

## Critical Discourse Analysis of Pre-enrolment English Program Curriculum Documents: Preparing Students for University Registers

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** Critiques in academic literature and Australian media focus on the English proficiency of international students in Australia, particularly those with EAL (English as an additional language) studying in Australia, raising doubts about their preparedness for university-level English studies (Arkoudis, et al., 2019). These concerns extend to pre-enrolment English program. To address this, the study examines the curriculum handbook of Australian universities' English programs. It reveals that this curriculum not only offers course and program information but also serves as a model for EAL students aspiring to enroll in Western universities. The study extends the analysis using the Verclaff Framework for Action (1989, 1995).

**Methods:** Applying Fairclough's framework, the study used a three-pronged critical discourse analysis of the English language program curriculum. This involved examining the text, interpreting the creation processes, and understanding the social and historical contexts influencing the text.

**Results:** interestingly, the description reveals a clear and comprehensive structure, providing detailed information not only about the curriculum but also about staff, facilities, and the wider university and city environment students will engage with. Moreover, it delineates assessment tasks, with some fully detailed presentations.

**Conclusions:** The curriculum document has become a comprehensive "book of rules" and a legal representation of the university. This study shows how the document prepares international students by teaching academic norms, complying with regulations, advertising courses, and providing curriculum information, while also addressing the socio-cultural aspects of their future studies at an Australian university.

**Keywords:** Critical discourse analysis, curriculum documents, pre-enrolment English program.

### تحليل الخطاب النقدي لوثائق برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية قبل التسجيل: إعداد الطلبة لغويا وأكاديميا للحياة الجامعية

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#### ملخص

**الأهداف:** تم توجيه انتقادات في الأدبيات الأكاديمية والصحافة الأسترالية حول إتقان الطلبة الدوليين للغة الإنجليزية في هذا البلد كلغة إضافية (EAL)، وأشار البعض إلى أن هؤلاء الطلبة غير مستعدين بشكل كافٍ لمتطلبات الدراسة في الجامعات الأسترالية باستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية (Arkoudis, وآخرون, 2019). امتدت هذه الانتقادات إلى برامج ما قبل التسجيل. من أجل تسليط الضوء ولعلاج كيفية عمل هذه البرامج في الممارسة العملية، تفحص هذه الدراسة كتيب المنهج لبرنامج اللغة الإنجليزية قبل التسجيل في إحدى الجامعات الأسترالية، وتوضح كيف يخدم هذا المنهج غرضاً مزدوجاً يتمثل في توفير معلومات الدورة والبرنامج، ونمذجة سجلات اللغة الإنجليزية التي يُعتقد أنها مناسبة للطلبة الدوليين مع اللغة الإنجليزية كخلفية إضافية للغة من أجل دخول إحدى الجامعات الغربية. بالاعتماد على إطار عمل فيركلاف (1989, 1995).

**المنهجية:** تم استكشاف الكتيب من خلال عملية تحليل الخطاب النقدي ثلاثية الجوانب، حيث تم تحليل كتيب المنهج لبرنامج اللغة الإنجليزية قبل التسجيل بما في ذلك وصف النص نفسه، وتفسير العمليات التي ينطوي عليها إنشاء وتفسير الظروف الاجتماعية والتاريخية الكامنة وراء إنشاء النص.

**النتائج:** يكشف الوصف عن هيكل موضوعي، لا يوفر فقط تفاصيل المناهج الدراسية، ولكن أيضاً تفاصيل عن الموظفين والمرافق المتاحة ومعلومات حول الجامعة وبيئة المدينة التي سيواجهها الطلاب خارج الفصل الدراسي. إلى جانب الوصف العام لمحتوى الدورة التدريبية، تم وصف مهام التقييم، وبعضها تم تقديمه بالكامل.

**الخلاصة:** كتيب المنهج أصبح وثيقة أيضاً أو "كتاب قواعد" ووثيقة قانونية لتمثيل الجامعة. هذه الدراسة تكشف كيف أن نوع كتيب المنهج الذي أعد للطلاب الدولي قد ركز على أن اللغة هو نص أدائي. يقوم بتدريس السجلات الأكاديمية، ويقوم بالامتنال والإعانة بالإضافة إلى توفير معلومات الدورة التدريبية والمناهج وإعداد الطلاب للجوانب الاجتماعية والثقافية لدراساتهم المستقبلية في إحدى الجامعات الأسترالية. الكلمات الدالة: تحليل الخطاب النقدي، وثائق المناهج، برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية قبل التسجيل.

