CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter I assess the contribution of the present study in light of its research results. I first address the theoretical and descriptive aims of the study and highlight the value of integrating aspects of 'involvement' analysis with aspects of Appraisal analysis. Special attention is paid to differences between the study guides analysed in the projection of the social presence of students, the development of interpersonal relationships through solidarity negotiation and the identities developed for students and lecturers. I also address the applied aim of the study and highlight the potential value of the theoretical framework and the findings of the study for the development of student-centred texts. The limitations of the study are touched upon and potential topics for further research are also proposed.

5.1 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

My aim with the present study was to answer the three research questions outlined earlier (cf. 1.4). As I have mentioned, these three questions relate to three domains: namely the theoretical, the descriptive and the applied, and these domains are the organising principle for the discussion in this main section.

5.1.1 A framework for analysing student-centredness in written texts

The first research question I asked was designed to meet the theoretical aim of the present study:

> What sort of analytical framework would enhance our current understanding of the linguistic basis of the notion, 'student-centredness', in the context of distance learning texts?

The development of an analytic framework that would enhance our current understanding of the linguistic basis of the notion student-centredness in the context of distance learning texts implies a consideration of theories that inform a student-centred approach to teaching and

learning. These theories were discussed earlier (cf. 2.1.1) and include: transformative learning theory (cf. Baumgartner, 2001; Boyd and Myers, 1988; Cranton, 1994, 1997, 2000; Grabov, 1997; Mezirow, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000; Scott, 1997; Taylor, 1998), constructivism (e.g. Bruner, 1960, 1966, 1973, 1983, 1986; Honebein, 1996; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978) and whole-person learning (e.g. Dirkx, 2001; Heron (1992, 1996); Rogers, 1961, 1970, 1980; Taylor, 2001; Yorks and Kasl, 2002). Educational theories such as these highlight the importance of developing instructional material and instructional activities in such a way that: students participate in the meaning making process (Bruner, 1973, 1986, 1990, 1996); the life-experience (affective mode of psyche) of students is addressed (Dirkx, 2001; Edelson *et al.,* 1996; Heron, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978); power is distributed between lecturers and students; and knowledge is seen as a negotiated commodity (Mezirow, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000).

It was argued in the present study (cf. 3.3) that in the context of distance education (with particular reference to print-based materials) it would be evident that these principles are activated in teaching texts if such texts display linguistic features associated with collaboration, interaction, negotiation, and conversational explorations. As was mentioned (cf. 2.2) such features have been identified by linguists such as Biber (1988), Chafe (1982, 1985, 1986), Halliday (1985, 1004), Poynton (1985), Stubbs (1982) and Tannen (1982, 1985), who identified linguistic features that distinguish different registers from one another (in this regard, the 'involvement' versus 'informational focus' of texts stands out as significant indicators); Brown and Levinson (1987), Bybee and Fleischmann (1995), Chafe and Nichols (1986), Drubig (2001), Halliday (1970), Palmer (1986), Stubbs (1986), Biber and Finegan (1989), Channel (1994, 2000), Conrad and Biber (2000), Hyland (1999, 2001), Myers (1996), Nwogu (1997), Thompson and Hunston (2000) and Thompson and Zhou (2000), who analysed the features whereby speakers and writers evaluate the world (in this regard the term 'attitude' stands out as a significant indicator); and, particularly, the work of scholars such as Iedema *et al.* (1994), Christie and Martin (1997), Martin (1997, 2000, 2002, 2004), Rothery and Stenglin (2000), and White (1998, 2000, 2002, 2003), who interpret evaluation or appraisal of the world in interpersonal terms (in this regard the term 'solidarity negotiation' stands out).

