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Objectivity and critique: The creation of historical perspectives in senior secondary writing

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Abstract

The increasing literacy demands of senior secondary studies have been noted by government agencies and scholars both in Australia and overseas. Disciplinary differences in writing has similarly received attention, although much of the research in this area has focused on the junior school, or spanned the whole of the secondary context. Less research has been focused specifically on disciplinarity in the senior high school, or on differences within what may often be conceived as a single discipline, such as between writing in Modern and Ancient History. This paper investigates disciplinary difference in the context of senior secondary writing for Modern and Ancient History and the resulting demands on students. It focuses on the different ways that dialogism, or the negotiation of competing knowledge claims, is managed in each subject. The Systemic Functional Linguistic system of engagement is used in a discourse analysis of highly rated student writing to reveal how writers in the histories open up or close down spaces for other voices in their arguments. Analysis illustrates the ways that 'objective evaluation' is managed, illuminating one aspect of what is valued as appropriate argumentation and raising implications for the way that literacy pedagogy in the senior secondary subjects of Modern and Ancient History is understood.

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The increasing literacy demands of senior secondary studies have been noted by government agencies and scholars both in Australia and overseas. Disciplinary differences in writing has similarly received attention, although much of the research in this area has focused on the junior school, or spanned the whole of the secondary context. Less research has been focused specifically on disciplinarity in the senior high school, or on differences within what may often be conceived as a single discipline, such as between writing in Modern and Ancient History. This paper investigates disciplinary difference in the context of senior secondary writing for Modern and Ancient History and the resulting demands on students. It focuses on the different ways that dialogism, or the negotiation of competing knowledge claims, is managed in each subject. The Systemic Functional Linguistic system of ENGAGEMENT is used in a discourse analysis of highly rated student writing to reveal how writers in the histories open up or close down spaces for other voices in their arguments. Analysis illustrates the ways that 'objective evaluation' is managed, illuminating one aspect of what is valued as appropriate argumentation and raising implications for the way that literacy pedagogy in the senior secondary subjects of Modern and Ancient History is understood.

Introduction

The senior secondary curriculum, with its highly specialised subject areas, places increasing demands on students' literacy abilities when compared to the curriculum of the junior high school. Government literature acknowledges, to some extent, the need for ongoing literacy development in senior years, stating that '[m] any students need explicit support in managing the literacy demands of the post-compulsory curriculum, and … there are equity issues related to the increasingly complex and often abstract forms of text which students encounter as they progress through school.' (Australian Department of Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs, 1998, p. 40)

The move away from common-sense meanings in senior years and the corresponding increase in complexity and abstraction in text has also been documented by a range of educational linguistics scholars both in Australia and overseas (Christie & Derewianka,

2008; Coffin, 2006; Columbi & Schleppegrell, 2002; Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011; Martin, 1993; Rose & Martin, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2004). It has been argued that this movement towards less common-sense meanings in writing 'is generally not made explicit or even understood by secondary school teachers, often causing more fragile learners … a great deal of confusion' (Love, 2010, p. 350). The increasing literacy demands senior studies place on students, particularly in the humanities, can present a significant challenge for many who are often assumed to be able to manage writing for school by the time they reach their final two years of schooling.

In addition to the general increase in abstraction in the senior years, many students are expected to write in ways they have not written before, as several subjects either begin in Year 11 or are divided into speciality areas. For example in New South Wales, the junior subject 'History' becomes two separate subjects in Year

11 – Modern History and Ancient History. This separation of learning into discrete subjects could reasonably be expected to involve differing ways of interacting with text (Hyland, 2004, 2012; Martin, 1993; Martin & Rose, 2008; Swales, 1990). The increasing compartmentalisation of learning into disciplinary areas can make the task of writing development in some subjects very challenging, as the context for which students have to write may be as unfamiliar as the content they are beginning to learn.

A further challenge for students and teachers negotiating the path of literacy development in the senior years is the expectation in the humanities for students to write evaluatively. The Ancient History syllabus, for example, requires students to 'analyse and evaluate sources for their usefulness and reliability' and to 'explain and evaluate differing perspectives and interpretations of the past' while 'using appropriate oral and written forms' (NSW Board of Studies, 2004a, p. 11). Similarly, the Modern History syllabus demands '[t]he fluent communication of thoughts and ideas gleaned from the critical analysis of primary and secondary sources' (NSW Board of Studies, 2004b, p. 6) using 'appropriate and well-structured oral and written forms' (NSW Board of Studies, 2004b, p. 11). The question of what is 'appropriate' in writing is critical to achievement of subject outcomes, however this is not spelt out clearly in the syllabus documents, beyond, perhaps, the expectation that students should be developing 'tolerant and informed attitudes' (NSW Board of Studies, 2004a, p. 12).

