are focused on four academic articles which form the basis of a discussion to be written by each student as an assessment task in the PEP. The analysis and interpretation of the interactions provide an account of the ways in which the students and the teacher interact in order to build common knowledge about the essay writing task. Specific attention is paid to the roles and functions of the speakers and their contributions and their evaluative comments.
about the four articles to shed light on the objective of the task which is to share information to facilitate the writing of an essay. The dissertation discussion centres on the structure of these commonplace classroom activities, as well as the challenges they present to learners and teachers in this context.
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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

1.1 Context

1.2 The study

1.2.1. Focus of the research

1.2.2. Purpose of the research

1.2.3. Aims and Objectives

1.2.4. Research question/s

1.2.5. Structure of the study

1.1. Context

From my teacher-researcher perspective as an EFL teacher of in Chile, the processes which take place in a language classroom are of great interest. The selection of the topic for this study began with a small-scale research project I undertook in a previous course in Discourse Analysis as part of my MA in Applied Linguistics program. From that study I understood that discourse analysis offered a general framework for the scrutiny of spoken texts. Of importance and relevance to me as an EFL teacher was the understanding that:

“discourse analysis serves as a device for systematically describing the kinds of interactions that occur in language classrooms”

(Ellis, 1994:568).

As a former PEP (Pre-Enrolment English Program) student I am interested in the same interactions in which I participated as an international ESL student within the PEP. These interactions led me to think about the relevance of interactive academic
literacy practices such as sharing information and opinions about academic articles, and also the importance of explaining to fellow students from a diversity of social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the ways in which I thought about structuring my written assignments. These experiences developed my awareness about how academic literacy practices, expressed in the interactions which occur in group discussions, helped to build a common knowledge about academic literacy amongst students.

The Enrolled students must pass the requirements of the PEP course in order to enrol in undergraduate or postgraduate university studies. In the class of fifteen students in which recordings and observations were made. The demographic consisted of eleven Chinese first language speakers and three Arabic first language speakers. One member of the observed group was a Spanish first language speaker.

The PEP course length varies from 5 to 20 weeks depending on the English language level of the students determined on entry by an IELTS score. Students attend the PEP on a full time basis equivalent to twenty hours tuition per week. Each day, students are taught through an integrated language learning approach to reading, writing, speaking and listening orientated around the students making meaning of, interpreting and executing the written genre and communication conventions of academic English. Students are assessed every five weeks on aspects of academic English according to the PEP course aims and objectives. The objectives are centred on academic writing and reading, viewed as the most important for across-discipline success in an English-medium university (PEP Student Handbook 2011, Appendix 3).
In the specific classroom from which data was collected for this study the teacher generally divides into groups of four which allows her to organise collaborative and interactive activities. The aim here, according to the teacher, is to build up English-language academic literacy knowledge amongst students using this collaborative and interactive approach for most of the activities.

The course is described as having “a project-based, learner-centred curriculum with a communication and genre focus” (About the course: Student’s Handbook, PEP, 2011:5, Appendix 3). It has the main goal of helping students to develop language and communications skills in order to allow them to participate in future university academic disciplines. Pedagogy orientated around a genre-based approach to academic literacy and communicative English academic language teaching and learning is evident inside the PEP classroom. Through the learner-centred approach, students are responsible for their own learning and development of academic literacy.

In PEP, students work towards academic literacy in all their tasks. Through developing academic literacy skills, the students learn to develop and use academic skills appropriately in context (Leiki 2000; Braine 2002). Gilliver-Brown & Johnson (2009) summarise academic literacy according to research done by Leike (2000) and Braine (2002):
“It needs to be understood holistically and includes, for example, competence in reading, writing, critical thinking, knowledge of independent learning processes, tolerance of ambiguity, effective practice of good judgement, and development of a deeper sense of personal identity”.


It is this broad concept which reflects most of the objectives in the work by students in the PEP course and explains, at the same time, the goals underpinning the teaching practices employed.

My purpose is to develop an understanding of the motivations behind these oral activities. In these spoken interactions non-native speakers of English find not only the opportunity to speak, but also the opportunity to corroborate with their cohort, thereby developing through their understanding across the entire range of tertiary academic literacy practices.

1.2. The study

1.2.1. Focus of the research

This investigation looks at the features of language use of ESL learners in group interactions. The foci of the research are those oral texts generated within classes in the PEP. More specifically, the foci are group interactions of learners in which they engage in discussion of articles which will form the basis of subsequent written assignments.

The analyses are of the interactions within groups set up by the teacher and as such they inform the ways in which interactants participate and construct their learning.
1.2.2. Purpose of the research

PEP classes offer a wide range of activities focused on written and spoken-communicative skills detailed in Chapter 3 of this study. Within these activities student interaction is one the most frequent strategies employed by the teacher. In order to describe how these strategies are utilised inside the ESL classroom, I undertook a discourse analysis of the interactions which occurred as students engaged in group work. The purpose of the study is to understand how students engage with each other in these group activities, to understand the processes they engage in to learn share with and learn from each other. The analyses and their interpretations also have implications for classroom practices, for students and for teachers who engage in them.

1.2.3. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study is to analyse and interpret group oral interactions in one PEP classroom.

The objectives of the study are:

- To understand the roles of the participants. That is, the ways students participate in interactions.

- To describe the evaluations made by the participant of the discussed texts.

A related aim is to investigate the role of the teacher. An analysis of the interactions offers insights into the pedagogic processes of a teacher as she engages in her daily teaching and learning activities.
1.2.4. Research Question/s

- How do students in one PEP classroom engage in spoken activities in which they talk about written material provided by the teacher?
- What is the role of the teacher in these interactions?

Through the analysis of spoken interactions undertaken within the activities, the roles and relationships of the students will be described, as will be their understanding of and orientation to the task.

The second question seeks to understand the influence of the teacher in the engagement of the students in this activity. The interactions with the teacher frame the interactions and help students to develop their understanding of the task.

1.2.5. The Structure of the study

The dissertation is structured in six chapters. The first chapter provides the context for the study and presents the rationale, aim, and objectives and focus. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on academic literacy teaching and learning and its relevance for ESL students and also the role of discourse analysis in the classroom through the years. It presents an overview of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1978), which is the theoretical framework for the analysis of data in this study, and also describes the SFL approach to discourse analysis applied by some authors at the level of discourse semantics or Genre by using the genre theory (Martin 2010). Chapter 3 describes the methods used to collect and manage the data arising from the audio recordings and observations made within a PEP class, as well as the tools for analysis used within Systemic Functional Linguistics framework and how they are applied to data. It gives a full description of this one PEP classroom context and the
pedagogy underpinning the PEP course. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 discusses and interprets the data in relation to the teaching and learning aims and objectives within PEP. In Chapter 6 I draw conclusions from the study and discuss implications for teaching and learning in this context.
Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

2.1. Academic Literacy for ESL speakers

2.2. Discourse analysis of classroom discourse and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)
   2.2.1. Classroom discourse studies
   2.2.2. Systemic Functional Linguistics
   2.2.3. SFL Approach to discourse analysis

Overview

This chapter positions my study from two core applications of linguistics, the field of education and the domain of discourse analysis. The first part reviews literature in the area of English academic literacy with a specific focus on ESL learners. It proceeds to review relevant studies on the discourse analysis of spoken texts with emphasis on the classroom based research. The aim is to look closely at the spoken texts involved in academic literacy learning and teaching. The particular theoretical framework described for discourse analysis in this study is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Studies which use SFL to analyse classroom discourse are also reviewed.

2.1. Academic Literacy for ESL speakers

English speaking countries have their own academic culture in universities (Brick 2009). Brick (2009) defines academic culture as the values and attitudes shared within an academic community. Where higher education
shares some aspects of academic culture globally, English speaking countries have developed a unique culture (Brick 2009) which has become more popular with the spread of English as a global language (Crystal 1997). Although there is a variation in the practices amongst the different disciplines within this academic community, these attitudes and values of teaching and learning prevail in internationalised higher education.

English-medium universities in countries like Australia, USA, UK share an expected academic behaviour from scholars and students (Brick 2009). However, specialists in the field of higher education improvement (Weimer 2002; Saroyan & Amundsen 2004) emphasize the general role of universities is supporting students to take on responsibility for their learning. For example, students and scholars need to be problem solvers, critical thinkers, write according to the faculty specific English genres and participate in group-based work in their fields of study (Brick 2009; Weimer 2000). Group interactions are a strategy commonly used in the higher education context and world of academia in English-medium universities in English-speaking countries. This is, according to Brick (2009), evidenced in the structure of courses where students are engaged in seminars, tutorials and lectures.

For international students wishing to study in English medium universities these attitudes and values need to be learnt in the context of English as a second language (ESL). These attitudes and values are what are taught to students as academic literacy.
English speaking academic higher education communities have therefore developed strategies to teach academic literacy to ESL learners who require those skills. Hyland & Hamp-Lyons (2002) identify English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as the field that has framed academic literacy learning in English speaking countries at the tertiary level. They define EAP as referring to “language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts” (2). They go on to suggest that the purpose of EAP is to involve speakers of English as a second language in curriculums which are designed to facilitate the learning and understanding of academic genres (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons 2002) which are at the core of the academic culture.

The ways in which students are taught academic genres at the tertiary level is of great interest. The process of talking about texts is considered as an effective way to learn and teach a language (Wells 1990). Yet whilst the process may be widely accepted, the process of the process, that is how talking about texts takes place, is usually assumed as natural. Martin & Rose (2007) make the point that the spoken interaction patterns resulting from talk about texts needs further study. Studies which focus on the teaching of the generic structure of written texts as part of a genre based pedagogy for reading and written literacy are common (Christie 1999; Hyland 2002; Martin 2009). These investigations are commonly based on the analysis of written texts for the purpose of teaching academic literacy. The spoken interactions which underpin any classroom discussion about the written texts are rarely investigated. Christie (2002) and her model of “curriculum genres” , which
developed as part of pedagogic approach labelled as genre-based, supports the idea of analysing spoken texts which occur in the classroom in order to identify possible macrogenres which, according to Christie (2002), can be used to shape the structure of a syllabus. Macrogenres are defined as elements of programming and planning, elements which are possibly equivalent to a unit of work, and which stretch over a number of lessons., Christie (2002) suggests, through the projection of this macrogenre, a number of classroom genres (i.e. lessons with a distinctive beginning, middle and end) can be developed. This development includes examining the talk among all participants in a classroom interaction, with the purpose of depicting the structure of the curriculum.

Collaborative classrooms include interactive models such as pair work and group work (Johnson & Johnson, 1993). Both are common resources in which the teacher is not an active participant for what the exchange of information promotes learning among peers and development of skills such as critical thinking (Mc Groarty 1989; Olsen & Kagan 1992). Those strategies help students to put into practice English language which will develop academic literacy in an ESL context. According to Wells (2000), spoken interactions help students to build their understanding. The learning process through spoken interactions is explained as follows:

“In uttering, the speakers’ efforts are directed to the saying - to producing meaning for others. To do this, speakers have to interpret the preceding contribution(s) in terms of the information it
introduces, as well as their own stance to that information; compare that interpretation with their own current understanding of the issue under discussion, based on their experience and any other relevant information of which they are aware; and then formulate a contribution that will, in some relevant way, add to the common understanding achieved in the discourse so far, by extending, questioning or qualifying what someone else has said. It is frequently in this effort to make their understanding meaningful for others that speakers have the feeling of reaching a fuller and clearer understanding for themselves”

(Wells 2000: 73-74).

He refers to the processes involved in the creation of a final product as the “saying” and the product itself as “what is said” (Wells, 2000 in Clifford et al. 2005: 184).

2.2. **Discourse analysis of classroom discourse and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)**

2.2.1 **Classroom discourse analysis**

Language interactions between teachers and students and amongst students constitute an important part of the teaching and learning process, particularly where English language is the focus of that teaching and learning effort (Richards 2006). In different contexts the specific focus and objectives may change from spoken language, to reading, to listening, to writing, and very often includes a combination of these skills. What is constant is that teachers and students interact and students interact with each other (Richards 2006).
Spoken texts inside classrooms vary greatly, from the planned to the spontaneous, from teacher led to student led, from teacher to students and also from student to student (Burns 1996). Those who have been interested in classroom interactions usually look at one or other of these kinds of interactions (i.e. Sinclair & Coulthad 1975, Cazden 1986; Burns 1996; Hall 2001; Gan et al. 2008).