In other words, it could be said that an analytical framework that would enhance our current understanding of the linguistic basis of the notion student-centredness in the context of distance learning texts, needs to allow for an analysis of language features associated by the quoted scholars with 'involvement', attitude and solidarity negotiation. However, distance education teaching texts comprise large corpora of data. Therefore, to analyse distance education study

guides in order to expose their relative student-centredness would imply analysing a large data corpus with relation to language features associated with 'involvement', attitude and solidarity negotiation. As such analyses are virtually impossible if not conducted in an automated way, the present study proposes that the analysis of texts in terms of their relative student-centredness can best be done by means of a framework that allows for an automated, corpus-based analysis of data and a calibration of texts in terms of their relative student-centredness on quantitative grounds.

In this regard, the present study's research results show that if the notion of student-centredness is considered as a continuous scale which features student-centredness at the one end and content-centredness at the other, high counts for the following features could be seen as indicating that texts are student-centred (features are presented in order of significance as illustrated graphically in Fig. 4.4):

    (a)   second person pronouns
    (b)   first person pronouns
    (c)   private verbs
    (d)   contractions
    (e)   general emphatics
    (f)   adverbs
    (g)   possibility modals
    (h)   *wh*-questions
    (i)   amplifiers
    (j)   contractions
    (j)   pronoun *it*
    (k)   indefinite pronouns.

Low counts for the mentioned features coupled with *we* used with exclusive reference, causative subordination, demonstrative pronouns, long words, and high type/token ratio, on the other hand, characterise content-centred texts.

However, the present study makes a special contribution by showing that a mere calibration of texts in terms of 'involvement' features such as the ones listed above only give a partial account of the relative student-centredness of such texts. To complete the picture, the 'involvement' features of texts must also be analysed in interpersonal terms. The research results reported

in 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 show how Appraisal theory allows for an exploration of those features associated with 'involvement' in terms of the positive and negative impact they may have on interpersonal negotiation. This is made possible in Appraisal because of its analytic framework which allows for the analysis of ATTITUDE, GRADUATION and ENGAGEMENT. That is, it allows for an interpretation of the use of attitudinal language and the grading thereof in terms of their dialogic potential. This flows from the fact that the expression of attitude, the grading thereof and the engagement shown by an author or writer with regard to the attitude expressed, have a direct impact on interpersonal solidarity negotiation (cf. 3.4.2, 4.2.2.1, 4.2.2.2).

Thus it could be said that the research reported in 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and the conclusions reached in 4.1.3 and 4.2.3 (cf. also Appendices C and D), show that an analytical framework that enhances our current understanding of the linguistic basis of the notion student-centredness needs to allow for a corpus-based exploration of the 'involvement' features of texts; and it also needs to allow for an analysis, in Appraisal terms, of the interpersonal potential of such features in terms of solidarity negotiation.

5.1.2 Some linguistic characteristics of student-centred texts

The second research question I asked was designed to meet the descriptive aim of the present study. It asks:

> How do Unisa study guides developed before and after a student-centred approach to teaching was adopted at the university compare with regard to 'involvement' and appraisal?

It has been pointed out that few guidelines exist about how the notion of student-centredness can be actualised in print-based texts. Thus Rowntree (1986), for example, gives guidelines on how to develop distance learning materials, but his focus is on matters such as: formulating aims and objectives, identifying possible learners, planning the teaching, planning the layout of self-instructional lessons, promoting active learning, considering the readability of courses, using supporting media devices and devising assessment tests. He is not concerned with developing distance education texts within a particular educational framework. Moreover, his explorations are not linguistic in nature. Therefore while Unisa academics have been developing so-called student-centred texts since the university changed its teaching strategies, no real mechanism has been in place to measure the extent to which they have managed to

move towards student-centredness.

As the analytic framework for the present study comprised such a mechanism, the research results obtained by answering the second research question indicate what some important linguistic characteristics of print-based student-centred texts are. In other words, answers to this research question flow from the research results reported in 4.1 and 4.2. In this regard it has been determined that the linguistic characteristics of student-centred texts relate to: the linguistic signalling of the social presence of discourse participants in a text; solidarity negotiation between lecturers and students; and the textual identities developed for lecturers and students. These matters are expanded on in 5.1.2.1, 5.1.2.2, and 5.1.2.3 below.