The injunction to write evaluatively may appear at times to be at odds with another often-heard instruction that formal writing by school students should be 'impersonal', 'objective' or 'non-emotive'. Coffin's research into school History found that

> students are encouraged to critically analyse a range of sources … to understand the way in which the same event may be variously (subjectively) interpreted and represented. Nevertheless, there remains a general belief that substantiated, empirically detailed, well-researched and balanced accounts can be characterised as (relatively) objective and of greater value that unsupported and skewed representations. (Coffin, 2006, p. 9)

Her work explores the various ways that 'language gives value to historical phenomena and how such evaluations may be presented in ways that render the historian (…) as a relatively impartial, neutral arbiter of truth' (Coffin, 2006, p. 140). While the nature of objectivity and subjectivity in the broader field of History is still a matter of some debate, it seems that to fulfil syllabus objectives in school History, students must *both* remain 'objective' and also 'evaluative' at the same time.

This paper focuses on one aspect of how students manage the apparent contradiction of producing 'objective evaluation' in writing for the two senior secondary subjects of Ancient History and Modern History. Through a discourse analysis of highly-rated student texts written for assessment purposes in the final year of schooling, it investigates disciplinary ways of negotiating multiple voices to arrive at an evaluative response which is also deemed to be 'objective'. The research is driven by a strong pedagogic belief that in order to make it possible for all students to succeed, the nature of the demands on students must be made clear so that they can be explicitly taught by teachers and learned by students (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999). The following section briefly introduces what is already known about the increasing literacy demands in senior school History and provides a context for narrowing the focus to an investigation of dialogism in student writing. The Systemic Functional Linguistic (hereafter SFL) system of ENGAGEMENT[1], is then introduced as the theory underpinning the analysis of the student texts and the approach to the textual analysis is explained. Ways of managing competing voices in a contested knowledge space are then exemplified and described separately for both Ancient History and Modern History to illustrate disciplinarily distinct approaches to objective evaluation. In the light of the findings, implications are drawn for teaching and for research in the area of literacy development in the senior secondary context.

The demands of writing history

The demands of engaging with texts in the school subject of History have already been the subject of significant linguistic research (e.g. Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Coffin, 1996, 1997, 2006; Eggins, Martin & Wignell, 1987; Martin, 2002). This research has focused on the genres of importance in school History, the language features attendant on those genres, the progression through the genres over the years of schooling and pedagogy for literacy development within the History classroom. Significantly, the breadth of research into History has enabled a substantial understanding of the increasing demands on students' literacy practices as students progress through the years of schooling.

Development into the senior years in History writing has been found to involve a shift from writing about History as story, to writing about History as argument, necessitating a corresponding shift from organising text around chronology or 'field time', to organising text according to the rhetorical structure of the

argument, or 'text time' (Coffin, 1996, 1997). Not only do the argument genres valued in the senior years of History require students to manage abstraction, technicalisation of time into segments, Theme (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Coffin, 2006; Martin, 1993, 2002), increasing lexical density (Christie & Derewianka, 2008) and grammatical metaphor, which has been described as 'the key to understanding the texture of the advanced literacy needed for secondary and post-secondary schools' (Martin, 2002, p. 114), they also require students to maintain the appearance of objectivity, while on the other hand presenting a particular point of view or in Coffin's words 'learning how to present perspective as truth' (Coffin, 1997, p. 215).

The investigation of how senior secondary students manage objective evaluation in senior secondary school History also necessitates a questioning of disciplinary difference within the field of History itself. Despite the significant body of research referenced above, most investigation of History at the school level treats History as a single disciplinary domain and does not differentiate between studies of Modern and Ancient History, which are treated as separate subjects in the senior years in New South Wales schools. The question often asked during discussion about curriculum development is 'what is History?' (Partingtion, 1980), not 'what is Ancient History?' or 'what is Modern History?' The development of the K–10 national curriculum in Australia, for example, sparked debate in curriculum development literature about the content, focus and purpose of studying history (Gilbert, 2011; Henderson, 2012). This discussion seems to centre around the nature of History as a discipline and how it may be recontextualised in the pedagogic arena, despite acknowledgement that History is, in fact, a diverse and extensive subject, covering extensive periods of time and areas of geography. In particular, Gilbert (2011) examines the extent of the challenge for curriculum writers in developing a clear set of goals for the study of history amongst the multiple perspectives of various stakeholders and the depth and breadth of material that is included under the umbrella of 'History'.