As a way into understanding the function of language in L2 classrooms, spoken interactions which take place in the classroom can be explored by using discourse analysis (Burns 1996; Hall 2001). The analysis of discourse has been defined by some authors as “the analysis of language in use” (Brown & Yule 1983:1; Paltridge 2006:9) and ‘the relationship between context and language’ by others (Mc Carthy 1997). The focus of discourse analysis is on how people use language in order to communicate, what acts are performed in communicative processes and in which particular situations (Paltridge 2006). Most importantly, according to Paltridge (2006), are the language choices made by students in the interactions which take place in the classroom.

The interactions which occur in classrooms can be approached from different perspectives. Allwright (1980) puts the emphasis on patterns of participation, including an examination of turn- taking and topic identification in his study. Mehan (1979), asserts interaction in a classroom is not unidirectional but is a joint production of all the participants. For Mehan (1979), student interaction was as relevant as teacher interactions with students. In more contemporary
studies, it is generally assumed that the interactions occurring in a classroom involve both learners and the teacher (Hall 2001).

Teacher-student interactions were first analysed in the 1970’s. Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) developed an understanding of the typical models of interaction in a range of settings (i.e. teacher-student; patient-doctor; customer-seller). From their examination of interactions, they proposed and identified a clear structure in typical classroom discourse. They labelled this the Initiation-Response-Feedback (I-R-F) pattern consisting of teacher initiation (I), a student response (R) and the teacher feedback (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Mehan 1979; Markee 2000; Nassaji & Well 2000). This model was then accepted as widely used across education systems in the English speaking world, a kind of basic template for classroom interactions between teachers and students (Hall 2001).

Affirmation of the IRF model of interaction as the most common pattern in language classrooms is evidenced in numerous studies (Nystrand, 1997; Lin 1999; Hall 1997). While Cullen (2002) believes IRF is an effective resource to construct and deliver knowledge to language learning students, Nunan (1987) argues that this pattern of interaction facilitated in classrooms is not authentic, that is IRF does not replicate or resemble real life interactions. Cullen (2002) adds that in language learning classrooms, the teacher is a deliverer of knowledge who elicits answers from students who will statically wait for feedback in the form of a teacher response. Mehan (1979) later described a similar classroom pattern which he identified as Initiation- Response-
Evaluation (IRE). The evaluation element replaced the feedback element and was a more advanced teaching and learning strategy to facilitate interactions. Hall & Walsh (2002) however, believe that evaluation as an end point to an interactive cycle constrains students’ participation because it terminates the interaction at the teacher’s turn and does not offer students any real opportunities of extended interaction. Furthermore, the interaction is controlled by the teacher as well as the turns, the topics and the totality of the teaching and learning process (Gan et al. 2008). Language learning classrooms in which interactions occur through IRF and IRE cycles are now critiqued as essentially monologic and are not indicative of the real-life communicative interactions which students will encounter in life.

Contemporary language classrooms encourage more active interaction and aim for a more “holistic and comprehensive communicative format” (Riggenbach 1998; Taylor 2000; Swain 2001). The language which occurs in group interactions in contemporary language classrooms is therefore, more similar to a casual conversation rather than the interaction cycles in monologic classrooms (Belnap & Withers 2008; Vickers 2007). In other words, modern teachers have developed approaches to language teaching in order to create more collaborative classrooms. Collaborative classrooms are distinguished by interaction among all the participants or in small groups characterised by negotiation where students work together in problem solving activities and take control of the interaction (Mercer 1996; Gilles 2006).

Kumaravadivelu (1999) advocates another approach to classroom discourse to ensure critical and authentic classroom interactions. He developed this
approach by involving teachers in its development to ensure they gained a critical understanding of the discourse patterns which were occurring in their classrooms. Kumaravadivelu’s research interest is in critical classroom discourse analysis influenced by “post-structural and postcolonial” (471) perspectives to discourse. He claims that classroom discourse is non-static social, political and historical construct. Moreover, he asserts that teachers should gain the knowledge to pursue an understanding of their own language classrooms. In other words, the language classroom is alive and its activity is not limited solely to interactions through monologic turn taking. This, according to Kumaravadivelu (1999), should be reflected in the improvement of teaching practice and language learning and teaching approaches from a teacher’s self critical perspective.

For some discourse studies, the focus has been on communicative development (Baker 1994; Cazden 1988; Wells 1996). These studies provide evidence of how interaction patterns indicate student understanding the content curriculum.

Baker (1994) concluded that students were able to co-construct solutions after mutual understanding gained during peer dialogue (Mercer 1996; Gilles 2006). Cazden (1988) describes studies where teacher scaffolding was present (through modelling questions) during student interactions which resulted in more effective learning. Wells (1996) studied the patterns of interactions between one teacher and thirty students. He used what he called a “tool-kit” (74), which included an application of Activity Theory (Leont’ev
1981, derived from the work of Vygotksy 1978) and SFL (Halliday 1978) as his methodologies for the discourse analysis. In his collaborative teacher-researcher work, Wells (1996) concluded that teachers could analyse small chunks of talk in their classes as a way of understanding how their interactions worked with students.

Discourse analysis undertaken inside the classroom has further allowed for the demonstration of language as a learning tool through three main evidences, according to Swain (1995). In her study, she firstly identifies that students realise what is missing when they cannot effectively communicate. Secondly, students try to find new ways to communicate to replace the ineffective methods. Finally, students have the opportunity to reflect on how they use language. Swain contends that this developing awareness in students is one of the benefits of collaborative group work.

Group interactions, whilst attractive for discourse analysts to analyse, become problematic at the moment of scrutiny. With the inclusion of group interactions in communicative classrooms these patterns change. Classroom interactions occurring in traditional language classrooms, typified by IRF or IRE cycles of teacher-student interaction, have easily recognisable patterns and structure (Coulthard 1976; Cazden 1988; Nassij & Wells 2000). However, group interactions inside the classroom tend to lack someone playing the teachers’ role of a facilitator, as with traditional models of instruction (Belnap & Withers 2008). Belnap & Withers’ study (2008) describes group interactions which were monitored but not facilitated. Within the group, there was nobody who played the role of the teacher as facilitator as occurs in the IRE interaction. In
this triadic dialogue (teacher, student, teacher) (Nassij & Wells 2000) the course of the interaction was controlled by the teacher (Gan et al. 2008), thus more clearly structured, allowing a less problematic analysis.

2.2.2. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)
The theory which underpins this study is SFL theory which has been applied to a number of domains including language education and research in language education (Christie 1999). What makes the approach attractive is the dual focus on both text and context. The theory is described as a functional-semantic approach (Halliday 1978; Eggins & Slade 1997; Eggins 2004) with particular benefits for discourse analysts (Martin & Rose 2004).

Halliday (1978) asserts “language as social semiotic”(2), that means language has the potential to mean in different social contexts. Interactions are semiotic encounters in which meanings are exchanged by “meaners” (speakers) (Halliday 1977 in Webster 2002:50). This construction of reality between interactants is identified, according to a functional-semantic approach, as a text. This functional-semantic duality offers clarity regarding the various uses and structures of language (functionality) and at the same time, what meanings are made and how they are organised (semantics) within a text.

Through this view of language, an understanding is gained in terms of language having a meaning potential (Halliday 1978), where the grammar of a language is an instrument for the core function of language, which is the exchange of meanings.

Eggins (1994) states that SFL has four theoretical statements:
“...language is functional (1); that its function is to make meaning (2); that these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged (3); and that the process of using language is a process of making meaning by choosing(4)”.

(Eggins 1994:2)

These theoretical claims have allowed SFL to constantly develop perspectives about language patterns and the social role of language. Matthiessen (2009) describes SFL as a dynamic system, since changes in the way it models language have occurred since 1961, the year in which Halliday first outlined the stratified model of language and context. Halliday (1966) modified Firth’s systemic-structure theory (1948) in favour of pragmatics (paradigmatic system) rather than syntax (syntagmatic system). The relation between these two systems is what he called a realisation, which goes through every stratum in the systemic model (Mathiessen 2005). Later, Halliday (1967) postulated the existence of metafunctions which accounted for the functionality of language in making three different kinds of meanings: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The different strata create the potential for looking at the meaning of texts across different levels. We use language for the purpose of making these simultaneous meanings rather than exchanging sounds or sentences with others (Eggins 2004).
Butt et al (2006) describe SFL as an analytical tool, which can be used to look at how meanings are made. Grammatical structures are present in both spoken and written texts. Butt et al. note that text is realized in two contexts. The context of culture is the broader, and a more specific context, known as the context of situation. Martin (1992 in Schiffrin 2003) explains, in order to define texts, that both contexts are interrelated and that these realisations occur through language because of the contribution of discourse semantics, lexico-grammar and phonology system (Butt et al 2006).

In SFL, meanings are made simultaneously at all levels indicating the importance for an analyst to look at all the strata when choosing tools for analysis. The tools suggested for discourse analysis consider not only the tools available in that stratum for ideational, interpersonal or textual meanings, but also the grammatical features as Mood, Transitivity or Theme (Eggins & Slade 1997; Martin & Rose 2005).

2.2.3. SFL Approach to discourse analysis
Martin and Rose (2002: 1) point to the relevance of doing discourse analysis by saying that “... Since each text is produced interactively between speakers, and between writers and (potential) readers, we can use it to interpret the interaction it manifests...”

Eggins & Slade (1997) used the SFL model in the analysis of casual conversation. They argue that casual conversation is “driven by interpersonal meanings” (50). The ways in which language is used (textual meanings) and the defined topics (ideational meanings) are not as important as the interpersonal meanings in the context of casual conversations. Table 0
outlines the three kinds of meanings and their realisation in casual conversations, that is the specific aspects of casual conversation in which each type of meaning is most salient.

### Casual Conversation Analysis using SFL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of meaning</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideational</td>
<td>Topics (who, when, transitions, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Turn-taking negotiation, roles relations, attitudes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>Cohesion, foregrounding patterns, etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 0 Adapted from Eggins & Slade 1997

Eggins & Slade (1997) justify the use of the Systemic Functional approach for the analysis of conversations as follows:

“1. It offers an integrated, comprehensive a systematic mode of language which enables conversational patterns to be described and quantified at different levels and in different degrees of detail.
2. It theorizes the links between language and social life so that conversation can be approached as a way of doing social life. More specifically, casual conversation can be analysed as involving different linguistics patterns which both enact and construct dimensions of social identity and interpersonal relations.” (Eggins & Slade 1997).

According to Eggins & Slade (1999) some spoken genres (i.e. casual conversations) have a “clear structure” (Martin 2009:117). It is common to
see in English teaching text books and ESL classrooms, how casual conversation is taught by following a pattern. Students learn how to greet people on the street, how to conduct a trivial conversation about the weather or just about life. These experiences help students to become involved in the social setting of English speaking cultures (Eggins & Slade 1997).

The interactions considered in this study are multidirectional and more spontaneous than planned interactions. In order to understand these interactions, the frame in which Eggins & Slade use a SFL approach to discourse analysis for conversation analysis is a useful example to follow. They also propose that one of the bases for analysing casual conversation is the potential for teaching conversation in EFL/ESL classrooms. They suggest that all analysis in this field has the potential to promote “full participation in the cultural life of English speaking countries” (Eggins & Slade 1997:315).

In a different application of SFL to classroom discourse Lai (2010), used Appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005) to analyse evaluation in the teacher’s discourse. Although her study describes the evaluative resources of teachers, it did not include the discourses of the students.

The systemic functional approach to discourse analysis has also been used in conjunction with critical discourse analysis. (Banda 2005) looked at the merging of Zambian/English casual conversation in order to depict social identity. Through the analysis of the semiotic resource of Mood and the analysis of sentence-level grammatical patterns, the study showed how interactants construct identities, social roles and relationships (Banda 2005).
Finally, Martin & Rose (2007) emphasise the importance of dialogue in the process of learning how to read and write. Their study was implemented in China in a primary school setting. The purpose was to examine the interactions in which the teaching and learning cycle, used in genre based pedagogy (Feez 1998), takes place. Martin and Rose (2007) consider the importance of doing “systematic analysis of classroom discourse” (18). Further to this, Martin & Rose (2003 in Martin & Rose 2007) suggest looking at interaction (Negotiation), affect (Appraisal) and multimodality when looking at classroom discourse. Their conclusion is that the analysis of texts produced in teaching reading and writing are as important as the analysis of the texts read or written by students in the same process (Martin & Rose 2007). Their study situates the research direction of this current research project, in which group interactions are considered as relevant for the purpose of understanding the process of teaching and learning academic literacy.
Chapter 3 METHOD

Overview

3.1. The context

3.1.1. The objectives of the course

3.1.2. Classroom Distribution

3.2. Data: Group interaction as a task

3.2.1. Instructions to perform the group interaction

3.3. Collection and Management of Data

3.3.1. Collection

3.3.2. Transcription method

3.4. Methodology Selection for the Analysis of the data

3.1. The context

The research context is a classroom in the PEP at Adelaide University. This program is a pathway course which allows international ESL students to subsequently enrol in a South Australian higher education institution on successful completion.