5.1.2.1 Student-centred texts and the social presence of discourse participants

It was pointed out (cf. 2.2) that Short *et al.* (1976:65) are of the opinion that the social presence of interactants, who are not in immediate contact with each other, can be inscribed in texts. I also mentioned that the success of this inscription depends on the authenticity (salience) of the simulated interaction and the authenticity of the deriving interpersonal relationships (Gunawardena and Zittle, 1997; Walther, 1992). It was highlighted (cf. 2.1) that in transformative learning situations, knowledge is socially constructed through interaction between a learner and mentor or teacher. Instead of being acquired from an existing reality that resides *out there*, it is a negotiated commodity (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Kilgore, 2001:53). I also mentioned that according to Vygotsky (1962, 1978) interactive teaching allows for the creation of a dialogue between students and teachers.

In this regard, the research results reported earlier (cf. 4.1) show that non-attitudinal 'involvement' features that occur very significantly more often in student-centred texts are:

    (a)   second person pronouns
    (b)   first person pronouns
    (c)   contractions
    (d)   *wh*-questions.

Non-attitudinal 'involvement' features that occur significantly more often in these texts are:

    (a)   pronoun *it*

(b) discourse particles.

High counts for these non-attitudinal 'involvement' features are reflected in the conversational tone of the newer study guides.

The research results reported in 4.2 show that attitudinal 'involvement' features that occur very significantly and significantly more often in student-centred texts cause these guides to be more 'involved', attitudinal and sensitive to the processes of solidarity negotiation than in content-centred ones. The features include:

(a) private verbs
(b) general emphatics
(c) adverbs
(d) possibility modals
(e) amplifiers.

The only attitudinal 'involvement' feature that occurs significantly more often in these guides is indefinite pronouns. Below I elaborate on the interpersonal value of the features listed above.

(a) The social presence of discourse participants in texts: very significant indicators

A consideration of the features that are very significant indicators of the social presence of discourse participants in student-centred texts, reveals that these features relate to: the signalling of private (non-observable) states and acts; reference to discourse participants; the strengthening or amplification of attitudinal meaning; the signalling of propositions as tentative; and the signalling of the time and manner in which something happened. Of particular significance with regard to non-observable states and acts are the private verbs: *think, feel, find, consider and reflect* (cf. 4.2.2.1) and the collocation of these verbs with personal pronouns, particularly second person pronouns or first person singular pronouns referring to someone with whom the student can associate (cf. 4.1.2.1). The preference for these particular collocations fits nicely into the principles advanced in transformative learning theory. For instance, examples such as*: I think I am an important link ...; you might have felt a bit exposed; Did you find it easy? ... if you consider the above ...; and ... you are in a position to reflect on these stories,* show that these verbs can be associated with a consideration of alternative viewpoints (e.g. *I think I am an important link ..*), with the expression of attitudes and emotions (e.g. *... you*

might have felt a bit exposed; Did you find it easy?), and with cooperative inquiry (e.g. *... if you consider the above ...; you are in a position to reflect on these stories*).

These examples show that through reflection on experience, the student is prompted to construct a personal understanding of relevant structures of meaning derived from his or her active participation in real world environments. Such emphasis on experience and reflection derives from the belief that reflection during and after action is considered an important mental process required to transform experience into knowledge.

The very significant use of general emphatics (e.g. *more, most*) and amplifiers (e.g. *strongly, much, as well as*) can also be associated with the principles underlying transformative learning theory. As was mentioned (cf. 4.2.2.1), emphatics and amplifiers boost or grade attitudinal meaning and as such they indicate heightened emotion (Biber, 1988:240) and are used by speakers or writers to signal their own opinion and to elicit a response from an addressee. As a result, emphatics and amplifiers are strongly associated with interpersonal interaction and interpersonal negotiation. The grading of attitudinal meaning compels students to take a stance and in the process they transform their existing frames of reference.