### **Introductory Background**

In recent years, complaints have been made in the press and academic literature about international English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners' English language proficiency. There have also been concerns raised about their integration into the academic cultures of Australian universities (Arkoudis, et al, 2019; God & Zhang, 2019). While some have noted that concerns sometimes arise out of linguistic and cultural racism (e.g. Dovchin, 2020), there is also the acknowledgement that universities can do better to support EAL international students' social integration and sense of belonging alongside preparing them for the academic demands in a new learning culture (Arkourdis et al, 2019). There is also an implication that pre-enrolment English programs that allow direct entry into Australian degrees without students completing international English examinations such as the International English Language Teaching Students (IELTS) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) are in some way deficient and do not adequately prepare students (Cook & Zhuang, 2019). The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency of Australia (TEQSA, 2019) showed that in fact international students had significantly lower attrition rates and higher pass rates than domestic students and that strict regulations and quality assurance processes applied to all direct entry English programs. However, these negative perceptions persist, and consequently direct entry English language programs take many steps to ensure that students not only achieve the language proficiency required to enter the program, but also develop the socio-cultural skills necessary to integrate into the Australian university environment. This paper explores how a pre-enrolment English program (hereafter PEP) achieved these goals by examining the curriculum documentation they provided to international students with English as an additional language (EAL) and viewing it as an artefact representing the practices of the program.

In this paper, we use the term "curriculum" in its broadest sense. Back in 1989, Kliebard (1989) identified four important aspects of the curriculum: 1) it highlights what should be taught and why; 2) it identifies who is taught what at which stage, and why; 3) it identifies the way in which content and skills are taught and what rules govern this; and 4) it denotes the interrelationships between aspects of the curriculum. More recently, Kern, Thomas and Hughes (2010) have created a broad definition of curriculum as "planned educational experience" (Kern, Thomas & Hughes, 2010, p.1).

In this research, we explored all documents that identify the planning of the educational experience in terms of what, when, how, why, and according to what rules and interrelationships (Kliebard, 1989). The PEP Student Handbook of 2010 was selected for analysis as it provides all information relevant to the "planned educational experience" except for specific exercises and classroom activities.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis as a Theoretical Lens**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was selected for this study because it allows us insight into the social norms and structures underlying the educational experience planned for international students at Australian universities. Through analysis of the curriculum artefacts provided to these students, CDA provides insight into the perspectives of the Australian higher education and international students that they are socially constructing (Fairclough, 1992). These insights are achieved through a detailed analysis of the "text", which includes word choice and grammatical choices. The researcher then moves to examine "how a text represents and constructs social realities contextually tied to a specific ideological (values) system through the manifestation of covert and overt messages" (Setyono, B., & Widodo, 2019, p.387).

### **Critical Discourse Analysis as a Method**

We drew on Fairclough's (1989, 1995) critical discourse analysis model for analysis of texts to explore the PEP Student Handbook. This method is particularly appropriate since it provides three dimensions of discourse (in this case, the discourse involved in curricula and related documentation) the text itself (the object), the processes involved in the creation of the text (processes) and the socio-historical conditions underlying the creation of text. Each dimension of discourse has a corresponding method of analysis:

1. Object requires description of the content. We focussed on the description of:
  - Thematic structure of the texts
  - Lexicalisation (word choice)
  - Modality (the writer's attitude or opinion as demonstrated by the use of grammatical modality and text-formatting)

These elements are linked with Halliday's (1973) 'speech functions' expanded by Smith (1983) which in turn are linked with genre later in the explanation phase.

2. Process-analysis requires an interpretation of the interpersonal relationships. We unpacked how the description of content (the object) relates to the interpersonal providing the link between methods/dimensions of analysis). We also examined how the discourse was produced and received. That is who wrote it, when was it given to students or teachers, and how etc. This also links with the methods/dimension of analysis related to the socio-historical condition.

3. Analysis of socio-historical condition involves an explanation of the context within which the discourse was produced. Here we explored:

- The history of the development of the document
- The social context in which it was delivered (link with interpersonal)
- The socio-historical context within which it was produced
- The genre of the document and how this linked with the context in which it was produced

In practice, we used Janks's (1997) classic model of systematically working through the document and analysing it in terms of the three dimensions and methods: object, processes, and socio-historical conditions, simultaneously writing down what was relevant in each box and uncovering the links between the boxes as we went. In the following section, we describe the content and show how the processes involved were interpreted, explaining the socio-historical mechanisms underlying the content of the PEP.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This paper reflects on data collected as part of a PhD thesis study and permission for conducting this research was gained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of Adelaide. The researchers were mindful of ethical issues that would be considered with careful attention at every step of this research, including sensitivity and respect to individuals, organisations, legal documents and research sites (Creswell, 2012). The ethics approval documentation specified that the intellectual property of the Language Centre should be protected, and the curriculum documentation could not be provided in its entirety in any publication. Similarly, specific details on the institution, program, teachers and students have not been reflected as part of a requirement to anonymise the data.

### **Analysis of the PEP Content of the PEP Curriculum**

The document started with a title page and table of contents. The title page shows the history of the course development through its provision of a long list of people involved in the development of the course, which includes academics, the advisory committee, and 'the CLPD' (University Central Unit). The document is also dated on the title page. The table of contents includes the following main sections:

- Section 1: Welcome and staff details
- Section 2: Student facilities
- Section 3: General course information
- Section 4: PEP curriculum
- Section 5: Student consultations
- Section 6: PEP final assessment
- Section 7: Student forms and contracts
- Section 8: Week One tasks

This brief listing of the main sections already indicates a thematic structure that is more comprehensive than a general curriculum document. It not only provides details of the "planned [learning] experience", but also provides details of staffing, available facilities, and information about the University and City environment that the students will encounter outside of the classroom (Sections 2 and 3). Along with the general description of course content, assessment tasks are described (Section 6) and some are even given in their entirety (Section 8). This document also becomes a 'rule book' and

a legal document protecting the University Language Centre against student complaints and appeals. It provides information on the expected behaviour both inside and outside of the classroom (Sections 3 and 5) and contains forms and contracts for the students to complete and sign (Section 7).