Despite the diversity of History, however, and the challenges in developing a unified and coherent curriculum, the subject is treated as a single discipline in the context of the Australian K–10 national curriculum, and also in much of the linguistic research to date. Many of the textual examples used in the extant research derive from Modern History (see for e.g. Coffin, 2006; Martin, 2002, 2003), although some recent research has begun to focus on literacy pedagogy in the Ancient History classroom (Martin, 2013; Matruglio, Maton & Martin, 2013).There is also some research into Ancient History from a curriculum perspective (Forber & Griffith 2011). There is, as yet, no consistent body of work which addresses possible distinctions between literacy practices in Modern and Ancient History. This paper addresses the question of such fine-grained disciplinary difference in the construction of objective evaluation through an investigation of how students negotiate multiple perspectives in the same knowledge space.

Managing multiple perspectives

There have been several approaches to the understanding of how writers manage evaluation and the negotiation of multiple perspectives in text. Many of these originate from the general field of pragmatics and include studies of *evaluation* (Hunston, 2010; Hunston & Thompson, 2000), *stance* (Biber, 2006; Gray & Biber, 2012; Hyland, 2005a, 2005b; Sinclair, 1986) and *metadiscourse* (Hyland, 1998, 2005a; Swales, 1990). Hyland (2000), for example, identified a number of 'rhetorical practices' which contribute to evaluative meaning, including 'discursive markings', 'promotional statements', 'attitude markers', 'hedges', 'boosters', the manipulation of generic stages called 'moves' to create an appropriate rhetorical structure and the use of 'non-factive citation' to ascribe evaluation to a particular author (Hyland, 2004).

In the field of SFL, Martin and White (2005) provide the system of APPRAISAL, which theorises much of what is understood in pragmatic approaches to stance, evaluation and metadiscourse, in the one coherent system. APPRAISAL is a systematic and integrated theorisation of evaluative meaning-making, which can account for the use of multiple lexico-grammatical systems in evaluative writing. Evaluative meanings are theorised in APPRAISAL research as systematic choices from within the entire meaning potential available to the writer, and which are significant because of other meanings which could have been made but have not. It covers three broad areas of evaluation: first, attitudes towards feelings, people and their behaviour, and the aesthetic quality of things (ATTITUDE); second, the grading or intensifying of these attitudes (GRADUATION); and third, the sourcing of these attitudes (ENGAGEMENT). A full account of the system of APPRAISAL can be found in Martin and White (2005).

In this paper I focus specifically on how final-year students use ENGAGEMENT resources in writing for assessment purposes. The system of ENGAGEMENT concerns the dialogic nature of text. It theorises how writers construe a stance toward other voices and possibilities in their text and towards shared values in the community of their particular subject area. It is concerned with the creation of 'solidarity' with the

reader (Martin & White, 2005). Students writing for assessment and examination purposes must manage alignment with their marker and must therefore understand which particular meanings are valued in their subject to obtain a high mark. In subjects such as Modern and Ancient History, which require students to 'evaluate sources for their usefulness and reliability' (NSW Board of Studies, 2004a, p. 11) resources of ENGAGEMENT are critical for either aligning or distancing from the historical sources on which the students are required to report.

The first distinction made in the ENGAGEMENT system is between propositions which are either monoglossic or heteroglossic. A monoglossic proposition does not reference any alternative voices or possibilities, and so responsibility for the proposition rests entirely with the writer of the text. This is exemplified in the excerpt below, taken from an Ancient History student text.

> Kings began to give land to loyal nobles, that were free of tax, the number of these given increasing with each reign. This tax-exempt land was also given to priesthoods for temples to the gods, further depleting Egypt's revenue.

A heteroglossic proposition, however, does in some way make space for pre-existing, alternative or anticipated viewpoints, even if the space made for these is relatively small. The sentence following on from the above example in the student provides several examples of heteroglossic references, indicated in bold.