The interactive value of *wh*-questions speaks for itself because such questions are used primarily in interactive discourse where there is a specific addressee present to answer questions (Biber, 1988:105-106). Very significantly higher counts for contractions in student-centred texts signal the more informal nature of such texts, in which discourse participants might be said to be socially present. Very significantly higher counts for possibility modals signal the accommodation of multiple perspectives, a notion associated with the negotiation of solidarity. As has been mentioned (4.2.2.1), it was established that the adverbs *generally, probably, namely, today* and *simply* occur with very significantly higher counts in student-centred texts. Again the use of these adverbs can be directly linked to principles underlying transformative learning theory.

As was reported (cf. 4.2.2.1), the use of the adverb *today* indicates that present-day issues are addressed – a phenomenon which can closely be associated with an acknowledgement of the student's presence in the discourse. The use of adverbs such as *generally* and *probably* can directly be associated with the accommodation of alternative viewpoints. By its very nature, the adverb *namely* is used to introduce a short list of concepts or items (e.g. *namely to describe and understand; namely to regulate societal order and well being*). It is associated with the

emphasising (and thus grading) of something and relates to stance taking. The adverb *simply* is associated with generalised, informal discourse and therefore it also relates strongly to interactive discourses. It must, in other words, be concluded that the association of adverbs with the notions of student-centredness relates largely to the potential of adverbs to signal immediacy, tentativeness and generalised interaction.

(b) The social presence of discourse participants in texts: significant indicators

It was mentioned above (cf. 5.1.2.1) that the research results of the present study (cf. 4.1 and 4.2) suggest that the pronoun *it*, causative subordination (*because*), discourse particles (*now, anyhow, anyway, anyways, well*) and indefinite pronouns (*anybody, anyone, anything, everybody, everyone, everything, nobody, none, nothing, nowhere, somebody, someone, something*) occur significantly more often in student-centred as opposed to content-centred texts. It was reported (cf. 3.4) that these features are associated with conversations, that is, with discourses taking place in situations where the discourse participants are in direct physical contact. As conversations take place under time constraints, that is, propositions are not necessarily carefully considered and edited, the language of conversations is often relatively vague and informal. Thus, the association of these features with the social presence of discourse participants in a discourse will be obvious.

5.1.2.2 Student-centred texts, the expression of attitude and solidarity negotiation

It has been emphasised (cf. 2.1.1) that educationalists such as Baumgartner (2001), Daloz (1999), Freire (1968) and Taylor (2000) suggest that human experiences are a series of psychic events consisting of anxieties and fears, disruptions, mistakes and conflict and that transformative learning occurs when such experiences are encountered. It has, on the other hand, been mentioned (cf. 2.2) that linguists are generally in agreement that the expressions of emotion or attitude establish contact between discourse participants, but that it also has the potential to create disparity between them. Thus, the expression of attitude should be facilitated in such a way that solidarity between discourse participants is not jeopardized (e.g. White, 1998, 2002, 2003; Martin, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2002; Biber, 1988; Chafe, 1982, 1985, 1986; Halliday, 1985; Rounds, 1987; Stubbs, 1986; Tannen, 1982, 1985 and Westby, 1985).

Quite specific contributions made by the present study are its finding that the follow mechanisms are regularly used to negotiate solidarity and establish contact between lecturers

and students in distance education texts: the use of the private verbs *feel* and *find*; the attributive use of the first person pronoun singular; the significance of the use of the private verbs *think* and *consider*; and the use of exclusive *we*. In this regard, the study showed that the use of the private verbs *feel* and *find* play a special role, as they regularly collocate with the first person singular pronoun and with values of ATTITUDE (e.g. *It makes me feel good; I felt unsettled; I felt like going crazy; I find it challenging; I find it interesting and/or beneficial; I find it somewhat overwhelming and even confusing*).