More details of the thematic structure of individual sections are provided in the section regarding 'Processes', since the way in which the discourse is produced and received is closely linked to the thematic structure of each section.

### **Lexicalisation**

The dominant lexicalisation of the PEP Handbook reflects a mixture of speech functions. Students are provided with information regarding the course in the customary style of an outline ('representational' information). Instructions are also given regarding actions they need to take ('regulatory' speech function). For example, the use of personal pronouns such as 'you' and 'yours', along with actions the student needs to take in using the University's learning management system, identifies this document clearly as a course outline or information text. There is also a predominance of jargon commonly used in the disciplines of Education and Applied Linguistics, for example, 'project-based' and 'genre focus', with no mentioning of specific tasks. Under the 'Objectives' section, however, the thresholds of the communication skills/tasks are spelled out using adjectives and adverbs qualifying expectations and nouns suggesting concepts related to expectations. For example, students are expected to achieve 'significant autonomy' in learning. There is a strong use or even overuse, of juxtaposed adjectives describing the student's experience as 'challenging' yet 'exciting'. These adjectives praise the experience at the University Language Centre, reflecting what Smith (1983) calls a representational speech function advertising to the students, their families, educational agents the positive experiences they will enjoy, yet at the same time communicating with the academic community (and even indirectly politicians and the media), about the standards of the Centre.

The positive adjectives describing the staff (e.g. 'friendly') also reflect an interactional speech function (Smith, 1983). There is also an element of the company prospectus in this section, with the possible proliferation of titles and description of roles of individuals.

In the second section of the PEP Handbook, the lexicalisation reveals additional speech functions to those already discussed. For example, extra information is provided in relation to the use of the English language (only) in the computer room (2.1). Therefore, the document providing information in fact reflects an instruction, i.e. uses a rulebook regulatory speech function. The use of the arrows pointing to the different information reflects its role as a teaching tool for students to access information and unpacks the register messages that are embedded in this document. Personal pronouns such as 'you' and 'yours' are repeatedly used. Under the 'Expectations' heading, once again the subsections follow a standardised Course Profile text type/speech function with 'Attendance', 'Late arrival to class', 'Participation', 'Meeting deadlines', and 'Classroom responsibilities' as subheadings. All these points focus on instructing students regarding required behaviours. Throughout this section, adjectives and adverbs implying obligation are juxtaposed with those implying advice. This is, for example, reflected in the following statement: 'students are expected to attend 90% of classes and other structured activities'. Here the obligation is even more strongly emphasised by the use of bold font. However, language suggesting obligation is contrasted with less direct language such as the following: 'If possible, students should also send an email to class teachers'. Here the suggestion is that it is merely a recommendation or advice, but the use of 'should' is an implied obligation. Meanings refer to the obligated steps that students have to follow. In section 2.6 of this document, the content focuses on safety issues. Its lexicalisation reflects a form of neutral language and factual information and an advice-giving speech function, rather than focusing on warnings or dangers. This means that the students will be exposed to a variety of tasks and by completing them, they will be able to use appropriate modality. As appropriate grammatical structures are required to reflect different academic registers, the register required for each task is explicitly communicated to students in this section. Emergency contacts are also listed in a table with position titles, areas they are responsible for, names, and phone numbers.

### **Modality**

A mixture of formal and informal modality is used in this text. Like the lexicalisation, the modality also reflects a variety of speech functions and text types. The dominance of modality in the PEP Student Handbook can be seen in the frequently use of the modal verb 'will', but as an advertising device suggesting future positive experiences. It is also used as a veiled

instruction, since the students are reminded that they ‘... will be working very hard’. This is once again a message to the University as well as to the students, their agents and external stakeholders. Administrative instructions are less strongly emphasised than academic ones, with the use of ‘can’ to instruct students regarding the use of student cards. Informality is also juxtaposed with formality. The friendly use of first names is contrasted sharply with titles in other places. The fact that this is predominantly representational information speech function (Smith, 1983) is emphasised by the frequent use of bold text to highlight any essential information, such as the name of the program and of key staff members. It is clear that the font style (bold or underlined) reflects modality. For example, the username and password are underlined to show the student their importance.

The modality in this section of the document moves from the short instruction modality of some sections to full sentences and factual information. In some sections short infinitive verbs are used as in the following example: ‘Alert other occupants near you’ (Section 2.7). Direct obligations are detailed in other sections such as ‘Students must pay for any usage over this quota’ (Section 2.3), or a more factual ‘prospectus-style’ information is given, for example, ‘The Language and Cultural Exchange Program is a mutual exchange program’. In other places positive reinforcement rather than obligation is expressed, for example, ‘Students are strongly encouraged to participate in this program.’ (Section 2.3). The student handbook becomes an advertisement for the program, advertising the ‘product’ of interaction with native speakers as part of the offerings of the program and, even to demonstrate to external stakeholders such as the media the integration of international students with local students. The first name and contact details of the person who is responsible for the project are given, suggesting a more personalised informal approach. However, this is juxtaposed with the position titles in the earlier sections, for example, ‘Community Engagement Officer’.