Within randomly selected class, there are 14 international students from different cultural and social backgrounds and varied levels of English proficiency. Students’ IELTS score average is between 4 and 5 which define the length of the program they take. The PEP maximum length is twenty weeks long. Data was collected during Weeks 5 to 8.
The classroom is configured so that students sit in set groups of four per table during the length of the course.

As described in the PEP institutional guidelines, the course is “an interactive, task-based course” (6). It aims to develop the following skills in relation to academic literacy in English for international students:

- Independent learning skills
- Reading & writing skills
- Speaking & listening skills

All these skills are taught and learnt through an interrelated teaching and learning approach within the course. A feature of this course is “group discussion”, which exemplifies this interrelated and blended approach to developing academic literacy. The course is orientated around students applying the skills outlined above in order to perform collaborative activities. In order to participate, students need to apply reading and writing skills in the form of note taking and speaking and listening in order to exchange information. The focus of this approach to academic literacy is on developing independent learning skills, since students learn at their own pace but must follow specific deadlines and timeframes.

3.1.1. The objectives of the course

The PEP curriculum is based on the accomplishment of seven general objectives:
• “Oral communication: a willingness to speak out and participate actively in spoken discourse.

• Significant autonomy in learning and initiative in self directed study

• Familiarity with, and skills in, Australian tertiary academic styles of thinking, learning and presentation of ideas

• An understanding of genre analysis and skills in presenting ideas in a number of written genres in English

• Skills in editing their own work for grammatical correctness, and continuous development of a command of more complex grammar

• Ability to participate actively, productively and equally as a member of a group

• Familiarity with, and confidence in, accessing and using student facilities and services”

(About the course, Student Handbook 2011, Pre-Enrolment English Program, CLPD).

The PEP is described as having “a project-based, learner centred curriculum with a communication and genre focus” (About the course, Student’s handbook, PEP, 2011:5, Appendix 3).

In project (task) based curricula, the use of tasks allows interaction amongst participants and the development of problem solving strategies in order for participants to move to the next stage of the task. Students, through their
interactions, are engaged in negotiation with peers. This experience provides students with the necessary knowledge and/or expertise for particular situations which may arise in future higher education experiences (Nunan 1999).

As a learner-centred curriculum, PEP also includes features of a collaborative approach to learning and teaching. The emphasis is on student’s working cooperatively together in interactive group activities. This collaborative approach is centred on activities where students develop social competence through small group or pair work. As a consequence of exchanging information, collaborative and interactive learning takes place among peers. The suggestion is that this then leads to the development of critical thinking skills (McGroarty, 1989; Olsen & Kagan, 1992). Johnson & Johnson (1993) explain this interactive approach as “the instructional use of small groups in order for individuals to work together to maximise each one’s learning”.

In addition, the PEP curriculum is influenced by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Hymes, 1987) and genre based pedagogies (Derewianka 2003). CLT is an approach which combines the idea of developing both linguistic performance and linguistic competence through an emphasis on social interaction (Hymes 1987). He suggests that communicative competence requires students not only to develop the necessary grammatical knowledge to perform utterances in the target language but also how to use those utterances in specific situations.

The PEP also promotes a genre based pedagogy which, as described by Derewianka (2003), is focused on texts. Within this approach to teaching and
learning, genres are defined as social practices that are present in all aspects of communication (Martin, 1985). In SFL literature, the definition of genre is “a staged, goal oriented social process” (Martin & Rose 2010:6). Within the SFL model genre is taken to mean the context of culture. Accordingly, the context of culture provides the understandings to its members of how to successfully stage, goal oriented, social processes to completion. This is how the culture operates and sustains itself and cultural members understand how to use the genres specific to the culture. In the context of the PEP the international students do not know the genres of academic culture in Australia and a genre based approach provides an explicit pedagogy for teaching and learning these genres. The purpose of a text-based approach is to make students aware of the structure of texts in order to understand their social purpose (Bakhtin 1994).

The main goal of a genre-based approach in the PEP is to assist students to develop their language and communications skills in order to allow them to participate successfully in future academic programs. In order to achieve the objectives described above, the PEP curriculum (Appendix 3) is divided into four main skill-based components (reading and writing; speaking; listening; independent learning skills). The main focus within each of the four skills is on academic English and independent learning situations (PEP Student Handbook 2011). Group interactions are used to develop each of the four components. For the purposes of this research project, the reading writing and speaking components are of particular interest.
Table 1 lists the expected outcomes of these components in the PEP

### Expected Outcomes of the PEP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Extract information from written texts relevant to their purpose  
  • Interpret and analyse positions taken within a text and critically respond to these | • Paraphrase/summarise arguments and synthesise information  
  • Use a range of grammatical structures  
  • Construct cohesive and developed written texts | • Express ideas/opinions and negotiate  
  • Respond appropriately in a range of academic speaking environments  
  • Lead and participate in academic discussions, tutorials, seminars and meetings  
  • Communicate ideas reasonably clearly  
  • Make formal academic presentations |

Table 1 Adapted from Students’ Handbook, PEP 2011

3.1.2. **Classroom Distribution**

The classroom is set up in a way in which students are encouraged to work in groups. In order to facilitate this, the groups in which students participate and interact are formed on a permanent basis.

In the spatial organisation of the classroom it is important to note that some of the students are not facing the teacher because of the way the seating and tables are configured. This exemplifies the importance of group performance over the teacher’s instruction. The classroom is configured to facilitate student interactions and collaboration.
3.2. **Data: group interaction as a task**

The audio recordings made as part of the data collection corresponds to what the teacher describes as “group discussion” occurring in the Academic English program described above. Over the course of two group discussions, the groups of students were asked to discuss four different academically orientated articles (Appendix 5) which were given to each group by the teacher. The purpose of the discussions was for the execution or performance of an individual discussion essay. The academic articles were provided to students to discuss in their groups two weeks before the essay task. During the two recordings (Identified in the analysis as “Text 1” and “Text 2”) students refer to each of the four articles interchangeably, resulting in difficulties arising in transcribing the data for the purpose of analysis. .
The essay task does not have a title to assist the student to conceptualise how the essay will be written. In order to write the essay, students must use the articles below to present a discussion to inform the writing of their paper based on the following questions: “What are some effective interventions for obesity in children? Which intervention is the most effective?”


3.2.1. *Instructions to perform the “Group Discussion”*

The group discussions had clear guidelines given by the teacher in order for the students to perform with strategic purpose.

Text 1 is a transcription of one group of four students who discuss the most relevant ideas in one of the four academic articles (Appendix 5). The discussion revolves around “Article 1” (highlighted). In Text 2, students form new groups. Each new group is constituted by students from different groups, so each group in the class has one student who has read and discussed one article. In this way, each student in the new group was responsible for presenting the main ideas in that article only.

The instructions given by the teacher were not audio recorded but are recorded in the written field notes made during the classroom observation sessions. According to the field notes, the teacher instructions before the group activity audio recorded as Text 1 were;

“*to present and discuss relevant information with your classmates in the group and decide where and how to use the information in your essay*” (PEP Teacher).

Students were required to have read the articles prior to the discussion in order to present relevant information. The teacher assumes students have the skills to recognise what is “relevant information”. The next part of the teacher’s instructional guideline which frames the group discussion is to discuss what the students identify as relevant information. In order for students to undertake a discussion, they require the ability to structure arguments to support ideas based on relevant information contained in the
articles. Finally, students need to decide where and how they are going to use the relevant information in the conceptualisation and the writing of their essays.

The group interaction and collaborative learning through discussion can be interpreted as having four academic literacy objectives:

1. To select useful information in the articles by identifying main ideas in the texts.

2. To orally present relevant information to the group by paraphrasing it.

3. To discuss as a group the relevancy of that information by creating arguments to support positions.

4. To decide how and where information is used in essays through developing an understanding of the purpose of each section of a discussion essay. (Introduction, 2 Body paragraphs, and Conclusion).

The students were given approximately 30 minutes on each occasion to complete the “group discussion”, that is to discuss the academic article in order to locate relevant information to inform the writing of an essay which in terms of text type is a discussion. During this time, the teacher moves around the classroom between groups monitoring the discussions. When needed, the teacher participates with short interventions, mainly observed in Text 1.

Through the writing of the discussion essay, facilitated by the group discussions, the student’s ability to apply what has been discussed about the
academic articles indicates the current ability of the students in their efforts to become academically literate.

One student (identified as Student 2 in both transcriptions) gave permission for the marked version of his discussion essay to be analysed as part of the study. The purpose of the analysis was to develop an understanding of the extent to which the student used the knowledge gained during the collaborative and interactive group discussions. This student was the only student in the cohort who participated in both of the recorded group discussion sessions.

3.3. Collection and Management of Data

3.3.1. Collection
The data were collected during observations of the PEP classroom. It comprises two audio recordings of approximately 30 minutes each from one PEP four hour class.

As indicated, one student’s written assignment was also collected and analysed.

The audio recordings are complemented by field notes taken during the class which provides details of the context, the participants and other relevant events.

3.3.2. Transcription method and Methodology
Each recording was transcribed using the conventions of Paltridge (2006) and Eggins & Slade (1997). For the purpose of this study, intonation was not
considered relevant and, therefore, omitted from the transcription. The key to the transcription conventions are shown in Table 1:

**Key to transcriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>equals sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“xx”</td>
<td>overlapping speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>Technical terms or concepts taken directly from the articles. Also used for instance of code switching in one of the speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>Identification of Theme in the clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[xxx]</td>
<td>Mood block of the clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>Silence or in comprehensible speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[xxxx]</td>
<td>The occurrence of omitted words in the speech is marked in the transcription by the use of brackets and the inclusion of the word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xxxx</td>
<td>Lexical item (appraisal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xxxx)</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Ellipsed interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>Ellipsed declarative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both interactions, Text 1 and Text 2 were separated into turns as part of the transcription. This made it easier to identify each speaker in the unfolding interactions. Each turn was then divided into clauses, to facilitate a functional analysis of the Texts.
A sample of the transcription is presented in Table 5, identifying turn numbers, the speaker for each turn and the utterance broken into clauses.

The two transcriptions (Appendix 1 and 2) were divided into clauses in order to apply a systemic functional analysis of the text. Three types of analysis were undertaken. Firstly, with the purpose of analysing ideational meaning, different colours are used to identify the three general topics which are evident in the Texts: about the content of the articles: red, about essay structure: green, about language (metalanguage): blue. These topics are topics about the content within each article, conversations about the essay structure, discussion about language issues, and the language used by the teacher (instructional and regulative).

The three categories described above, identified by different colours in the transcript and included in the full transcriptions (Appendix 1 and 2), which are the topics within these classroom interactions, offer an understanding of the
interests and concerns of the students during the interactions and how they go about communicating these interests and concerns. The use of colour identifiers in the transcript is for the purpose of providing a visual perspective of the most common topics.

Ideational meaning was depicted by observing the frequency of lexical items. When talking about the content of the articles, students used noun groups like the article, the text, health practitioners, obesity and others related exclusively to obesity and health care. When talking about the essay, words like introduction, discussion essay and the information were very frequent. Finally, when talking about metalanguage students used questions to refer to their misunderstanding. These questions and answers were considered for identifying interactions about metalanguage. While it was easy to identify these two categories, what referred to teacher talk (categorised as instructional language and regulative language) was hard and confusing. Regulative language was classified by commands and explanations by the teacher regarding the performance of the group interaction to the class. Instructional language was also identified when the teacher addressed the whole class, however each category described above (content about the articles, about the essay and metalanguage) was scrutinised in order to identify the instructional interventions of teacher.

In order to examine Textual meaning, the Theme of each clause was identified with the purpose to understand the construction of textual meaning at the macro level of Text. This indicates what drives the topics and subtopics
of conversation. The frequency and variation of the topics were also discussed.

Interpersonal meaning was considered by identifying grammatical patterns of Mood in each clause, thus investigating the role of each speaker, including the teacher. These patterns contributed to the construction of meaning in the group interactions. Finally, interpersonal meaning is considered, the analysis focussing on a Appraisal, more specifically the identification of Appreciation. Lexical items representing Appreciation are represented in italics in the transcript and categorised in tables in the analysis section in order to understand how students react, value or refer to different aspects within each of the texts.