> **Many historians** are opposed to **the belief** that this led to the collapse however, as **they believe** the amount of wealth lost from the tax-exempt lands was never significantly large & the priesthoods were never wasteful with offerings.

A heteroglossic proposition might be dialogically expansive, in which case the writer opens up space for alternative positions, or dialogically contractive, in which case other voices and alternatives are introduced into the text with the express purpose of limiting them. These distinctions are depicted in Figure 1, below.

This paper examines how students in Modern and Ancient History use such ENGAGEMENT resources in writing for assessment in their final school year.
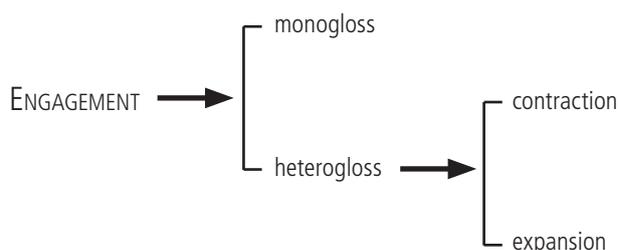

Figure 1. ENGAGEMENT - dialogic expansion and contraction

Analysis concerns the relative degree of heteroglossia in writing for each subject, the extent to which space for other voices is opened up (dialogic expansion) or closed down (dialogic contraction) and the kinds of patterns in the choices of ENGAGEMENT resources used in each subject. Moments of discord, which reveal students' developing control of the ENGAGEMENT system are also analysed to illustrate the complexity of the demands that this type of advanced literacy places on students.

The data consist of three extended responses in each subject which were considered by highly experienced HSC markers to be in the highest mark range. Two texts in each subject were produced in the final school-based examination before students take the Higher School Certificate (HSC). These texts were gathered from a senior high school in Sydney, with the written consent of both teachers and students and were de-identified before being provided for the research. They were produced in the course of regular school assessment practices, and were judged by their teachers to represent the standard required to achieve in the highest marking band. University ethics clearance and permission from the Department of Education was also obtained for the conduct of the study. The third text in each subject was taken from the Board of Studies 'Standards Package' publicly available on the New South Wales Board of Studies website (see Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards NSW, 2015). These texts were produced in the actual HSC examination and have been deemed by a panel of experienced markers to be indicative of the standard expected to achieve the highest mark range. They are provided to teachers and students to help illustrate the standard required to achieve high marks in the examination.

The study is qualitative, involving a detailed and fine-grained manual analysis of the texts in order to determine the nature, the patterning, and the role of ENGAGEMENT resources, realised by a large range of lexico-grammatical options. When considering strategies to manage objective evaluation, the unfolding of texts, or their *logogenesis*, is of value as it can provide both description and detailed analysis of how stance is built up cumulatively throughout the course of an unfolding text (Hood, 2006). A quantitative approach would necessarily limit to some degree the attention to a comprehensive array of features in interaction. While detailed manual analysis may necessarily limit the size of the data set, the SFL theory of instantiation, which perceives texts and the overall system of language to be 'two poles of the cline' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 27) means that individual texts may be studied to determine what they reveal about the system of language from which they were produced

and vice-versa. The use of particular language systems indicates how certain choices from the entire meaning potential of English are valued differently in different intellectual fields, and sheds light on the types of meanings deemed 'appropriate' in each.

Making room for interpretations of Ancient History

The texts in Ancient History are highly heteroglossic, reflecting the necessity for students to engage with the contested nature of interpretations in the field. Monoglossic propositions do occur, but are relatively rare. Students make frequent references to archaeologists, historians and various types of evidence to negotiate shared responsibility for their interpretation of historical events. References to important voices in the field are used to strengthen the students' arguments while also avoiding full responsibility for propositions which may be contested. Examples from each Ancient History text are provided below with the heteroglossic resources bolded. All text excerpts are labelled according to subject (AH for Ancient History and MH for Modern History) and numbered as originating from text 1, 2 or 3. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are as written by the students.

AH1: **Ancient writers such as Senecca also write about** how the impact of this eruption resulted in the abandonment of the region as **it was considered** a source of 'bad omen and outrageous fortion'.

AH2: **Wilson states** that one of the major contributing factors to Old Kingdom's collapse was the 'burden of building non-economical and huge structures for each new pharaoh'.

AH3: This was due to the fact that this **was considered** the turning point in the Persian Wars. This is **supported by Plutarch who states** that it was their powess at sea which saved the Greeks. **Many historians also agree** with this statement as **it was a well known fact** that without the Athenian navy the Persians would have been able to raid the Greek coastline at will.