The modal verbs ‘can’, ‘must’, ‘should’, and ‘will’ are used throughout this document to refer to the possibility, obligation, and imperatives with which students have to comply. Students are allowed options in some cases, for example, ‘you can pick up your student cards from the student card office ...’ (Section 2.2). However, in most cases, the student is obliged to follow the instructions, such as ‘Students should log off ...’ (Section 2.3). There is repeated use of the infinitives and gerunds in Sections 6–8. The simple infinitive form, for example, ‘To access all online services ...’ is sometimes used as a noun and is exactly equivalent to ‘accessing’. Therefore, in these cases, this phrase therefore allows possibility rather than obligation. However, elsewhere in the sections, the infinitive indicates obligation, for example, ‘Leave the building’ (Sections 2-6).

Regulatory and authoritative instructions are clearly spelled out in this section using gerunds (primarily in lists) and infinitives (primarily in regulations). However, the infinitive is also used in less regulatory recommendations, which attempt to modify by encouragement rather than force, such as ‘Students are encouraged to speak English...’. This indicates that there is a possibility to speak in their own language if they would like to do so. Students are indirectly obligated in this section to put strategies in place within and beyond the classroom for further fluency development. Gerunds (the verb form acting as noun) are also used as in lists to show the duties in which the students need to comply in order to maintain the upkeep of all classrooms and the computer room, (e.g. ‘Maintaining a clean environment’, ‘Leaving chairs and tables in an orderly fashion’, and ‘Ensuring all lights and air conditioning are turned off’). The formal modality is also emphasized through the use of documentary evidence throughout such as in the following phrase: ‘the discussion will be documented in writing’. In the remaining sections (5.3, 5.4, and 5.5) a high degree of formality is used since students and teachers both need to sign/date these forms.

In the last two sections (6 and 7), the use of modality slightly deviates from the previous sections. The writer of this document (PEP Handbook) resorts to intensified modal verbs as well as an increase in bold and capitalised fonts to enhance the importance of the content. The modal verb ‘must’ proliferates. ‘Must’ is repeated in this section 23 times. This reveals that the section is a very important one as it is fully spelled out with obligations which if fulfilled will assist the student in passing the PEP demonstrating to all stakeholders the high expectations and quality assurance mechanisms of the Program.

### **Process and Socio-Historical Analysis of the PEP Student Handbook**

As well as exploring the structure of the discourse, lexicalisation and modality (described in the previous section), we interpreted how these elements reflect interpersonal relationships: namely, how this discourse is produced and received. We also linked this interpersonal analysis with our explanation of the context within which the discourse was produced. Thus, in this section, we straddled what Fairclough (1995) calls meso and macro discourse.

#### **Advertising the Educational Product**

Section 1.2 ('Welcome from the Director' and 'About Staff') introduced the

Director and most important staff members to the main audience (the students). This section can be seen as a representative of an advertising genre, which links to the representational speech function mentioned in the Object description above. An example of why we would characterise this as an advertising genre is that although the Director is powerful and represents the whole Centre and by implication the University, she is still presented positively (selling an experience to a customer). She is smiling in her photo and uses the positive reinforcing language mentioned previously. This advertising genre could also have potential other audiences such as potential students and their agents.

The use of words such as 'service' reflects the socio-historical condition

within which students are positioned as 'customers' and universities as service providers. This 'student as customer' and/or 'university as industry' discourse has been decried in the higher education literature (e.g. Halbesleben, Becker, & Buckley, 2003; Pitman, 2000; Bejou, 2005). The concern is that if students take on the customer role, they can have unrealistic expectations and lose out on the challenges of learning and that academics can lower standards and refrain from challenging students in order to provide the wanted 'service' of a pass at all costs. A refinement on the 'student as customer' discourse that has gained prevalence of late (e.g. Kotze and Du Plessis 2003) focuses on the importance of the 'student experience' in enhancing the quality of learning. The Director's welcome seems to focus on this holistic element in the students' learning in that she refers explicitly to the role of the learning environment.

In Section 1.3, the other main staff members are introduced as a product of

their life experiences, qualifications and job experience. Once again, an advertising genre is employed, with the 'product' being the staff as competent deliverers of the Program able to help students achieve their goals. American and British teaching experience is highlighted and seen as something that will sell the course to the students and make them feel as if they are receiving a high level of education. This appears to reflect a discourse of language and cultural 'imperialism' that has been highlighted in the English Language Teaching literature, most notably by Pennycook (1994) and Phillipson (2006). The genre in this section links to the representational speech function as previously mentioned. The audience of this advertising genre is the students as well as international agents that are responsible for sending students to study abroad.