The present study also contributes new understanding of the ways in which academic writers manage to frequently use values of ATTITUDE while at the same time maintaining solidarity with students. In this regard, I found that a key strategy of lecturers is to include case studies in the text. This affords them the opportunity to inscribe other characters in the text and such characters are usually hypothetical, non-authoritative people with whom most students will be able to associate. Lecturers then attribute the ATTITUDE expressed to these characters. Of particular interest in such instances is the role played by the first person singular pronoun to personalise texts while simultaneously serving as a reference to an attributed source (e.g. *Melanie: I hate doing assignments ...; Nico: After a year I was bored; Student 2: I doubt whether [it] will ever be possible*). In other words, lecturers inscribe hypothetical characters into the text and project certain feelings onto the characters by letting them relate their feelings in personal terms. The result is that the text is personalised, yet the lecturer's relationship with the student is not compromised.

I found that the private verbs *think* and *consider* play an important role in inscribing ATTITUDE in a text while at the same time protecting solidarity. These verbs occur significantly more often in study guides developed after a student-centred approach to teaching was adopted. These verbs often collocate with values of ATTITUDE, and they present the coding of ATTITUDE as tentative, as in: *I think I am an important link...; I think humankind will be worse off; I consider myself as using my anthropology background to solve problems; ... whoever you consider not to be important*). The tentativeness helps to prevent solidarity being put at risk. As content-centred texts display very significantly lower counts for private verbs and personal pronouns (cf. Table 4.4), it must be deduced that there is not only little attempt from the side of lecturers to establish contact and negotiate solidarity with their students in such guides.

It has been mentioned (cf. 3.4.1 and 4.1.2.2) that Rounds (1987) established that in academic discourse the first person plural pronoun can be used in such a way that the student is either

included in the reference (e.g. *below we have seen that ...*) or excluded from the reference (e.g. *It is our opinion at Unisa that* ...). Tang (1999) also notes that *we* has the potential to be used along a cline from being personal to impersonal. Fortanet (2003: 65) suggests that 'teachers use inclusive *we* in an effort of co-operation with the students and 'exclusive we' to create a distance between the speaker-teacher and the audience-students'.

In this regard, the present study makes a specific contribution in that it determined that the pronoun *we* is used very significantly more often with exclusive reference in study guides developed before a student-centred approach to teaching was adopted. The implication is that pronoun use is more impersonal in such studies. Thus, there is less contact between lecturers and students in such study guides. Very significantly lower counts for exclusive *we* in study guides developed after a student-centred approach to teaching was adopted, suggest that pronoun use is more personal in such guides. Thus, there is more contact between lecturers and students in these guides.

Of relevance in this regard is Walkerdine's (1997) observation that the rather ideologically lopsided tradition of rationalism, which sets affect against cognition, and emotion and feeling against reason and logic, is a fallacy. In her opinion, reasoning is an affective state or process (you either like it or dislike it) and all cognition, because it is embodied, is necessarily also affective. As a result, there is a direct correlation between our feeling and our cognition. Thus, it is understandable that in student-centred texts, the lecturer's aim is to build interpersonal relationships with students and to address students' affective mode of psyche (Heron, 1992). Directly associated with this contact are the textual identities that emerge for lecturers and students, which are dealt with in the next section.

5.1.2.3 Student-centred texts and identity development

It has been mentioned (cf. 2.2.5.3) that Brooke (1991) is of the opinion that a person's identity is a social construct which depends on surrounding circumstances and the social relationships in those circumstances. I have also mentioned (cf. 2.2.5.3) that Tang (1999) extends this view by saying that writers can be sensitised to the possibilities of inventing their identities for themselves through their writing by selecting a particular role for themselves. In this regard, Tang points out that while academic writing has traditionally been thought of as impersonal prose, academic writers need not be absent in their texts. She (Tang, 2000) cautions academics not to adopt a high level of authority within the text as this leads to students feeling

disempowered. In other words, knowledge is not mental structures acquired by the learner, but a process of affective participation and interaction. Thus knowing is entwined with doing and feeling.