The written assignment of one student was analysed to get a sense of the relationship between what the students talked about in their classroom interactions and what was used by this student in the final written task. This provides some tentative comment on the level of effectiveness of the group interactions.

3.4. Selection and application of methodology for the analysis of the data
There are several approaches to conversation analysis including the ethnographic approach (Hymes 1972) and the social-interactionist approach (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975) as discussed in Chapter 2. The Systemic Functional approach was chosen as it appears the most suitable after comparison with alternatives.
The strength of the SFL approach to discourse analysis is in the tools it offers in understanding both spoken and written language. Accurate use of the grammatical resources has the potential to indicate patterns of language use which, in this case, which are a window into the roles and relationships within this one classroom setting, and also provide a clear indication of the specific topics of interest and concern for these students.

Group interactions are understood as a type of conversation. Even when the spontaneity factor is diminished in a classroom setting, the unstructured flow of turns and subtopics reflect conversational patterns. Eggins & Slade (1997) suggest that if topics are not previously agreed by speakers, spontaneity is a marked characteristic in casual conversations.

A full description of the setting has been given in order to contextualise these group interactions. The analysis also looks at the participants’ roles. These are considered ethnographic features but are relevant since they complement the SFL approach of analysis.

The audio recordings were transcribed and analysed following the model of analysis from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) particularly as described by Eggins & Slade (1997). Through this approach an understanding of the functional role of language in social activities can be developed through the provision of an “integrated, comprehensive and systematic model of language which enables conversational patterns” (Eggins & Slade, 1997:47). The analysis of the three different layers of meaning (ideational, interpersonal and textual) provides information, for example,
regarding the topics they talk about, the relationships among the speakers and how they organise turn-taking to maintain the interactions.

Table 4 below indicates that at particular levels within the overall stratified models, there are particular analytic resources which contribute to an investigation of the meanings within a text. Because the texts in this study are spoken texts then it is natural that some emphasis should be placed on resources which highlight interpersonal meanings, that is, meanings which foreground such matters as the roles and relationships of participants, as well as their attitudes and evaluations of things and people. In this study it is their attitudes towards texts, specifically their appreciation of the composition of texts which is most relevant.

**Key resources for text analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratum</th>
<th>Metafunction</th>
<th>Ideational</th>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th>Textual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Orbital/serial structure</td>
<td>Prosodic structure</td>
<td>Periodic structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register</td>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register</td>
<td>Ideation, external conjunction</td>
<td>Appraisal, negotiation</td>
<td>Identification, internal conjunction, information flow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse semantics</td>
<td>Transitivity, nominal group classification, etc.</td>
<td>Mood, modality, polarity, appraisal, etc.</td>
<td>Theme and information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexicogrammar</td>
<td>Tone sequence</td>
<td>Formatting, tone, voice, etc.</td>
<td>Punctuation, layout, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Adapted from Martin et al. 2010: 295

Although ideational meaning is not usually the main focus when using this approach in casual conversations, in the group work interactions in the study, students have been given clear guidelines about what to talk about. There is a topic which frames the conversations occurring in the group work and an
The ideational analysis provides insights into how the topic is spoken about by the interactants. The 28-30 minute recordings reveal that even with such a clear delimitation of the analysis, different subtopics can be identified. The ideational analysis is used in order to look at the topics discussed by the students and the language used by students.

In order to look at the ideational meanings of a text, Martin, Matthiessen & Painter (2010) recognise the identification of nominal groups. By looking at Epithets (descriptive words) and Things (noun groups), it is possible to identify what is being talked (284).

In terms of textual analysis, Martin et al. (2010) suggest identification of Topical Themes and Rheme as a useful recourse to refer to how the information flows in a text. Topical Theme could correspond to a circumstance or a participant. In the case of imperative topical Themes are realised by a process (Droga & Humphrey 2002, Martin et al. 2010).

Interpersonal meaning can be analysed using several tools. Martin et al. (2010) propose approaching the analysis using the Appraisal system looking at Attitude and negotiation of the interactants. Within the appraisal system, four main resources are identified: Appreciation, which relates to the speaker’s evaluation of reality, including both “semiotic and natural phenomena” (Martin & White 2005:43); Affect, which relates to expression of the emotions of the speakers; Judgement, which relates to moral judgements and Graduation, which relates to how speakers augment or minimise reality. Each of these has subcategories of analysis. This study will focus on Appreciation within the Appraisal system. The analysis looks at the evaluation
by the students of the academic articles which they are directed to talk about. This kind of attitude is termed Appreciation within Appraisal theory. Appreciation is then subcategorised as follows:

- **Reaction** (linked to the interpersonal metafunction), - the language used to assess the emotional effect of the phenomenon or the semiotic resource in the individual.
- **Composition** (linked to the textual metafunction), - the language used to evaluate the texture of the phenomenon.
- **Valuation** (linked to the ideational metafunction), - the language used to evaluate the content of the message with regards to its significance for the individual.

(Martin & White 2005)

Figure 3 describes a model of the system of Appraisal. Appreciation has been highlighted as it is the analytical resource used in this study.

**Overview of the Appraisal resources**

- **Affect**
- **Judgment**
- **Appreciation**

- **Monogloss**
- **Heterogloss**

- **Force**
  - Raise
  - Lower

- **Focus**
  - Sharpen
  - Soften

Figure 2 Source: Adapted from Martin & White 2005
Complementarily, Eggins & Slade (1997) propose analysis by identifying grammatical features such as the Mood block to support the predominance and description of the roles of the speakers as an interpretation of interpersonal meanings. The Mood block is formed by the Subject and the Finite within a clause. The Finite is that part of the verb which locates the message in time, past, present or future.

As one of the aims of the study is to look at the roles and functions of the speakers in the interactions, it is useful to conduct a Mood analysis of the interactions.
Chapter 4 FINDINGS

Overview

4.1. Text 1

4.1.1. Ideation in text 1

4.1.2. Samples of ideational meaning in Text 1

4.1.3. Interpersonal meanings: Roles of the speakers

4.1.4. Interpersonal meanings: Appreciation in Text 1

4.1.5. Textual meanings: Representation of information in Text 1

4.2. Text 2

4.2.1. Ideation in text 1

4.2.2. Samples of ideational meaning in Text 1

4.2.3. Interpersonal meanings: Roles of the speakers

4.2.4. Interpersonal meanings: Appreciation in Text 1

4.2.5. Textual meanings: Representation of information in Text 1

4.3. The discussion essay of Student 2

4.3.1. The plan

4.3.2. The essay: assessed

Overview

This chapter describes the SFL analysis of the two transcriptions made from the audio recorded data. Given the length of the texts recorded over approximately 30 minutes, the Systemic Functional analysis of Theme (highlighted), Mood block (underlined) and
Appreciation (italics) appears directly on the transcription. This can be found in the Appendix 1 and 2.

Each text is analysed considering how teaching and learning takes place to make meaning in both spoken and written texts and the way into this is to take meaning from written texts (academic articles).

In order to do this, I have selected particular resources to help understanding how this takes place. Firstly, the analysis of ideational meanings informs the question “what”? What did the students talk about? What did they think was important in the articles they were talking about? Secondly, the analysis of interpersonal meanings casts light on how they talked about the articles to understand the roles taken on by the speakers in the interactions, including how they talked to each other and how active their participation was. In regard to the focus of the interaction (the academic articles), the analysis describes their expressed attitudes about the articles they read. A related aspect in the interpersonal analysis was the language of the teacher and how she expressed her role through her language and her participation to guide or lead the interaction of the students. Finally, the textual analysis looks at how the students presented the topics they were talking about, how they presented the information they considered as relevant during the interactions.

The resources selected from SFL which offer insight to these different areas of meaning are:

- ideational meaning: through an analysis and identification of lexical choices in order to understand what the students were talking about.
• interpersonal meaning: mood analysis to provide understandings of how students took up speech roles in the interactions.

• Interpersonal meaning: a focus in Appreciation within the system of Appraisal is presented to provide an understanding of the student’s attitude towards the academic articles.

• textual meaning: an analysis of Theme and Rheme of the clauses of the interactants is undertaken in order to describe how information was organised and presented through the exchanges.

In regards to the classification of the clauses for analysis, ellipsed declaratives and ellipsed interrogatives are not considered in the interpretation of data since they do not influence the conclusion regarding participation of the speakers in the text. However, they are clearly identified in the transcript and are classified as ellipsed due to the absence of a subject and verb in the clause. For counting the clauses expressed in the table only complete clauses were considered, for what sometimes the number of clauses might be lower than the number of turns.

Further to this, the written assignment of one of the speakers (Student 2 in both transcriptions) is examined in order to understand how the student applies the ideas exchanged during the group interactions through a comparison between the spoken and written texts produced by Student 2

4.1. Text 1

This text corresponds to the first group interaction. In this text students were grouped in fours for the purpose of locating relevant information in an academic article which could inform the conceptualisation and writing of their essays. The students talked about the
contents of one of four academic articles (Article 1). The task, in terms of academic literacy in English, is therefore to discuss in a group of four, one specific article sharing information and arguing how the information could be used to inform a written academic assignment.

The interaction is 28 minutes long.

4.1.1. Ideation in Text 1
In Text 1, students talk about a range of topics mainly related to the contents of the articles. Students were asked to talk about the articles which were related to health care and obesity. Talk about the essay structure and the identification of relevant information within the articles was also noted, as was the exchange of information about particular meanings of lexical items or grammatical structures in the article.

Colour coding is used in order to clearly identify and organise the topics talked about in Text 1. Three main topics were observed to occur in the first group interaction. In red are coded topics related to the contents of the articles. Here the students converse about the role of health care professionals, interventions to control obesity, the role of advertisement in preventing obesity and also, their problems in order to cope with the text (difficulty). In green is coded all the information related to the structure of the essay and the identification and use of relevant content from the articles. Finally, in blue the interactions regarding doubts about meaning and pronunciation of words in the articles are presented.
## Topic Distribution in Text 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starts at turn</th>
<th>Finishes at turn</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Most frequent lexical items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Opinions about the article</td>
<td>I, the article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Meaning and pronunciation-Pediatrician</td>
<td>Paediatrician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>What is the focus of article?</td>
<td>This article, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>Problematic on focus (level)</td>
<td>This article, this problem, this professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>How to use info in essay</td>
<td>The more(most) relevant information for our essay, you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Nutritional health</td>
<td>It, obesity,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Main idea of article?</td>
<td>Prevention, education, they (the authors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Effective reading</td>
<td>You, discussion section, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Article-education</td>
<td>I, it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>How to look for relevant info?</td>
<td>You, it, the article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Professional training and ed. at school</td>
<td>The article, intervention,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Finding the most effective intervention</td>
<td>It, the most effective intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>Barriers and difficulties for treatment</td>
<td>This barriers, it, this area, this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>Professional training and ed. at school</td>
<td>Many people, this professional, professional doctor, they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td>People, in my classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>Relevance of education</td>
<td>Education, it, you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>Useful information</td>
<td>Education, I, it (information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190</td>
<td>190.5</td>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>I, obesity, it, that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190.6</td>
<td>191.10</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>I, physical education, it, this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191.11</td>
<td>197.3</td>
<td>Responsibility of TV advertisement</td>
<td>TV advertisement, it, children, food companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197.4</td>
<td>202.5</td>
<td>New and good info</td>
<td>The article, it, information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202.6</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>Better focusing on best intervention</td>
<td>One intervention, focus, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>Essay questions</td>
<td>You, I, Two parts, Which one, that,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>How to select info to be used</td>
<td>As a good intervention, it, we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>Which is useful info</td>
<td>The most useful information, it, the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>Meaning of amenable</td>
<td>what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>249</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>How to use info in essay</td>
<td>It, how, we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>Closing task/relevant information?</td>
<td>You, the readings, I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Topic Distribution in Text 1

Tables 5 and 6 show the distribution and frequency of the topics within Text 1. Noticeable is the prevalence of interactions related to the contents of the articles. In total 157 Turns focus on this topic. Also common in the text are interactions which focus
on the essay. These total 120 Turns in the Text. The students tend to concentrate their talk on the articles and the structure of the essay. Finally, only 15 Turns focus on the language within the articles which indicates that the students were able to read with meaning the content.