#### **Personal Responsibility expectations**

Although the Director appears to treat the student as a customer in Section 1.2, she does not, however, allow the students to "possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for that success", as suggested by Chowning and Campbell (2009, p. 982). Instead, she flags the fact that the environment will be different and challenging to the students from their previous experiences in fact taking a more traditional 'institutional excellence' discourse. Although her mention of the challenges of studying could be seen as a 'selling point' and part of the advertising genre selling to the student customers, it could also be seen as appealing to another audience – academics within the University, politicians and the media, who may potentially be concerned about lowering of standards in academic entry programs (Birrell, 2006, 2014). Concerns about students with English as an additional language and their academic and language standards have been dubbed a 'deficit discourse' (Lawrence, 2003). Although the Director does not seem to subscribe to this discourse, she seems aware that students may face concerns about their levels of English and academic standards.

#### **Teaching through the Handbook**

Section 1.3 can also be seen as fulfilling a teaching purpose. Emmit, Pollock and Komesaroff (2003, p. 25) state that "language not only gives [students] the resources to acknowledge power and status relationship in [their] communication

with others, but in doing so requires that [they] recognise these different relations when [they] speak". Students are prepared for a difference in culture and consequently in spoken register from what they are used to, for example, the explicit use of staff's first names within a formal course outline and staff introduction as is common in the Australian context. The fact that this material is in the same document as other teaching material transforms it into a potential teaching tool for register. As noted by Emmitt and colleagues (2003), by giving the students access to the language that identifies and marks out distinctions between people, the students are provided with cultural insights that can assist in avoiding cultural misunderstandings and even culture shock.

Section 2.1 is once again a Table of Contents, while section 2.2 (the Student

Card' and the 'Accessing online services') instructs students formally on how and from where they can pick up their students' card as well as how to obtain online access. The main audience of this section are the students themselves, their agencies as well as the University and ELC staff members indicating that the English Language Centre is both a part of the University and a separate entity. It is also clear that this section plays the role of instruction genre. This kind of instruction genre here moves between 'regulatory' and representational speech function as already mentioned. The reason why we assume that this is an instruction genre is that the writer(s) provides a sample 'Welcome letter', which the students are supposed to receive on the first day of the PEP from the Student Centre.

The use of the word 'service' (in 'online services') assumes that students are treated as 'customers' and the university as service provider. This links to the socio-historical condition within which 'student as customer' and/or 'university as industry' discourse. Within this socio-historical discourse there is also a focus on the financial. The students are made aware of financial issues affecting the Language Centre and even the University itself as a business and public institution. This emphasis is reflected in the explicit description of internet and printing quotas in the Handbook (e.g. international students are allowed '150mb' per semester and they 'must' pay for any usage over this quota). There appears to be an assumption that the students might have difficulty understanding the administrative processes, which is perhaps a new experience and genre for them. Therefore, this section once again fulfils a teaching purpose, despite its commercial references. In this section, the underlined username and password are linked with the example letter and explanations using arrows. The section appears to follow the manual genre, providing the students with an example and explanation/instruction of the genre. When this 'Welcome letter' is received, students are informed that they are officially enrolled in the university system 'academic discourse' and thus, the students will have username and password to log on online services and can pick up their Student Card. The socio-historical reason for distancing in language is the relationship of the Language Centre with University (i.e. it is a business unit within the university) and the enrolment as well as Student Card is managed by central administration of the University. This takes the students through a variety of registers from legalise to instruction manual to rules and even implied threats.

#### **Duty of Care to International Students**

In Sections 2.5 to 2.8 a variety of genres are employed. For example, the listing and information genres such as commonly used in a phone book or map book are employed in Section 2.5, while in section 2.6 there is a combination of information genre and guidebook and rule book. These genres are linked to the regulatory and representational speech functions. This is a compliance genre that the University complying with copyright legal requirements – legalise. This reflects a socio-historical discourse of the obligation of universities to provide detailed local information to international university students as well as information on Australian culture and expectation of the culture and the institution and specific location. This 'safety' discourse has arisen from well publicised attacks on international students in Australia as well as policy documents and safety manuals provided to international students (for example, the living safely in Victoria and Australia, La Trobe University website 2012; or the Study Adelaide Personal Safety website, 2023). This focus on keeping international students safe is therefore a compliance genre where the university needs to demonstrate to government agencies as well as international partners that they have fulfilled their duty of care.

#### **Communicating with Stakeholders**

Section 3.2 (Philosophy and Objectives) appears to be written for an

academic audience. This is reflected in the lexicalisation which includes a great deal of academic jargon such as 'Project-based learner centred curriculum'. Here the Language Centre appears to be advertising its pedagogical credentials to an academic audience within the University. Consequently, although this is on the surface a curriculum document, the interpersonal relationship highlighted by this text is one of a hierarchy; the writer who 'knows', the academic readers who are meant to be impressed by this 'performance' of academic standards and the student readers who are likely to struggle to understand.