I consider these observations and also White's (2002) conclusion that the use of different evaluative resources contributes to the construction of authorial personae when I draw conclusions about the personae developed for students and lecturers in student-centred and in content-centred texts. Below, I first discuss my earlier findings about the identity developed for students in the two types of study guides and then I focus on the identity developed for teachers.

(a) Student identity in student-centred as opposed to content-centred texts

Research results obtained in the testing of Hypothesis 1 (Table 4.4) show that the collocation of private verbs and second person pronouns occur very significantly more often in student-centred texts (cf. Tables 4.19 and 4.22). This is illustrated by the examples presented in 4.3.2, such as the following: *... you might have felt a bit exposed; What have you found to be the discerning factors ... ?; Do you think that Bodley's argument .. is relevant to the situation in South Africa?* Such examples show that students are presented as able individuals, who are actively involved in the learning process in student-centred guides. Moreover, Table 4.9 shows that *wh*-questions occur very significantly more often in the new than old guides. Included are questions such as the following: *Why, would you say, is this an issue in South Africa?; What is your opinion on the reintroduction of the death penalty in our country?; How do you personally experience being ... a gay person, elderly person?*   Questions such as these emphasise that knowledge is presented as tentative in student-centred guides and the student has a say in the meaning-making process in that his or her opinions and feelings are accommodated.

The data presented in Appendix D show that in student-centred texts, an appeal is made on the students' capacity to feel (through the expression of positive and negative values of AFFECT), on their capacity to make judgements (through the expression of positive and negative values of JUDGEMENT), and on their ability to appreciate things (through expression of positive and negative values of APPRECIATION). Based on these findings it can be concluded that in student-centred texts different modes of the student's psyche are addressed. The result is that the student is positioned as someone who is an independent human being, who has the potential

to evaluate the world in a variety of ways and who resultantly has a role to play in the meaning-making process.

The research data acquired by analysing adverbs (cf. 4.2.2.1) also show that the identity created for students in the new guides is of individuals living in a specific reality which impacts on their experiences. As a result, the new study guides accommodate a variety of perspectives on things as is demonstrated by the use of adverbs such as *generally*, *mainly, mostly, largely,* and *probably*, which signal that other viewpoints are entertained.

In contrast, content-centred texts position the student as someone who has to accept the reality presented in study units about what existing viewpoints suggest – their own opinion is rarely asked for. Moreover, the subject material is discussed in an uncontentious manner as if no or few alternative viewpoints could be taken. These findings flow from the research results reported in Table 4.4, which shows that private verbs and second person pronouns occur very significantly less frequently in these older guides. Moreover, Tables 4.20 and 4.23 show that second person pronouns rarely collocate with private verbs in such guides. In other words, students are rarely projected as agents of private verbs in these guides. *Wh*-questions also occur very significantly less frequently and, as shown in Appendix D, values of ATTITUDE are less frequently expressed.

The data presented in Table 4.10 show that counts of demonstrative pronouns are significantly higher in old Unisa study guides. Examples presented in 4.1.2.2 show that such demonstratives occur in content-centred guides in examples such as the following: *The bureaucracy. This is a structure ... ; Environment: This concerns those institutions or forces outside the organisation ...; Re-engineering work processes: These have to do with how things would be done if ...; Flexible manufacturing systems: These make possible the integration of computer-aided design ...; Behavioural theories: These theories propose that ...* In these examples the focus is on the subject matter rather than matters concerning the student personally.

The adverbs of content-centred guides also show that the immediate reality of students is rarely acknowledged in such guides. Instead, place adverbs such as *above* and *below* are used to refer to portions of the text (e.g. *Point 2 above relates to the previously discussed theory ...; See Lecture 4 below*). The adverb *briefly*, which is used to indicate how the subject content is presented, also occurs frequently (e.g. *We have ... briefly explained what a problem-solving*

team is; *We define it <u>briefly</u> as* ...).