**Frequency of general topics in Text 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAUSES</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TURNS</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>58,4</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>51,8</td>
<td>ABOUT ARTICLES’ CONTENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>40,5</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>39,7</td>
<td>ABOUT THE ESSAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8,5</td>
<td>ABOUT LANGUAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>428</td>
<td></td>
<td>303</td>
<td></td>
<td>TOTALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6  Frequency of general topics 1
4.1.2. Samples of ideational meaning in Text 1
The following excerpts provide detail of some of the instances of the three topics spoken about in Text 1.

1. About articles’ content:

The following examples aim to show how the students talk about the contents of the articles.

16. Student 1: maybe this article focus on… for science professional attitude, high skills, training needed toward inicament of a child, adolescent obesity. Let me see aahh. There is a, there is a section, there is a section (that) talk about attitude, barriers, skills level=

17. Student 3: =But I, aahh, I have a question: what, what, what should I intervernment used in this survey? Where the intervernment? …Because I had a job eee the lack of, aahh, this study, the lack of… for example: the lack for parent involvement, lack for eee, aahh, patient motivation…

18. Student 1: here?

19. Student 3: Yeah

20. Student 1: Only

21. Student 3: Yeah

22. Student 1: only I notice aahh aah the better solution in this article(it) is behalf their management strategies… and=

23. Student 3: = behalf their management strategies

24. Student 1: yeah, and this section talk about education… the first solution and training needs=

25. Student 2: =I, I. I think this article is difficult because the problem is not in the child obesity. (It)Is in the professional that work in this area, for example: doctor, nurse, and praction… practionity, practionity, yeah? So, the, the, I understand this text explain the difficulty this professional have in this work or in this job.

26. Student 1: Aha

27. Student 2: So they mention, the, eeeh, said in relationship the barrierthis professional have in their job This barrier are in the… lack parent involve, lack of patient motivation, and lack support services. In fact, eeeh lack in reinvestment, reinvestment?

28. Teacher: yeah, reinvestment…
In this extract (16-28), students discuss the contents of one of the articles. Frequent lexical items, presented in Table 9 below include barriers, interventions, and professionals (see transcription for detailed analysis). Students are talking about and discussing the article.

All the exchanges which involved the lexical items mentioned before were classified as being about the articles. Content words related to obesity, health care and health professionals were identified as the topic of conversation in these exchanges.

2. About the essay:

These examples correspond to instances where students talk about how to approach the essay and other related issues.

Excerpt 1

58. Teacher:  Yeah
59. Student 3:  especially the concentrate on the section, discussion section
60. Teacher:  yeah, yeah, yeah. The discussion section is good to concentrate. Amazingly I agree with you. As you can see that’s where I win as well.
61. Student 3:  Because (they) number the five of them
62. Teacher:  Yes
63. Student 3:  and maybe we don’t need=
64. Teacher:  =no, that’s right. And that’s when your efficient reading comes into, you need to go to the right section. Skim, scan and look at the right section. Let’s put a lid on. There’s a lot of topic for discussion, ok?
In this section of the transcript (57-64), the teacher and Student 3 negotiate the most effective way to locate useful information in an academic article. They discuss reading strategies which will assist in the location of relevant information.

This interaction between two participants exemplifies the collaboration which can arise from interactions in the group activity. The most frequent lexical items arising from the data and identified in green sections within the transcript concerning the essay, refer to sections of the article and section of the essay (60) or the essay question (207). Words related to the structure of the assignment, the essay, or which described the relevance of the information were the key to identify the topic.
Student 2: yeah, but I believe from this article we can found good information, yeah (it) is a lot practical

Student 3: Yeah

Student 2: but in abstract there are good information for our essay or the essay

Student 3: Yeah

Student 1: yeah, I, I think I agree with you. There are some information maybe it is useful we can use. But, I think we need to focus on one intervention

Teacher: on one intervention?

Student 2: one intervention

Student 4: one intervention that is more effective

Student 1: yeah, one, most one

Teacher: Yeah, but one part of the essay question…Don’t get trapped into thinking that you just have to talk about one .It has to be some effective intervention Which one is the best?

Student 4: the best

Student 1: Ok

Student 3: I don’t understand the question

Teacher: Ok… There’s two parts. Yeah? Be careful. Don’t just focus on one. That’s only one part of the essay questions. Yeah? It’s some effective intervention; some of them

Student 3: yeah, yeah=

Student 2: =What of the prevention is not relevant?

Teacher: what do you mean?

Student 2: Prevention, because=

Teacher: =You think (it) is not a good intervention?

Student 2: Mm

Teacher: really? Prevention is not a good intervention?

Student 2: you say=

Student 1: =what she… What...

Student 2: I understand prevention is very good intervention
At Turns 198-227 the teacher clarifies the essay question. This question provides the purpose of the group interactions and frames what the students need to locate in the academic articles to inform their written essays. It is evident from the transcript the teacher assumes all students understand how to approach the assignment question. The purpose of this interaction is to clarify that they really understand how to approach the essay.
3. **About language:**

Relatively few instances of interaction occur about specific meaning or pronunciations. One instance is as follows:

**Excerpt 1**

5. Student 1: yeah. And it give more information here about...this, the study, or the therapy was conducted by two hundred two peditriacan, peditriacan. You know peditriacan? What does it mean? What does it mean peditriacan?

6. Teacher: Pediatric

7. Student 1: Pediatrac

8. Teacher: which one? which one is it?

9. Student 1: two hundred peditriacan

10. Teacher: Paediatrician

11. all students: Pediatrician

12. Teacher: Paediatrician

13. All students: Pediatrician

14. Teacher: Yeah

15. Student 2: aaah paediatrician

An examination of this section of the transcript (5-15) further exemplifies the difficulty students have with English language use in academic articles. This exchange (5-15) also exemplifies how the teacher models the correct usage of language to facilitate meaning making of subject specific terminology and how this is expressed in academic English writing. The teacher models pronunciation of ‘paediatrician’ resulting in all the students attempting the correct pronunciation
Frequent lexical items are speech functions related to asking about meaning and pronunciation.

**Excerpt 2**

243. Student 3: yeah, yeah, amenable what’s it mean?
244. Student 1: changeable... or responsible
245. Student 3: Yeah
246 Student 2: or easy

This excerpt from the transcript (243-246) exemplifies an issue one student has with making meaning of English vocabulary in academic writing. An examination of the transcript following this vocabulary question reveals a lack of understanding by a student that the question directed to the teacher by another student does not concern the article being discussed in the group work. This is exemplified in the transcript (243-246) when a student believes the term “amenable” is a characteristic of the article and not an enquiry to the teacher concerning the understanding of sophisticated English vocabulary used in academic writing.
Conclusion:

Table 5 indicates that the topics which occur most frequently in the conversational interactions between students are “about the content of the articles” and “about the essay structure”. This is evidence that the purpose or goal of interaction is achieved. Several sub-topics of conversation can be identified within the transcription. In terms of their distribution in the interaction, when students begin the discussion, the focus of conversation is on the difficulty of the content (1-41.). After Turn 42, the discussion becomes more content based. This reflects how students interactively begin talking about what they believe is the relevant information in the academic articles which will inform the writing of their essays. Topics which the students locate in the text such as “professional training”, “education as intervention” or “barriers” demonstrate how specialised the discussion becomes. A conclusion to this orientation of the group interaction is also observed (197.3, Turn 197, clause 3).

The most frequent topics which are discussed from this point on, shows how the discussion is orientated to deciding what of the previously presented information can be used in the writing of the essay and where this information should occur in the essay. The discussion is focused on the aim of the group activity which is for the students to interact and collaborate in order to extract useful information from the academic articles, and how best to use this information to inform the conceptualising and the writing of their essays.

In Table 5 above general topics emerging from the group discussions are categorised according to the most frequent lexical items found in the clauses in each Turn in the
flow of the discussion. From the analysis of the most frequent lexical items (Table 7) we see that the general topics can be narrowed into sub-topics evident in the Turns taken by the participants.

4.1.3. Interpersonal meanings: role and function of the speakers

The analyses of the interactions from an interpersonal perspective allows for the identification of the Mood block in the speaker Turns. Through identifying these grammatical patterns, the number of declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses expressed by each speaker is described (Table 7, Mood of speakers). This reflects the speech functions of sharing information (declaratives) or demanding information (interrogatives) in the interactions.

**Mood of the speakers in Text 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Declaratives</th>
<th>Interrogatives</th>
<th>Imperatives</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St1</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St2</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table indicates that two students in the group interaction are the most frequent speakers. Student 1 makes more declarative statements than Student 2. This also occurs with interrogatives. This indicates that the interaction mainly revolves around these two students. The participation of the other speaker (Student 4) evidenced
through her non-contributions is evidence that the interpretation of the articles is revolving around the opinions of Student 1, Student 2, and sometimes, Student 3. Student 2 uses some of his Turns to communicate his personal opinion and understanding of the text. He appears to express a personal opinion as a way to request approval or denial of his opinion from other group members.

Students 3 and 4, express few opinions about what they consider as useful information. The number of declarative statements they produce is minimal compared to Students 1 and 2. It is further evident from the transcript that Students 1 and 2 show little interest in engaging Students 3 and 4 in the interaction for example through enquiring about their opinions of the article or any other topic. The interaction is about giving opinions and requesting information. In this group of four this task revolves around the contributions of two of the participants evidenced by the lack of participation of the two other students.

According to Motteram (2006), passive or non-participation in group or class discussions or oral activities is common in many Asian ESL speakers. She describes several studies which focus on reticence to speak affecting Asian students in ESL/EFL settings (Liu & Littlewood 1997; Chen 2000; Cheng 2003). Among the factors affecting participation are affective issues (i.e. lack of confidence), educational experience and linguistic differences. In this current study the group from which data is collected is made up of three Asian students (two Chinese and 1 Saudi) and one Latin-American student. From an understanding of the demographic of the group in this current study, Students 3 and 4 (both Chinese) could have been experiencing the affective issues described above therefore participate and contribute little to the group interaction.
Table 8 shows the participation of the speakers in the topics which arose in the conversational interactions. Students 1, 2 and 3 actively participate in the exchanges about the articles in terms of Turns. Although they participated with a similar number of Turns, only students 1 and 2 elaborated completed ideas. This is reflected in the number of clauses they produced in each utterance. In regards to the topics related to the essay, students 1 and 2 have similar number of Turns, but student 1 produces clauses, which is evidence of a greater contribution.
From Table 9 it is evident that Student 1 is the one who generally initiates the topics in the group. He takes on the opportunity to start topics in twelve of his Turns, while student 2 initiates topics in six Turns, and Student 3 initiates Topics in five Turns. Student 4 does not initiate topics and her interaction is minimal through the whole text. Although Student 1 and Student 2 have a similar number of total Turns in the interaction (Table 8), Student 1 appears to control the conversation indicating his leading role in the group interaction. He is the most dominant speaker in introducing new topics and closing them and then moving on to the next topic.
4.1.4. **Interpersonal meanings: Appreciation of the speakers towards the articles**

Appraisal is considered a relevant feature to examine in the study because one aspect of the group task was for the students to discuss Article 1 in terms of what they considered to be relevant information. Along with this, students were expected to justify their opinions in order to decide where this relevant information or the main ideas they had taken from the article could be used in the writing of their essay.

Table 10 in the next page indicates the lexical choices made by the students in their appreciation of the article, that is how they appraised specific aspects or content in the article.
## Appreciation in Text 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Lexical item</th>
<th>Appraised</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td>the article</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>better (the best)</td>
<td>solution</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td>this article</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>significant</td>
<td>barriers</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>the difficulty</td>
<td>the first topic</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>urgent</td>
<td>(erasing epidemic obesity)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>critical</td>
<td>healthcare professional (or rules)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>the biggest</td>
<td>issue</td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>possible</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>effective</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>effectively</td>
<td>Manage intervention</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>the discussion section</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>efficient</td>
<td>reading</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>specific</td>
<td>information</td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>not relevant</td>
<td>this text</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>specific</td>
<td>information</td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>relevant</td>
<td>information</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>important</td>
<td>that (relevant information for your essay)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>that (to focus)</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>more effective</td>
<td>which one (intervention)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>relevant</td>
<td>information</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>most effective</td>
<td>(intervention)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>most effective</td>
<td>(intervention)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>the most effective</td>
<td>(intervention)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>the most effective</td>
<td>(intervention)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>the most effective</td>
<td>(intervention)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>effective</td>
<td>(some interventions)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>effective</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>education</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>most frequent</td>
<td>barriers</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>difficulties</td>
<td>this (factor)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>effective</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>that (healthcare)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;more easy&quot; (easier)</td>
<td>(text)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>food</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>food</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>very difficult</td>
<td>it (the fact)</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10: Appreciation in Text 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>In Text</th>
<th>Valuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 provides an overview of the appreciation of the students towards the texts about which they were talking. The ‘thing’ which is most frequently appraised are, unsurprisingly, the articles, as coded green in the Table In white it is coded the appreciation towards the information of the articles, not the articles as texts, but what their content is. This analysis indicates the texts as being difficult for the students to comprehend and to locate relevant information and therefore consequently, difficult to talk about.
In the analysis in Table 10 all positive appreciation is coded in light blue and negative appreciation is coded in yellow. Valuation - which is the value given to something, in this case the texts and the contents- is coded in orange.