PCE as a semi-private institution (acting as a commercial arm of the

University) needs to justify its work to the academic community both as a provider of a service to these important 'customers' and as a protector of the standards required by the academic community. To perform this public role, the writer(s) of this document spelled out all the general information about this course (PEP), for example, the PEP Philosophy and Objectives, and Expectations in order to demonstrate how they meet these requirements.

In the same section 3.2, there is another subheading 'Expectations'. Under

this subheading the writer(s) cover a number of areas; Attendance (including a library tour); Late arrival to class; Participation; Meeting deadlines; Classroom responsibilities; Required texts; Recommended texts; Organisational notes. This information has been written to specific audiences, students as well as their teachers. For example, the 'Attendance' section deals with both the students as the side who must obey this condition and to their teacher to take a further action, record in an absent sheet, in case the students come to the class late. This is highlighted as an authoritarian register/genre as the text sets out the ground rules for students in the course. This kind of genre/register links to the regulatory speech function mentioned above.

More recently in Western higher education, learners have been encouraged

to be more active respondents and to be included in the development of curriculum (Cleveland-Innes and Emes, 2005). This socio-historical movement towards student democratic voice and participation is reflected in the participation sub-section where students are told that, at the beginning of the term they should 'jointly' with their teacher, 'negotiate and comply with the ground rules'. However, there is no mention of the student's expectations of the university, teacher and course curriculum. Nor is there mention of how feedback on these issues from students during the term can be provided to the University.

In section 3.4, information about the end of the program is provided. In this

Section, there is a less authoritarian tone, and the student is treated as more of an equal. 'Please...' is used three times in the paragraph and the students are encouraged by the writer to consider and plan for the study break to make the best academic decisions. The socio-historical condition that is reflected here is that until the more recent past, it was the sole responsibility of the student to plan for an end of break. It is now recognised as a responsibility also of the University, as a duty of care to students, to support and encourage learners about how to plan for semester breaks. The writer(s) perhaps want(s) to introduce the students to the new educational system as well as new society they are going to be part of. The relationship of the classroom to the outside world is a reciprocal one; the classroom is not determined by outside world, but it is part of the world, both affected by what happens outside its walls and affecting what happens within it'.

Section 3.5 deals with 'Guidelines and Polices'. In this section there are a

number of headings under which the writer(s) explains the policies of ELC. For example, under the heading of English Speaking Guidelines, the text is speaking to the student through use of the third person, 'the student'. The text distances the writer from the student audience and is authoritarian. The socio-historical condition that is reflected is that of 'student centred' learning and student responsibility. This is in contrast with the students as 'customer' discourse, where the institution takes the greatest responsibility.

In the next subheading of Section 3.5, 'Fair Treatment Policy', the

document appears to reflect that there is a Fairness and equality for all students and staff and visitors on campus. The discourse reflected in this document is that this society (Australian society) is an equal opportunity society where all have a 'fair go'. The socio-historical condition is reflected in fairness and equity that are embedded in policy.



In section 4.2, the writer(s) once again take(s) on the role of an academic writing for students. The first paragraphs introduce the student to the components of the curriculum and convey to them the purpose of sub-skills: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and independent learning skills. A table is provided with sections for each skill and its sets of sub-skills to provide students with a detailed outline of what skills they will develop and the specific outcomes these skills and sub-skills will provide. Information is provided in dot point format and so is highly structured and conveys to the reader the importance of the information. The formatting also makes reading easy for the student and organises the information in a logical way. The criteria for demonstration of the attained skills and knowledge are provided by component specific assessment tasks (formative and or summative).

On the one hand, this can also be seen as a reminder for teachers or a visible / explicit listing/ referral to the university staff. On the other hand, the writer(s) encourage(s) the students to work on the development of the sub-skills through in-class, out-of-class and self-direct activities. The use of words such as ‘in-class out-of-class reveals the socio-historical conditions through which the writer(s) shows(s) the extent to which these two environments will help the students to enhance learning formal and informal registers.

The format, lexicalisation, concepts and the use of different styles (formal and informal) presented throughout this section are a learning tool for students. It is a template as to how to think critically, and to systematically ‘unpack’ ideas to more fully appreciate their structure and function. However, the PEP’s mission, focus and pedagogy are also made explicit to the University audience and to the teachers as a reminder.

In section 4.11, a table (1) is provided. The tasks overview for the period of 1-20 week is included in this table. It shows the scaffolding of skills and competencies on previous knowledge. It provides a template to students about how to structure information to isolate skills/knowledge, their application and links to curriculum tasks.

Section 5.1 starts with a title page and table of contents. Three types of Students Consultation forms are included in this section. In section 5.2, under the heading of Consultation Guidelines and Forms, an explanation and instruction genre of how to fill these forms is employed. The student is informed about the 3 different types of consultation they can have with their teacher; course progress, individual and student at risk (SaR). These descriptive paragraphs provide an outline to students as to what to expect. The writer(s)’ focus appears to be to demonstrate that there is a fairness and equality for all students and staff in this Centre and the university. It is suggested that the students have the right to receive feedback about their progress during this program. For example, The Course Progress Consultation aims to provide students with feedback on their progress in the PEP and in particular their development of general speaking, writing, listening and language in use.