Importantly, heteroglossic references in Ancient History writing are frequently located in textually prominent positions. They are often to be found in macroThemes introducing the entire response, and in hyperThemes which set up a paragraph or particular section of text. The explicit acknowledgment of the contested nature of the knowledge space in such textual positions foregrounds the dialogism of the field. In the following example, the first sentence of the student's response introduces the high level of debate in the field of study, and the paragraph then goes on to include several other instances of heterogloss, opening up space around the interpretation of the ancient past.

AH2: The collapse & breakdown of Old Kingdom Egypt is one that has been continually **debated among scholars & historians.** The lack of discriminating evidence has led to **various interpretations, many scholars suggesting** that a build-up of events led to the once mighty and centralised government's collapse. Factors that **may have** led to the collapse are the monumental building habits, the giving of tax-exempt land, climate change, growing independence of the nobles & the resulting decline of the power of the pharoah.

The appearance of such heteroglossic features in highly valued student texts suggests the importance in Ancient History of demonstrating a recognition and evaluation of multiple contributions to an understanding of the past. It also reveals the importance of legitimating knowledge by reference to expert knowers in the field.

Perhaps because there is a significant amount of scholarship in the field, and because the events are so far removed so as to make certainty about them difficult, the heteroglossic resources used in Ancient History writing are predominantly dialogically expansive, opening up space for alternative propositions. Writers indicate a preference for the dialogically expansive option of *acknowledge* in which the views of others are reported neutrally, not explicitly indicating the student's alignment or disalignment with reported views. Such acknowledgements are dialogically expansive as they 'associate the proposition being advanced with voices and/or positions which are external to that of the text itself and present the authorial voice as engaging interactively with those voices' (Martin & White, 2005, p. 112). Students most commonly acknowledge the views of others through the use of the reporting verbs 'states' and 'believes' although there is a wide variety of other resources they can draw upon as exemplified below (All examples are drawn from AH2).

Wilson states that one of the major contributing factors to Old Kingdom's collapse was the 'burden of building non-economical and huge structures for each new pharaoh'.

Bradley suggests that this continual building of pyramids shows an excessive use of resources, especially those of Sneferu, Menkaure, Khut & Khafre.

Bradley believes that the collapse may have also been triggered by the decreasing revenue being given to the Egypt administrative centre.

All historians agree that the main impact of the breakdown was the king's fall in power. The king represented prosperity and safety to the people, and it was his duty to maintain Ma'at. **Malek contends** that the king's inability to return prosperity to the land is evident through the records of 17 kings in 17 years, revealing the falling state Egypt was in.

Such neutral reporting of others helps maintain an appearance of 'objectivity' or 'balance' in reference to respected scholars in the field, as it does not explicitly indicate the student's own subjectivities. Writing in Ancient History relies to a great extent on the work of ancient writers and both ancient and modern archaeologists due to the distance in time of events and the inaccessibility of first-hand evidence for students. Students need a way to be able to refer to this work while still maintaining the appearance of unbiased writing. Resources of *acknowledge* are critical as students manage references to multiple important knowers in the field.

While the texts are predominantly dialogically expansive, there is a smaller yet significant amount of dialogic contraction in the texts. While the ENGAGEMENT resource of *acknowledge* reports propositions attributed to other voices neutrally, the ENGAGEMENT resource of *endorse* presents them as valid. Thorough the use of resources of endorse, student writers explicitly align with the views they are reporting in their text, thus closing off any anticipated opposing views. The examples below, from AH1, exemplify this option.

Dr Estelle Lazer, an Australian anthropologist, **discovered** that it was not only the sick and elderly who were left behind …

Dr Penelope Allison, who works on the houses of Pompeii, has also **found** that the site was discovered long before the 18th century.

This new research **shows** that restoration programs were actually complete …

Such resources of *endorse* are used in the student texts to reference ancient and modern writers alike, and are commonly constructed through the use of the reporting verb 'shows'. This indicates that to some extent at least, both modern and ancient sources are valued in the field of Ancient History. What varies is what ancient or modern research is said to show. While ancient research is endorsed for either recording observable events or for providing a point of comparison to modern understandings, modern research is endorsed for the contributions it makes to interpretations of the observable evidence. This is illustrated by the text excerpts in the table below.