It is apparent that valuation is the most frequent resource used by the speakers in the group interaction. The speakers mainly use appreciation to evaluate specific aspects arising from the content of the article and also when making general comments about the article as a whole. Negative appreciation is not frequently used by the students in evaluating the article. It mainly occurs when students discard information which they consider irrelevant for use in their essays. Positive appreciation occurs as the students evaluate both the article and the information which is contained in it in terms of how this information can be used to inform the writing of their essays (89).

4.1.5. Textual meanings: representation of information in Text1

With regard to the Theme analysis, it is of relevance to mention how difficult it becomes to analyse grammatical features of spoken language of some of the members of the group due to the differences in levels of English of the speakers. Therefore, in the transcription, some clauses are adapted (see key for transcription) in order to facilitate a clearer understanding for the reader (i.e. some connectors, personal pronouns, third singular, nouns replacing verbs). In the transcription it is evident that students have difficulty in elaborating complete sentences.
From a thematic perspective the method of development of the information contained in the exchanges is Thematic reiteration (Eggins 2004), which positions what is talked about in each case in Theme position. For example, in the case of topics related to the content of the articles, students tended to use Themes like the article, the text (it), health care professionals (they), or patient and intervention in most of the clauses of the exchange. The new information (Rheme) was limited to providing a description of what was represented as a Theme, but without further development. Additionally, the students use personal pronouns to begin their messages. This indicates the message represented in this instance was their opinion. The same occurred when talking about the essay. Frequent Themes in those exchanges are pronouns or the essay. In the first case the new information was related to what they suggest to each other to do in terms of using certain information in the essay. For example, the teacher’s use of the Theme “essay question” (211) and the students with the personal pronoun ‘you’. This exemplifies how the teacher emphasises that she wants the students to do/understand “something” about the essay.

According to Eggins (2004) the use Thematic reiteration as a method of development in a text results in a boring text or, in her own words, “in a text which is going nowhere” (324). She also states that the spontaneity of a conversation makes Themes vary more frequently. This is observed to happen minimally from one Turn to another or from speaker to speaker. This could be explained by the inexperience of the speakers in creating arguments.
4.1. **Text 2**

Text 2 is the transcript of the interactions which took place in the group activity immediately after the first group interaction (Text 1). In this activity students are mixed in new groups of four. Each student is responsible for sharing the ideas from the academic article which they read and evaluated in the first group discussion in which they participated. Each student presents the ideas discussed in the previous group and presents the conclusions drawn by the former group within the new group. The common student in both these group discussions (Text 1 and Text 2) is the one identified in the transcript as Student 2, who was also the only student in the group who agreed to provide his final written assignment for analysis which is done at the end of this chapter. The purpose of this analysis is to understand, in terms of academic literacy, if the information the students found in their group discussions concerning the academic articles was used to inform the academic writing of their essay.

This text is 31 minutes long.

4.2.1. **Ideation in Text 2**

In Text 2, students talk about the same topics as in Text 1. Students were asked to share the information they were able to collect from the previous group interaction. Although students were asked to share information about the content of each article, they were also expected to talk about the structure of the essay. The most frequent topics are related to the content of the academic articles. Topics related to the structure of the essay are importantly less frequent.
Colour coding was used in order to clearly identify and organise the topics talked in Text 1. Three main topics were observed to occur in the first group interaction. In red were coded topics related to the contents of the articles. Amongst this interactions, students converse about the role of health care professionals, interventions to control obesity, the role of advertisement in preventing obesity and also, their problems in order to cope with the text (difficulty). In green were coded all related to the structure of the essay and identification and use of relevant information. Finally, in blue are represented the interaction regarding doubts about meaning and pronunciation of words in the articles.

As well as in Text 1, the most frequent topics are related to the contents of the articles. However, there is no much presence of exchanges related to the structure of the essay. This was indicated by the frequent use of lexical items related to health care, health professionals and issues related to obesity. Few lexical items related to the essay were identified, being encountered a few lexical items such as essay, information, it (information). As previously explained, the purpose of this second interaction was to put students to share the conclusions and relevant information that each one of them found in the previous group activity. It is observed in the topic analysis that students are talking mainly about the contents of the articles instead of sharing any opinions regarding the structure of the essay. It is also observable that topic varies less frequently than in Text 1. This means that each student is talking in a more expositive way what makes topics mores static during the interaction which is proved and explained in previous sections where the high number of clauses produced by each participant proved the elaborated participation.
**Table 11 Topic Distribution 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starts at turn</th>
<th>Finishes at turn</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Most frequent lexical items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Text one</td>
<td>I, it, this abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Single word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Main ideas of advertisement’s influence</td>
<td>TV advertisement, it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Opinion about the article</td>
<td>It, this article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Information on the article</td>
<td>I, this information, it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Weight management in adolescents as main idea</td>
<td>I, the main idea, they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Study on children</td>
<td>These methods, it, that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Need for more info-enough</td>
<td>This point, it, the second point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Children weight management</td>
<td>Some methods, it, i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>Meaning of “portions weight”</td>
<td>I, You, this word, what this sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>Meaning of “seeking assistance”</td>
<td>Seeking assistance, it, How</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>Whether that is useful information</td>
<td>I, It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>Children obesity and advertisements</td>
<td>There, food, preference,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Methods of the study</td>
<td>This one, I, this evidence, the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>Effective interventions</td>
<td>It, we, advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>Description of the article</td>
<td>It, I, this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>Timing the task</td>
<td>You, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>Barriers for treatment of obesity</td>
<td>That, obesity, the children, the adult, they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>Effective intervention</td>
<td>We, with television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>Task for next week</td>
<td>The next week, we, it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220.11</td>
<td>234.12</td>
<td>Paraphrasing and editing essay</td>
<td>It, you, we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234.13</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>Taking a break</td>
<td>Rewrite, you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 expresses the predominance of topics related to the content of the articles.
The talking about the structure of the essay only occurs in three exchanges across the interaction, for what is considered as a secondary topic for the students. The emphasis is put on sharing the information the students got from the first activity (Text1). What is expressed in blue corresponds to talking about the language, this means, any doubt students have regarding meaning or pronunciation. It can be noted
that there is no much occurrence of topics related to use of language as well as topics related to the essay.

It also can be extrapolated from Table 11 and 12, that there is higher presence of red colour (topics related to the content of the articles) in regards to number of clauses uttered by the students and turns taken to express them. Table 12 particularly shows that predominance of red at the beginning of Text 1 and at the end of the interaction. This can inform that students organise the interaction at the beginning and then, as a form of conclusion they continue the conversation about the articles. However, through detailed observation it can be noticed how students went from talking about the articles to the essay and language intermittently. This fact is totally comprehensible considering students have to mainly share information and from time to time they express their opinion regarding the use of that information in the essays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAUSES</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TURNS</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>242</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>56,5</td>
<td>ABOUT ARTICLES' CONTENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>30,5</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20,5</td>
<td>ABOUT THE ESSAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>10,5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>ABOUT LANGUAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>409</td>
<td></td>
<td>239</td>
<td></td>
<td>TOTALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 Frequency of general topics 2
4.2.2. Samples of Ideation in Text 2

The following are examples of how students express ideation in Text 2.

1. About articles’ content:

The following sample is an example of the exchanges related to the contents of the students.

Excerpt 1

161. Student 3: so… we cannot use this to support this idea
162. Student 2: I understand, I understand you say this evidence (has) no support?
163. Student 3: no, because…
164. Student 4: it's too big
165. Student 3: it's too big, because there are two hundred and fifty two children and black kids
166. Student 1: (inaudible speech)
167. Student 3: and also, this one “children obesity rates are no different from those…” so it also showed that there are no relation between the advertising and children obesity, because they are no different from…
168. Student 1: Ok
169. Student 3: Hmmm also, maybe this paragraph is also more useful because the research showed some methods, some effective methods. For example the governments should provide help, that can be one method and there’s the parents, also parents also can do something for their children
170. Student 1: ok, school
171. Student 3: yes, the school. Also, I think the most effective way would be called activity.
172. Student 1: activity, yes
173. Student 3: so we have some effective intervention
174. Student 1: Yes
175. Student 2: ok…it is no good paragraph, no good paragraph, in conclusion?
In this excerpt (161-185), Student 3 is presenting part of the notes he took during the discussion of the first article which he believes to be relevant in informing the writing of his essay. As it is evidenced in the transcript, Student 3 gives many details to support his argument as to which details are most relevant (163, 167, 169). As well as in Text 1, frequent lexical items are barriers, interventions, and professionals (see transcription for detailed analysis). This is identified in the excerpt by the frequency of these lexical items. For example, Student 3 tries to convince his classmates that statistical information derived from scientific work in the articles is valuable and should be used in their essay (165) as an effective intervention. However, after some reflective discussion the students in the group realize that this amount of information, instead of being useful, is irrelevant in informing the writing of the essay.
From the transcript it is apparent the group interaction revolves around attempts by the students to define aspects of the article which will support the arguments they wish to build in their essays.

The excerpt (161-185) is very rich in terms of interactions between the students as they discuss the relevant points from the article which could inform their writing. Student 3 is presenting the information, where the lexical items which determined the topic being discussed are government, parents, effective intervention and advertising.

2. About the essay: Excerpt 1

This example corresponds to one of the three instances where students talk about how to approach the essay and the teacher’s intervention regarding to the topic.

220. Teacher:  ok. The next week we are finishing this article. I may find another one to make it four. I'll see how we go next week or I might get five students and introduce them, e'll see how we work it out. Ok? So, what are we gonna do for homework, as a reason, I'm asking you to finish all of the readings and write some notes for next week as well, Monday, ok? Ah it's because while I was listening to you to talk about the reading, I could see that you are not really paraphrasing very much, ok? It was really just about copying what you read in the text and that's actually not paraphrasing. So if you are doing that for your essay, it's not gonna help you very much in the paraphrasing section. So to help you with your essay, what I want you to do is ...I want you to choose two or three of the relevant sections that you identified, ok? Just two or three, maybe two or three sentences, yeah? And I want you to paraphrase these sentences, yes? I want you to rewrite them in your homework So, I want you to choose two or three relevant sections, so relevant for your essay. When I say, “relevant,” I mean relevant for your essay. And I want you to paraphrase...yeah? I want you to paraphrase it and bring it with you on Monday and we are gonna do a little activity, as a group as well, ok? So, practice your paraphrasing, and (we'll) see how it goes. Remember when you paraphrase, what should you do? after the end of it?

221. Students:  Put references...

222. Teacher:  yes, don’t forget to add reference. Otherwise, it’s incorrect, right?
So remember to us quoting marks as well. Yeah?
In the transcript of Text 2, there is infrequent discussion about the essay. The teacher makes recommendations to the students at the end of the activity. In the transcript (220-226), this teacher-talk excerpt concerning what the teacher expects the students to do next and her advice on how to perform the remaining tasks in the reading and note taking activity (220). From examining the green coded sections of the transcript, it is evident that the teacher is giving instructions and recommendations on how students should paraphrase the relevant information they find in the texts in the writing of their essays.
3. About language

The excerpts below correspond to some of the exchanges relates to doubts on language.

Excerpt 1

15. Student 1: and eee this abstract is very useful in… this abstract eee talks about the TV and the TV adver, adver, advertisement.
16. Student 3: Advertisement
17. Student 1: Advertisement?
18. Student 3: yeah…underachievement
19. Student 1: Undera…
20. Student 3: chivement (all students repeat the word together)
21. Student 1: ok. Adevertising (laughs). Ok. The TV advertising influences the children to mmm eee influence the children to aaa to choose the unhealthy or healthy food. And [it] influences the children perhaps in the food habit. mmm At the introduction, mmm the authors give many stories about the, the TV advertising. Advertisement....