The socio-historical discourse reflected in this section aligns strongly with the philosophy and outcomes that claim to be learner-centred, supportive and encouraging. The modern higher education discourse emphasises complexity and choice (Australian International Education Advisory Council, 2013). For English as an Additional Language student there are added stressors and challenges related to learning to communicate complex thought in an additional language and meet the demands of day to day living in a new culture (Australian International Education Advisory Council 2013). These documents appear to formalise opportunities for students and teacher to have one-to-one discussions and reflect a discourse of mentorship and informal counselling.

Section 6.1 starts with a table of contents. A Final Assessment Summary is provided in section 6.2. A formal, assessment socio-historical discourse is employed in this assessment sheet. The University logo on the right-hand corner along with a highly structured format for the summary of 2010 Final Assessment Summary are provided. This sheet does not assess out of the class learning which is emphasised in the remainder of the Student Handbook a formal genre is utilised here by the writer(s), which links to authoritative/contractual speech functions.

In section 6.5, under the heading of Requirements to Successfully Complete the PEP, rules on passing the PEP are outlined. The scale conversion between IELTS scores and Criteria Grades is provided showing stringent requirements. This demonstrates a compliance genre

reflecting the role of the IELTS examination and what has been dubbed ‘international language proficiency politics’ (Feast, 2002). It also plays to the audience of university academics, and the media who may hold a ‘deficit discourse’ (Lawrence, 2003) towards international students and require increasingly high language standards.

In section 6.6, further details on the assessment requirements are provided. There are also along with General Requirements; Exceptions; and Possible scenarios (e.g., Scoring an F leads to a Supplementary Exam, which will require a P, as well as the exam being discussed by a Screening Panel, to either a) ensure criteria to enter PEP has been obtained, or b) determine that criteria has not been made and alternative University option requirements must be sought by the student). This detailed description of the IELTS and PEP scores reflects the socio-historical discourse of accountability and what some have dubbed ‘managerialism’ (Meek, 2010). The University is obliged to provide wealth information and details about the students and for the students. However, the complex language used could be confusing and intimidating to pre-enrolment PEP students and is more clearly written with an academic or legal audience in mind. Section 6.9 is dedicated to Supplementary Exam-Information The writer(s) continue(s) using a formal information genre that is represented in authoritative/contractual and regulatory speech functions and reflects a legalistic discourse, protecting the University and Language Centre from potential lawsuits.

In section 6.10, the students are given an opportunity to appeal against the result of the final assessment if they are not happy with. The writer, again, wants to show that in this society (Australia) there is there is fairness and equality for all students and staff and visitors on campus to be treated with. For example, the Director of Studies or Academic Advisor is available to meet with students who do not meet criteria to pass the PEP. Options are discussed regarding the student’s academic future and details of processes are provided. Once again, the language appears to target an academic and/or legal audience rather than a student with English as an Additional Language audience.

Information about PEP Assessment Certificate is provided in section 6.11.

The writer(s) use(s) this section to provide the student with a tangible document indicating their level of achievement for PEP.

In section 6.12, a sample of Assessment Result is provided. In such sample there are only two outcomes for a student a) that they satisfactorily meet the criteria to Pass PEP, or b) they do not satisfy the criteria to Pass. Previous information pertaining to the criteria are again summarised in this section. Although this might appear to be a doubling up of information, the difference in working may allow the student to better understand how the criteria determine their successful completion of PEP or not. The writer(s) of this document still provide(s) information genre in a formal way in this section which acts as movement between authoritative/contractual and regulatory and representational speech function.

In section 7.1, there is a highlighted heading, STUDENTS FORMS AND CONTRACTS. The remainder of Section 7 consists of a series of forms used for a variety of purposes. These range from a collection of demographic information (Section 7.2) to a permission form (Section 7.4) for students to give permission for their work in PEP to be used as an educational resource and/or for research purposes, to the ‘PEP Student Assessment Contract’ (Section 7.5). The audience of this section is mainly the students. Two genres are utilized by the writer here, information and instruction genre. These two genres are linked to ‘regulatory and authoritative/contractual’ discourses.

In section 7.6, a ‘Needs Analysis’ form is provided for the students. This is a brief qualitative and quantitative set of questions that the student is required to bring to their first report-review. Open questions that tap student experiences of English language learning are asked, such as, ‘How long have you been learning English?’ and scales are provided, such as, ‘How do you rate your skills in the following areas (the four main skill areas) on a scale, with the lowest rating being Poor and the highest, Excellent. This reflects yet another type of questionnaire genre: the self-assessment form. There is no indication of whether this is part of the learning activities or merely for information purposes.

Section 8.1 is used as a table of contents. In section 8.2, under the heading

of ‘PEP Campus Tour’ information for the student on how to go on a self-guided campus tour is provided. The students

are required to go on a self-guided tour of the North Terrace and so familiarise themselves with the university's layout and facilities. Open-ended questions are asked about landmarks on the Tour, such as, 'In the foyer of the Student Centre what can you see on the walls?' The document provides a real-world opportunity to apply one's English language skills. In section 8.6, information about the University's Websites for International Students is shown. The students are encouraged to become familiar with suggested sites to cultivate a deeper awareness of Australian lifestyles (a cultural discourse). A brief document asking open-ended questions is provided for students to again apply in a real-world context their current skills with the English Language. For example, using the university's website they are asked to write about Uni Terms (e.g., what is the difference between a program and a course?); Who do we talk to? Guide to Online Services and Work/Life Balance. The document provides a real-world opportunity to apply the students' English language skills.