This strategy of differentiating between ancient and modern sources has the effect of achieving implicit evaluation. The student does not explicitly align with modern sources and distance themselves from ancient sources, but makes a more covert differentiation between ancient sources as valuable for *observation* but modern sources a valuable for *interpretation*. In this way, the student can achieve evaluation of the sources while not appearing overtly critical and while maintaining an appearance of objectivity.

In summary, writing in AH is highly heteroglossic and dialogically expansive. Writers in AH largely avoid sole responsibility for their propositions, instead opening up space for alternative views through frequent reference to historians or archaeologists, with whom they share responsibility for their claims about history. These other voices are for the most part referenced neutrally, however there is also some degree of explicit alignment

Table 1. Endorsements of modern and ancient sources

Ancient Sources	Modern Sources
Ancient source endorsed as a point of comparison to current understandings. By reading Pliny the Youngers account of the volcanic eruption in Source 4, **it shows** how different times interpret and understand different things.	*Modern source endorsed for its contribution to theory.* Further new research shows that this theory could have been possible.
Ancient source endorsed as recording observable events. By reading this account we become aware of the characteristics of an eruption such as the 'cloud rising from a mountain' which **shows** the black smoke being emitted from the volcanoe.	*Modern research endorsed for leading to new interpretations.* This new research **shows** that restoration programs were actually complete after the 62 earthquake and that after the eruption, looters came to steal marble and any other thing of value that had survived.

with other voices in the texts. The use of heteroglossic resources of both acknowledge and endorse to bring the voices of others to bear in the construction of argument leads to a prosody of accumulated authorisation in Ancient History texts, revealing the importance of other knowers in legitimating knowledge in AH.

Constructing a 'balanced' view of Modern History

Texts in Modern History are also highly heteroglossic, however the heterogloss functions differently from the way it does in Ancient History. Rather than contributing authority to an argument by referencing valued voices, in Modern History the heterogloss functions to privilege certain facts, arguments or evidence over others. Examples of the types of heterogloss found in Modern History texts are provided below.

MH1:   Hence, as Botha reformed Apartheid he **only** strengthened resistance to it, as **it showed** people that Apartheid could be changed and ultimately abolished.

MH2:   **However, essentially** the trade sanction was **in**effective, as SA's trading partners, the US, Britain, France, Japan and Germany all **failed to** impose a ban on trade as it conflicted with their own economic interests.

MH3:   The Jews became victimised. They were targets for any feelings of resentment. This **is evident** on '**Crystal Night**' where Jewish shops were ransacked and destroyed.

This type of heterogloss contributes to the construction of persuasive argument through negating or limiting the possibility of alternatives. In Modern History the use of ENGAGEMENT resources revolves around anticipation of the putative reader. Rather than opening up space for many voices, resources of dialogic contraction are used to limit anticipated views which may conflict with the intended argument. The dialogically contractive resource of *counter,* exemplified below, is critical in writing for Modern History.

MH1:   **However,** the PAC symbolised a struggle which was Black **only**, opposed to the inclusion of other groups, and which was led by Robert Subokwe and other former ANC members.

Counter-expectancy is so critical in Modern History writing as it may be used to open up space for further argument on a topic. One perspective can be introduced and then closed down through resources of *counter,* enabling another competing perspective to

be introduced. This enables movement from one point of importance to another competing point of performance and gives the appearance that the writer is being 'objective' through their examination of multiple views. Resources of counter are also frequently used with other dialogically contractive resources forming 'syndromes' of dialogic contraction. In the following example, two examples of counter are followed by an instance of *deny*, another dialogically contractive resource.

MHS2:   **While** [counter] the domestic resistance movement was **nevertheless** [counter] just as important, the international response **cannot** [deny] be discounted.

Another example demonstrates counter-expectancy framed with dialogically contractive *proclamations,* where the writer's voice intervenes in the text to vouchsafe the proposition. Such proclamations anticipate 'some contrary pressure of doubt or challenge against which the authorial voice asserts itself'(Martin & White, 2005, p. 128) and set out to close down any anticipated opposition to an argument by presenting it as maximally warrantable.

MHS2:   **In fact,**[proclaim] **while** [counter] events such as the death of Chris Hani in April 1993 and the escalation of civil war violence can be attributed to the collapse of Apartheid; international pressure **ultimately** [proclaim] facilitated the means by which both the ANC, Inkatha and the National Party came to an agreement in 1993.