As in the first interaction, the students encountered difficulties with academic English use in the articles in terms of vocabulary, terminology and pronunciation. The excerpt above (15-21) is a sample of how students coped with an example of language difficulty when it arose in the discussion. From this excerpt it is apparent Student 1 is experiencing difficulties in pronouncing the word ‘advertisement’, as he discusses the usefulness of the abstract in academic articles with the group. The correct pronunciation is scaffolded by one of the group members, Student 3, followed by the group enunciating the correct pronunciation of the word ‘underachievement’ together. In this occasion the lexical items which lead to identify the topic of the interaction was
the word advertisement and underachievement. Because of the context and the way the words were used, it was assumed the topic was metalanguage. After that interaction, Student 1 is then able to continue giving his opinions about the text to the group, the discussion flowing on immediately after this example of how students within the group support each other in order to overcome difficulties with English pronunciation.

Excerpt 2

107. Student 2: I, I, I don't read the article... "portions high" is about... what?
"Portions height" is about the portion the eee food?
108. Student 4: I don't know (laughs)
109. Student 1: you can use a dictionary to...
110. Student 2: no, no, no, no, no...I understand, portions... height, yeah? But this word is about the, the food?, the am... weight of food, for example?
111. Student 3: you mean... what's the meaning of this word in this article
112. Student 2: Portions height. I don't read the article
113. Student 3: Yeah
114. Student 2: so I don't understand what is portions height... portions height... = (laughs)
115. Student 3: =I do not understand this word
116. Student 4: I understand in Chinese (laughs)
117. Student 4: Sorry
118. Student 2: don't worry. I don't read the article so it's for example, portions height is the portion of drink? portion of food? Which portion? what is a portion?
119. Student 1: what does mean portion?
120. Student 3: I don't know...
121. Student 4: (laughs)
The most frequent lexical item in the excerpt above (107-137) is the concept of “portion weight”, which helped in categorizing this exchange. It is apparent students spend a long time in the discussion trying to explain the meaning of the expression. Student 2, for example, who raised the question of the meaning of the term “portion weight”, understands the meaning of each word independently when he translates it back to his first language (Spanish), but not the meaning of the concept when the words are put together in as a technical concept in the context of health (107). Although Student 2 understands the meaning of each word independently, he is
unable to make his fellow group members understand that he needs to make meaning of the concept in terms of the context of the article. Although Student 2 had not read the article in which this concept is located, he discusses that whilst he knew what the concept could mean, the application in the text as a technical concept was not clear.

**Conclusions**

Table 12 illustrates the most frequent topics which emanated from the group discussions. Discussions about the content of the articles are by far the most predominant conversational interactions occurring within the group. It is also observed that there is very little in the way of discussion concerning the structure of the essay in terms of using relevant information from the articles to inform the writing of the essays.

Text 2 is considered to be more a seminar than a discussion. This is exemplified at the end of Text 1 when the teacher asks if “everyone has some relevant information to share” (Text 1, 263.1-2, Turn 263, clauses 1 and 2) as she announces the beginning of a new activity (Appendix 2, Text 2) when students swap to new groups. The ways in which the conversation flows in the group is explained through the number of turns of each student (Table 14). Their contributions in the discussion appear to be much more elaborated, which is observable in the number of clauses occurring in the student-talk. Students verbally produce their ideas and expose them to their group members.
At times, these exchanges become more interactive. There are some excerpts where could be observed dialogue consisted of mainly a student presenting the information to the others in the group (i.e.206-216 in the Appendix 2). After a few minutes of this monologic presentation, other students joined in the discussion and the conversation flowed interactively.

4.2.3. Interpersonal meanings: role and function of the speakers
As explained for Text1, the SF analysis of the clauses allows for the identification of the Mood block in the speaker interventions which occur within the interaction. The number of declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses realised by each speaker is determined (Table 13). This reflects the speech functions of sharing information (declaratives) and demanding information (interrogatives) in the group interaction.

**Mood of the speakers in Text 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Declaratives</th>
<th>Interrogatives</th>
<th>Imperatives</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St1</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St2</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St3</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13  Mood of speakers in Text 2

Table 13 shows the results of the participation of each student in terms of functions of language chosen by them. The teacher frequently uses declarative statements, but,
as observed in Table 13, her intervention is only related to what relates to writing the essay, rather that helping students to discuss the articles as occurs in Text 1.

The role and functions of the speakers in this text are the only features of the analysis which cannot be approached comparatively to Text 1. This is because the participants in Text 2 are different to the participants in Text 1, with the exception of Student 2. From the transcript it is apparent that Student 2 continues to participate strongly in the group interaction, with all students within the group contributing, regardless of what might influence their participation. Each student in this group activity is required to present their ideas according to the previous group activity. It can also be noticed that the teacher only participates in the final exchanges of the interactions (Appendix 2, Transcription Text 2). Students develop the interaction by themselves and in similar number of turns and also, similar numbers of declarative statements.

Differently from Text 1, all students have approximately the same number of turns in Text 2 when talking about the topical information they have discovered in the academic articles.
Table 14 Participation of speakers 2

Table 14 shows the results of the participation of each student. It is observed that interventions of each are mostly base on the elaboration of complete clauses to express their ideas. Students 2 and 3 have the most extended participation. The teacher is, in this Text, less active than in the previous activity. This is observable in a decreased number of clauses. However, her participation is mostly related to the final instructions of the task and regulations of the classroom, rather than guiding the interaction or helping students to structure the essay.
Table 15 shows that St 1 is the most active participant in terms of initiating topics and closing the topics. The teacher, differently from Text1, only appears at the end of the interaction. Student 2 and Student 3 have similar participation. Although Student 4 is different Student in Text 1, her participation is the same.

4.2.4. Interpersonal meanings: Appreciation of the speakers towards the articles

Expressions of Appreciation are observed in Text 2 concerning all four articles and the contents of the articles. Negative appreciation by students can be marginally observed more frequently in Text 2 than Text 1. However, appreciation in this discussion is mostly concerned to specific information contained in the articles rather than the articles themself (in light blue, Table 16)
Valuation is the most frequent resource used by the speakers in the group discussion. Student 2, who is the common speaker of both Texts 1 and 2, expresses more valuation concerning the content of the information he is presenting.
### Appreciation in text 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Lexical item</th>
<th>Appraised</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>the longest</td>
<td>it (text one)</td>
<td>composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>very , very interesting</td>
<td>(the text)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>very useful</td>
<td>this abstract</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>reliable and very useful</td>
<td>this data</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>good and bad</td>
<td>it (TV advertisement)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>effective</td>
<td>it (the influence of TV)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>effective</td>
<td>it (the influence of TV)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>not useful</td>
<td>these notes</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>not useful</td>
<td>these notes</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>not very useful for us</td>
<td>this article</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>not too relevant</td>
<td>(the evidence)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>relevant</td>
<td>the evidence</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>more useful</td>
<td>second item</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>more useful</td>
<td>it (second item)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>not useful for</td>
<td>other information</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>the easiest</td>
<td>the main idea</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>more important</td>
<td>information</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>relevant</td>
<td>point 1 and 2</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>more useful</td>
<td>second one (point 2)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>useful intervention</td>
<td>1 or 2 (points)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>useful</td>
<td>information</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>useful intervention</td>
<td>control weight among families</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>impossible</td>
<td>this analysis</td>
<td>reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>it (the information)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>idea</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>useful</td>
<td>the article</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>the most useful</td>
<td>(another article)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>most useful</td>
<td>the other one (idea)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>(the article)</td>
<td>reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>wrong</td>
<td>that (information)</td>
<td>reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>useful</td>
<td>this one (other piece of information)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>too big</td>
<td>it (the evidence)</td>
<td>composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>too big</td>
<td>it (the evidence)</td>
<td>composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>more useful</td>
<td>this paragraph</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>effective</td>
<td>methods</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>the most effective</td>
<td>way</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>some effective</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>no good (x2)</td>
<td>paragraph</td>
<td>reaction</td>
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<td>one (information)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>effective</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>the most useful</td>
<td>one (intervention)</td>
<td>valuation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.5. **Textual meanings: representation of information in Text 2**

Again, it became difficult to analyse grammatical features of spoken language of some of the members. As well as in Text 1, some clauses are adapted in order to facilitate a clearer understanding for the reader. However, in contrast to Text 1, the students produce more elaborated sentences.

Theme analysis showed the same method of Text 1 for developing the information. Thematic reiteration (Egginns 2004) appears in every exchange produced by each of the students. Students present the information and repeat some of the ideas which do not allow the flow and further development of ideas. Students position what is talked about in each case as Theme. Similar to Text 1, students locate as Themes the main words related to the topics like *the article, the text (it), health care*
professionals (they), or patient and intervention in most of the clauses of the exchange. The Rheme or new information only provided a description of what was represented as a Theme, but without further development.

Additionally, the students use personal pronouns to begin their messages. This indicates, as in Text 1, that the message represented was their opinion. In the few occurrences of students talking about the essay, they used as Themes pronouns or the essay. In the first case the new information was related to what they suggest to each other to do in terms of using certain information in the essay.
4.3. The discussion essay of Student 2

The purpose of this section is to identify through an analysis of the essay of Student 2, if the topics discussed by the student in both group discussions (Text 1 and Text 2) that were used for the informing and writing of the essay. This was the purpose, in terms of developing academic literacy in English, of the group discussions of academic articles. Evidence of the student’s use of the topics which arose in the group discussions in the writing of his essay, indicates that for this student, the group discussions were a successful activity in developing the academic literacy skills in English he will need to study in an English-medium university.

4.3.1. The plan

Student 2 was the only participant who consented to the analysis of his written assignment. Students are required to present a plan attached to their assignments. The purpose of this plan is for the student to make a summary of the ideas which the student will include in the essay. The plan of the student’s essay (Appendix 4) was contrasted with the Themes which arose in the group discussions in Text 1 and Text 2 which relate to the topics the student includes in his plan.

This analysis provides an example of the relevance and influence of the interactions which occur in collaborative group discussions in developing academic literacy. This is evidenced in the topics from the academic articles Student 2 included in his essay. These are topics the student identified and discussed in which can be found in both transcripts (Text 1 and Text 2). Further to this, Student 2 also includes the topics discussed by other students in the group interaction which they believed were
relevant in informing the essay. Teacher contributions to the discussion of the academic articles are also evidenced in the essay of Student 2. Thereby the purpose of the interactive group activity and the collaborative language learning and academic literacy development which occurred has, for this student in terms of his essay plan, been fulfilled.
Discussion essay plan

Text 1, St 2: 29.1 - St 2: 29.8

Text 1 and Text 2 in several exchanges

Text 2, St 1: 20.1 - St 1: 42

Text 1, Teacher: 46.1 - Teacher: 54.6

Text 1, Teacher: 56.1

Text 2, St 2: 192

Text 1, St 3: 17 - St 2: 27

Text 2, St 3: 169.3 - St 3: 169.4

Text 1, St 1: 164.1 - St 2: 167.11

Text 1 and 2 in several exchanges

Figure 3 Discussion essay plan
4.3.2. The discussion essay - assessed

The image below (3 pages) shows how Student 2 applied the plan into the final draft of his essay and also how the contributions during the group interaction were applied as well into the written assignment.

In blue are represented the comments of the teachers, in red are coded the sections in which the comments were also exchanged during the interactions in Text 1 and Text 2. Finally in green were added the sections of the transcripts where Student 2 talked about the information used in the written assignment.

Student 2 discussed the most effective interventions which were supported by him during the group interaction. As an example he considered as effective the implementation of education as a preventive factor for obesity in children and adolescents (Text 1; Text 2). He also suggested government as responsible for implementing strategies for preventing obesity in the population (Text 1, St 1: 164.1-St 2: 167.11; Text 2, St 3:169.3- St 3: 169.4).

The assessment by the teacher was regarding mainly the structure of his paragraphs. Student 2 had problems structuring paragraphs and supporting topic sentences. This can be interpreted as the necessity to increase discussion related to essay structure which could improve the development of ideas and information flow in the paragraphs. However, this fact is only applicable to the results of this student in particular since any other participant consented to access their written assignment.

Figure 5 shows circled in red all the information discussed during the group interaction which was found to be applied by Student 2 in the discussion essay. It
also shows the comments done by the teacher in the assessment of the written assignments which point out particular problems of Students 2 for structuring his paragraphs and supporting ideas. Although he showed problems on structure, his introduction accomplished the expectations of the teacher. This contrasts strongly with his problem with body paragraphs.
What are some effective interventions for obesity in children?

Which intervention is the most effective?