Section 8.9 provides information for the students about 'Skill Development

Websites' in this section, a comprehensive list of academic, software tutorials and English Language learning websites are listed, and the student is encouraged to determine which are easy to use and most informative. This section provides a real-world opportunity to apply their English language skills.

In section 8.10, 'Editing and Error Correction Symbols' a comprehensive document outlining the shorthand that teachers may use when providing feedback on assessments is presented in a Table. Students are asked to reflect on their understanding of the symbols by using a matrix to identify a) the meaning of a symbol, and b) an example of correction using that symbol. The writer(s) (designer) of this document emphasize(s) the importance of exposing the students to the informal environments that will help in involving the learner directly in order to be effective. As a result, the students will practice a variety of genres that help them to identify the correct speech functions that need to be applied in some real-world situations.

### **Conclusion**

The critical discourse analysis of the PEP handbook document reveals the document has many different purposes besides that of a traditional curriculum document detailing the features of the 'planned educational experience' (Graves, 2008). The document also serves the function of information/tourism document, an advertisement for the University and Language Centre, an instruction manual and a legal document detailing the rights and responsibilities of all involved. The PEP handbook also serves an explicit teaching purpose with the writers using content-based instruction around specific tasks and activities in order to teach the students spoken register and other academic English content. The use of a variety of academic and non-academic registers serves as a model for students as well as a teaching tool. The writer(s) indicate(s) a number of codes or registers that are used in different situations. This can be seen by the fact that the PEP Handbook shifts register rapidly depending on the content and communicative purpose. This models for the students the fact that they too can switch from one register to another as appropriate to their needs and supports the students in their integration into the various and complex learning environments they will encounter at the University.

The content of the PEP Handbook is clearly written with a 'customer' focus

attempting to provide all the information and resources the students may need. The emphasis on students' needs is perhaps also because of the reporting and legislative environment within which the document was created, since Language Centres and universities have an obligation to provide detailed information support for their students (Australian International Education Advisory Council 2013 Council 2013; Gillard 2012). The 'needs analysis' form at the end of the document is perhaps the clearest indication of the focus on students' needs and feedback since it explicitly states that the curriculum will be updated based on the students' feedback.

The critical discourse analysis of this document provides some evidence that

students are encouraged to communicate both inside and outside of the classroom with both native and non-native speakers of English. The document also explicitly links the PEP classroom with the outside world and addresses the concerns of critics regarding the students' language proficiency and ability to communicate with native speaker colleagues in groups.

A range of academic genres and consequently academic registers are formally and explicitly introduced through this document through the progressive development of skills and the introduction of academic terminology.

The critical analysis of PEP Handbook revealed that the students are anticipated to be active learners and the role of the teacher is presented as facilitators who assist the student in developing his/her own meanings and skills, rather than transferring of information.

The data from the PEP curriculum also indicates the important role that an understanding of cultures plays in developing academic and other registers. Culture provides the substance of meaning and the process in making meaning in this document. The students are provided with explicit information about 'cultures' at a variety of different levels including Australian culture(s), the culture of the city, academic cultures in general, the University culture, the Language Centre culture and expected classroom culture. . Firstly, they are given information about Australian culture(s) in general (Sec, 2.4). Secondly, they are provided with information about the culture of the City (Sec, 2.5-8). Next, at a meso level, they are provided with information about academic culture(s) (e.g. Sec, 3.2), the University culture (Sec, 3.2), the Language Centre Culture (Sec, 3.3) and finally the expected classroom culture (Sec, 3.2). The document conveys the idea that in order to learn another language, the students need to learn to understand the culture(s) within which individual communicative events occur.

This focus on culture is not only for the students. The other audience is the teachers, both within the Language Centre and the academics within the University as a whole, as well as external stakeholders such as agents and Australian politicians and media. The explicit admonishments for students to be aware of cultural differences, but to respect each other and difference (Sec, 6.9), is also an admonishment to teachers that they need to appreciate that individuals who possess another language as their first language possess a different culture and a different way of creating meaning and reality. The teachers need to accept what students from different backgrounds bring to the learning context and not reject their language and customs as being inferior. This emphasis is also revealed through the sections (Sec, 2.10) that detail the students' rights, responsibilities and recourse if they perceive they have been unfairly treated.

This paper has shown how one pre-enrolment English program has attempted to address the critics, but more importantly to scaffold language, and register development for students and provide them with all the necessary information to cope in the new environment through a comprehensive course handbook. This explicit 'performance' of teaching, information provision, and regulatory compliance in the course handbook is one way in which pre-enrolment language programs can demonstrate their concern that students not only meet the language proficiency levels of their target institutions, but also have a deeper understanding of the registers and socio-cultural expectations of the institution.

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