These syndromes of dialogic contraction enable writers to negotiate multiple perspectives on an issue while privileging some and backgrounding others. Arguments which are interpreted as likely to be at odds with the views of the putative reader are introduced and then closed down through the use of counter or deny, while arguments which are viewed as aligning with the marker can be strengthened through the use of resources of proclaim. In this way, writers can demonstrate that they are familiar with the multiple conflicting perspectives on history and give the effect of balance in their argument while also maintaining an evaluative response.

As in Ancient History, both dialogic contraction and expansion sometimes are used together in Modern History writing. Where dialogic expansion does occur in the Modern History texts, however, it is almost always used together with dialogic contraction. The judicious combination of dialogic expansion and contraction enables students to argue for a particular 'point' or thesis amidst the complex interplay of voices,

constructing a coherent argument for one side, while still acknowledging multiple perspectives. For example, in the following extract, students acknowledge other opinions on embargoes before closing them off with the counter-expectant 'however' and further contracting with denial.

> MHS2: At the time SA had a growth rate in the economy of 6%, second only to Japan, and **it was seen that** [acknowledge] effective embargos would cause SA to capitulate under international and economic pressures, **however** [counter] this **did not** [deny] occur.

Learning to manage such shifts between dialogic expansion and contraction is crucial for success in Modern History writing as such shifts are implicated in maintaining the appearance of objectivity. They enable the student to demonstrate a consideration of other views before closing them off and constructing their own thesis or 'point'. Dialogically contractive resources of *counter* are critical to this process of negotiating competing knowledge claims, especially as knowledge in history is acknowledged as contested and as HSC examination questions are often framed in terms of degree. HSC questions in this discipline often begin with 'to what extent' or a semantic equivalent as exemplified in Table 2 below.

Such questions require students to acknowledge possible alternative interpretations and negotiate the interaction of complicated factors contributing to a particular historical outcome. Resources of counter enable the introduction of particular perspectives before closing them down as possibilities and turning to another interpretation. In other words, they enable the privileging of some evidence and argument over others.

Implications for teaching

Both history subjects are highly heteroglossic, reflecting the contested nature of the field. The way each subject achieves this heterogloss, however, differs in important ways. In Ancient History, students aim for an objective tone through the relatively neutral reporting of other voices, while in Modern History they introduce other voices but quickly close them down. That is, the use of heteroglossic resources in Ancient History leads to prosodies of accumulated authorisation, while Modern History texts accumulate prosodies of contraction.

The most obvious pedagogical implication of this is that not only should the contested nature of the field be made explicit to students, but also that valued ways of negotiating this contested knowledge space in each subject should similarly be made clear. As the creation of argument relies on opening up space for alternative voices in Ancient History and acknowledging other voices but closing them down in Modern History, students cannot simply transfer ways of writing from one history subject to the other. In Ancient History, the contested nature of the subject necessitates the sharing responsibility for knowledge claims with other knowers. In Modern History, an understanding of the persuasive purpose of writing and the recognition that the position for which one is arguing may not be universally held is critical. Some explicit teaching of even simple distinctions within the ENGAGEMENT system, such as

Table 2. 'To what extent' and equivalents in 2014 Modern History examination.

'to what extent'	semantic equivalents
To what extent did the Cold War affect Australia's foreign policy and changing relations with the wider world?	**How significant** was Gandhi to the development of Indian nationalism in the 1920s?
To what extent did the limitations of the Guomindang (GMD/Kuomintang) Nationalist Government affect its achievements in the period 1927–1937?	**How significant** were religious and regional issues in the collapse of the New Order?
Germany between 1918 and 1939 was the triumph of nationalism over democracy. **To what extent** is this statement accurate?	**How significant** was the war in the air in shaping the course of the European war?
Indian Independence could not have been achieved without Partition. **To what extent** is this statement accurate?	**How significant** were the Occupied Territories in the continuation of the Arab–Israeli conflict?
The rise of militarism was vital to the development of Japan in the 1930s. **To what extent** is this statement accurate?	**How successful** was Indonesia's foreign policy in achieving its aims in the period 1959–1963?
To what extent was US foreign policy from 1919 to 1941 influenced by domestic pressures?	**Assess the effectiveness** of the United Nations in relation to the creation of Israel and Communist China, and the outbreak of the Korean War.
To what extent were paramilitary groups responsible for delaying movements towards peace in Anglo-Irish relations?	**How effective** have the UN and its agencies been in dealing with poverty, racism, refugees and AIDS?
To what extent did the use of the A-bomb bring about the end of the conflict?	

dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion could help prevent any potential confusion between valued ways of arguing in each subject and make it easier for students to manage the complicated task of managing alignment and disalignment in their writing.