Obesity is a complex problem that needs different approaches in relation to the improvement of the conditions of obese people, especially children and adolescents. Poskitt (1987: 305) explains that obesity results from an excess of energy intake over energy output. Authorities think that the percentage of overweight children has changed since the 70’s and where the evidences explains that around 23-24% Australian children suffer of this problem (Carter, 2006). Authorities are concerned with the consequences of this illness, due to the risk of suffering blood disorder such as high blood pressure, diabetes or heart conditions is dangerously higher and the obese children might be affected in their future life quality (Story et al, 2002). There are several interventions that expert can perform with different probability of success. Obesity is a huge health problem in Australia and the world, where the basic intervention is early treatment; however the most effective is prevention. This essay will focus only on the treatment and prevention of obesity as the most commonly seen interventions.

Health professionals observe treatment as an effective intervention in the first step of the illness. Initially they explain children are more amenable to accept treatment that an adult with obesity (Story et al, 2002). Experts suggest the use of a diet as first intervention in children with pre obesity. At the beginning the attitude is very optimistic, however they stop their treatment when realize about the slow and long term results (Poskitt, 1987). In addition, there are higher difficulties on treatment of obese children that might affect the use of a diet.
Data shows barriers such as low parent commitment, poor medical support and, more important, few interest from the patients (Story et al, 2002). In short, the treatment of obesity is a usual and typical option as intervention, but it has a low percentage of success. However, treatment work for a low number of patients, prevention is the most effective at a macro level (King and Gill, 2008, Poskin, 1987). These strategies involve fields such as education, physical activity, and Government action, only to name the most relevant. Concerning to education, it is very important to teach children correct nutritional habits and develop self-motivation. This must be complemented with parents’ commitment and supported at school. For instance, it is important the mother’s attitude, since she is who usually cooks the goods in the house (Ashton, 2004). This can be optimized by increasing physical activity in the curriculum. Furthermore, data explains that long time ago people spent high level of energy walking long distances (even 8 miles per day). This explained the low number of heart diseases and blood disorders that requested specific medical attention into hospital (King and Gill, 2008). If compared with what happens today, it can be thought that people need to spend more time in physical activity. Moreover, Government action is very relevant since authorities are supposed to maintain appropriate policies to allow reducing the risk of obesity in children. Educational authorities can design strategies promoting consumption of healthy food, for example, by reducing the high level of energy intake in the different goods at schools. Other strategies are advertising regulation and carrying fruit and vegetables to remote places as stated by King and Gill (2008). Specialists believe that in the next two decades Governments may spend over 40 million dollars only in...
treatment of obesity in aged people (King and Gill, 2008). In sum, prevention is the more effective intervention on the children obesity and would even prevent the need for its treatment.

In conclusion, treatment and prevention are effective interventions on obesity. Treatment is the most used by specialist; however it reveals a high percentage of negative response from patients who are not willing to wait for long term results. In accordance to this, prevention through education and intervening nutritional habits can make a real difference in children health, particularly in terms of weight. It should be the first intervention prior to diagnose weight issues. Finally developing self motivation and increasing physical activity in the school and free time will carry healthy life style.

Word account: 680

Figure 4 Discussion essay
Chapter 5 DISCUSSION

In classroom observation of a PEP course allowed to prepare a detailed description of the objectives of the program presented in the Student Handbook. Of interest was the organisation of the classroom. The tables were arranged in a way to allocate four students per group. Students worked together in the same group for the length of their PEP program. This has the advantage that the students had the opportunity to develop relationships with their colleagues over an extended period of time. The permanent setting of groups, however, also has the potential of impeding collaborative work with students who do not belong to this pre-determined group, for example in the context of an activity which calls for the interaction with members of different groups.

The analysis of the two interactions (Text 1 and Text 2) has provided further understanding of how ideational meanings, textual meanings and interpersonal meanings are construed in an activity designed for the purpose of developing academic literacy in English.

Students in Text 1 talked about relevant topics they found in the articles, while in Text 2 the students presented information in turns. The interaction in Text 2 revolved mainly around the content of the articles that each one of the students presented. This is reflected in the number of total turns and clauses. Text 2 appeared to be denser than Text1 in terms of content and information of the academic articles. This was due to the active participation of all the group members. Additionally the teacher's participation was limited to addressing the class at the end of the activity, thereby signalling the end of the group activity. It was also evident in the structure of their interventions, which
comprised similar number of turns, with wide difference between the numbers of clauses constituting each turn.

In terms of the linguistic analysis, ideational meanings were construed by the participants through the selection of topics related to the texts they were discussing, and also by the use of technical terms related to nutritional health, which was the overarching topic binding the academic articles. Three general topics were recognized during the group interactions. Students talked about the contents of the articles most frequently; they talked about the essay which they had to write as the outcome of reading these articles in terms of its structure and how to use relevant information from the articles. This was the second most frequent topic in Text 1. Metalanguage, or a focus on the language of the articles was a more minor than these other two topics.

The following is the summary of the findings on construction of ideational meanings.

**About the content of the articles**

This category identified all the talk related to the content of the articles. Most of the students’ interactions fell into this category, exemplifying the student’s understanding of one of the main purposes of the activity. Their primary concern was to identify points, ideas and issues from their individual articles which they brought to the group interaction in their effort to address the main purpose of the activity.

**About the essay structure**

This category contained language related to academic literacy knowledge, essentially how essays are structured. On several occasions in the group interaction the students talked about what information from the articles should be included in the essay and in
which part of the essay it should be included. From the transcript it is evident that the teacher, through her interventions, guided the students in how to look for important information through, for example, activities such as skim reading and scanning the text for specific information.

The students make meaning of the information they read because they are deciding how to use this information to inform the writing of their essays.

Although some of the teacher's interactions are focussed on individual students, all of the students who were listening were able to apply the information about how to locate relevant information in an article. In terms of developing academic literacy, this informed and facilitated further discussions in the group and provided students with a means of being able to contribute to the discussion.

From the teacher-student interactions, it can be understood in how teacher guidance and explanation informed the students about how to use the information they located in the academic articles. This helped them to conceptualise and write their assignments.

**About language (metalanguage)**

This category included the teacher interventions during the interactions about language matters such as pronunciation and the meaning of particular vocabulary items. Not only were the interactions between the teacher and the students categorised here, but also the interactions between the students. This kind of language did not appear frequently, but constituted an important part of how meanings about language were built by the participants. The choice of language structure was not always accurate but was most of
the time comprehensible amongst the participants. When there was no understanding, the conversation lost continuity and topics changed abruptly.

The modelling of correct pronunciation by the teacher exemplifies how a point of language learning relevant to developing academic literacy in English can arise as part of the natural flow of classroom interaction. The importance of this is that it shows how academic literacy can be developed in group interactions rather than through separate activities found in decontextualised approaches to language learning and teaching. Students were able to pause to work out their issues when language doubts occurred in authentic interactions.

On a personal level, as a speaker of Spanish as my first language, I have experienced these problems with pronunciation and making meaning of English language in terms of making myself understood in internationalized English-medium settings. I believe pronunciation in additional languages such as English differs across speakers from a diversity of cultural, social and linguistic demographics, exemplified in the groups in this study who were made up of Chinese, Arabic and Spanish first language speakers. Cross cultural difficulties with English pronunciation were evident in the group interactions, hindering effective collaborative communication. This problem, as can be seen in some sections of the transcript, for example in Text 1 107-137. This directly impeded the flow of conversation and group discussion and, therefore, the meaning-making and the quality of collaborative learning when students were working within their groups without teacher’s facilitation of the conversation.
With regard to textual meanings, these were construed by the participants through Thematic choices evidenced in the transcripts of Text 1 and Text 2. The students tended to locate the lexical items from the academic articles which would inform the writing of their essays as the Themes which appeared in their conversational contributions to the group interactions. The students also placed themselves thematically, using themselves as the point of departure for their messages. It was noticeable that the use of lexical items relating to the structure and the process of writing an essay was higher in Text 1 than in Text 2.

The identification of the Themes of the clauses in the transcript indicated the relationship between the context of situation (register) and the discourse semantic stratum. It was through the student’s successful negotiation of this relationship that they began to develop the academic literacy needed to produce a spoken and written academic text. However, the spoken exchanges were observed to have simple a structure. Themes did not change frequently to influence the development of the conversation and the flow of information from one topic to another. It was also of interest how the students positioned themselves as points of departure of their messages to individualize their participation and opinions.

The construction of interpersonal meanings was evident in the group interactions when the students assumed different roles. The Mood analysis allowed for the interpretation of the participation of each student. In Text 1, Student 1 and Student 2 clearly took on leadership roles. In Text 2, Student 2 and Student 3 took on the role of leaders in the
group interaction. This was evidenced through the expression of their understanding of the academic articles, predominately through the use of declarative clauses.

The teacher assumed the role of facilitator of the group discussions evidenced in Text 1 through her use of a large number of declarative clauses and interrogative clauses. These constructions were used more frequently by the teacher than the students who took on the leadership roles in the group interactions. From the analysis of Text 1, it appeared that the aim of the group activity was for the students to locate relevant topics within an academic article, through interacting and collaborating, which would then inform the writing of an essay congruent with this purpose.

The role of teacher as facilitator of the group discussions diminished in Text 2. Here the students participated in a seminar style discussion, in that one student presented the findings of the previous group to the new group members. Each student took turns to introduce this information to the new group members, evident in the similar number of clauses attributed to each student,

The students also evaluated the articles they read and this was evident in their use of the resource of Appreciation. In both Text 1 and Text 2, the students appraised the articles through the use of the semantic resource of valuation. This analysis is useful in clarifying how the students perceived their articles. As in the analysis of Text 1, there is a higher frequency in the use of valuation by some students, particularly Student 2, who is the common participant in both discussions, and also by the teacher.
Finally, when considering the written assignment of one student it was clear that the student was able to apply what he learnt during the collaborative group interactions. Although this observation pertained to only one student in the study, this example is an indicator of how academic literacy is necessary for English as second language students in order to participate successfully in an English medium higher education context. This is achieved though interactive and collaborative purposeful group interactions in pre-enrollment programs. These interactions facilitated their understanding of the relevant information (Allright 1980, 1984) and the ways in which it is identified within academic articles. They could then relate this information to essay structure and their understanding of the functions of its stages.
Chapter 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the teaching and learning interactions which took place in two group activities in the Pre-Enrolment Program (PEP) at Adelaide University. The PEP aims to develop academic literacy in students from a diversity of cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds for whom English is an additional language and who wish to study at an English-medium University. When entering PEP, the students have a lower proficiency in English than is required to enroll in a university undergraduate or postgraduate program.

Relevant literature was reviewed and discussed in order to contextualize the study and frame the methodological approach underpinning the research. Firstly, with regards to academic literacy for speakers of English as an additional language, the literature described the approaches most helpful for preparing and culturally-inducting students into their future academic life at university. Additionally, relevant literature was presented regarding SFL, the methodological framework used in the analysis of data. The functional model of language was linked to its application in discourse analysis, particularly in the classroom setting.

Through the use of specific resources within the systemic functional model, the study looked closely at the interpersonal, ideational and textual meanings made by participants within a specific group interaction in a PEP class related specifically to writing an essay. The activity was divided in two half an hour interactions where students talked about the information they took from four academic articles. The ideational analysis allowed a detailed description of the topics addressed by the
participants. As well as topic distribution, the ideation analysis also provided insight into how the students applied the information to the elaboration of their essay.

Interpersonal meanings were described through the analysis of Mood which was an expression of the students’ and teacher’s participation and assumption of roles during the interactions. As well as the roles of the speakers, a second interpersonal analysis pointed to the attitude of the students, specifically their appreciation of the articles, in order to determine their attitude towards the information contained in the academic articles and the academic articles as texts.

The textual analysis provided a means of looking at how the participants structured relevant information. Theme and Rheme identification offered an understanding of what the students expressed as important information and how they created conversation flow in each of the exchanges.

It would be useful to conduct future research to look at more samples of these kinds of activities in order to provide greater understanding of the processes and practices of these kinds of interactions in academic literacy learning. They are very common activities in ESL classrooms and especially in the context of academic literacy classrooms, where they provide the opportunity to use the range of language macro skills. It would, of course, be useful to be able to have a larger sample of written texts to analyse, as a way of making more concrete conclusions about the impact of the spoken interactions on the written work of the students.
This kind of research study could be further strengthened through interviews with participating students. In this way the perceptions of the students could be determined in relation to the classroom activities in which they engage. All of this information could be of use to PEP staff and students as they work towards creating the optimum academic literacy environment regarding the utility of these interactions in the academic learning from the perspective of the learner.
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