It also appears from the data that the language resources necessary for managing dialogism in writing are still developing in many cases. During analysis, several instances of discord were noted in both subjects, where combined ENGAGEMENT resources resulted in confusion for the reader. While dialogic expansion and contraction may be used together for significant rhetorical effect, there were several instances in the highly rated texts where their combination resulted in disjunctions for the reader. In the following example, both dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion are used to refer to the same historian's work. Confusion results from the movement back and forth between expansion and contraction as it is not clear whether the reader is meant to align with Allison's views or not. While at first seeming strongly aligned with Allison, by the end of the extract the writer appears equivocal.

> AHS1: Dr Penelope Allison, who works on the houses of Pompeii, has also **found** [contract] that the site was discovered long before the 18th century. Her evidence to this **claim** [expand] is the numerous circular incertions found in the ash, **suggesting** [expand] that after the eruption, residents came back to try and salvage what they could. Further new research **shows** [contract] that this theory **could have been possible** [expand].

Disjunctive moments such as these reveal that although students already have a quite sophisticated ability to use resources of ENGAGEMENT to position the reader, making implicit judgements of historians and archaeologists, it is nevertheless still a developing resource. It appears that the ability to negotiate multiple perspectives analytically, 'objectively ' and evaluatively in writing is in many cases at a developmental stage by the end of senior secondary schooling.

This developmental stage in student writing may also be visible from the perspective of the tertiary sector. The complaint is often heard that many first year undergraduate students are unable to write critically and analytically. Some direction in the senior secondary context on how to achieve 'objective evaluation' in writing though the use of ENGAGEMENT resources may go some way toward helping students better understand what is expected of them in tertiary writing. Resources of ENGAGEMENT are important in the construction of critical and analytical writing, as judgements can be made covertly through the management of alignment and disalignment with attributed material. They are also critical in sharing authority for propositions with voices external to that of the writer. An understanding of how to use ENGAGEMENT resources to build prosodies of authorisation, such as in school-level Ancient History writing, could also contribute to an understanding of academic referencing in the tertiary sector as more than just 'avoiding plagiarism' but also as important in the construction of an authoritative argument.

The differences in managing dialogism in Modern History and Ancient History also raise implications for the way we conceive of teaching History in the junior years of schooling. Importantly, the question of whether the disciplinary difference found in this research holds true when pushed back into more junior years of secondary schooling may have important implications for the way we organise and teach History in the junior years. At present, the national curriculum specifies that students should study 'The Ancient World' in Year 7, in Year 8 they study the period from the end of the ancient period to the beginning of the modern, in Year 9 they study 'the making of the modern world' and in year 10 they study 'the modern world and Australia' (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013). What implications does this progression from Ancient to Modern History through the junior years of schooling have for the development of students' writing skills, especially in the area of dialogism, attribution and the creation of 'objectively evaluative' texts?

Conclusion

The combined skills and knowledge of both educational linguists and teachers of school History would be advantageous in answering questions such as those raised in this article. Each has a unique perspective on the issue at hand, and can ask questions and raise problems to push the other into new territory. The interpersonal nature of language has been reported as being more implicit in school writing instruction. While teachers are aware of interpersonal meanings present in language, they may, with the possible exception of subject English teachers, lack the metalanguage to be able to talk about it explicitly (Christie et al., 1991; Luke & Elkins, 2003; Macken-Horarik et al., 2011). Educational linguists have a rich toolkit from which to draw when describing interpersonal meaning-making. However, the question of exactly what proportion of this toolkit teachers need, and how to make the technicality of SFL more available to teachers and students is still unanswered. Although important work is progressing in this area, (Cann, Inglis, Dalmau & Gregory, 2013;

Humphrey & Robinson, 2012; Macken-Horarik et al., 2011; Macken-Horarik & Morgan, 2011; Newbigin et al., 2013), there is still much work yet to be done, especially in the area of disciplinary difference and in interpersonal stance in senior school-level writing.

Note

1 SMALL CAPS are used in SFL to denote the technical names of linguistic systems.

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