Thus, the identity developed for students in the older study guides is mainly of passive, impersonal, largely unemotional bystanders to whom pre-existing facts (meanings) are presented without necessarily being related to the student's contemporary reality. The impersonal cloak with which students are covered in content-centred guides is also reflected in the finding that values of AFFECT are rarely expressed (cf. Appendix D). When attitude is expressed, it is mainly in terms of APPRECIATION, and even then, such values rarely address students' potential reactions.

Lemke (1990, 1995, 1997, 1998) associates the expression of attitude with an underlying ideology and expresses the view that in science texts students are presented as dependent, passive observers in the learning process as part of an underlying ideology to constrain the overall rate of social and political change. The result is that students who do not find corresponding identities within the limited scope of identities introduced in the texts, become alienated from the study process. He says:

> We construe this alienation as failure, and use the 'failure' to justify the great disparities ... that characterize our present social and economic order. We justify these restrictions on young adults with a belief in their inherent incapacity, a belief whose consequences, as with any ideology, seem to support the belief. (Lemke, 1997:52)

(b) Lecturer identity in student-centred as opposed to content-centred texts

The research results of the present study (cf. 5.1.2.1, 5.1.2.2 and 5.1.2.3) show that through their teaching practices lecturers constitute identities for themselves. The identity lecturers create for themselves in student-centred texts is of learning facilitators, whose aims at liberating and transforming students' culturally-determined perspectives in order for them to become empowered to resist oppression, transcend limited cultural rules and images, and assert their own voices. In the process of developing teaching texts, lecturers create meaning and reflect on the meaning in an intentional manner. However, they do so with limited projection of a fixed reality and with careful consideration of the instability of facts and accommodate alternative viewpoints.

During this process the lecturer 'lays down a path while walking' (Varela, 1989:49). In other words, in the process of developing a humanised, emancipated identity for students, lecturers implicitly present themselves as willing to shed some of their academic power and being prepared to present themselves as mentors. These impressions are confirmed by the mainly non-authorial use of the first person singular pronoun to refer to an entity presented in a case study, so that lecturers do not inscribe their own egos in the student-centred guides (Chafe, 1985; Biber, 1988). The non-authorial nature of lecturers' presence in student-centred guides is also emphasised by the inclusive use of the first person pronoun plural and more frequent use of values of ATTITUDE. The data presented in Appendix E, which show that values of Appraisal are often attributed to outside sources or entertained as only one of a variety of possible options, confirm that the evaluative positions conveyed by student-centred texts are constructed as more or less compatible with the anticipated positions of prospective students. The implication is that lecturers present themselves as willing to enter into negotiation with students. Thus, the identity created for lecturers in student-centred guides is of 'care-givers' (Henderson, 1979) and of 'learning consultants' (Coughlan, 1980), who do not simply position students as inferior beings in need of teaching (Tang, 2000).

In content-centred texts the identity of lecturers is manifested in a monolithic dominant ideology, which sees learning as a process of knowledge transfer from the privileged to the not-so-privileged. From such a perspective teachers see students as passive, homogeneous non-critical beholders of a dominant ideology which has to be learned. The identity created for lecturers in these guides is closely related to the conclusions reached about the students' social absence in content-centred guides (cf. 5.1.2.1, 5.1.2.2 and 5.1.2.3), about the neglect of relationship-building in content-centred guides, and about the identity created for students as passive entities. Implicitly, the identity developed for lecturers here is of authoritative subject specialists, who remain largely faceless. The first person singular pronoun is rarely used and the first person plural pronoun is often used with exclusive reference to subject specialists, or to people in general. Tang (1999:S27) points out that when *we* is used to refer to people in general (e.g. *We know that English is one of the dominant languages of the world*), the first person plural pronoun 'far from giving the reader information about the writer, effectively reduces the writer to a non-entity'.

Because there are fewer examples of propositions being presented in a dialogically expansive manner (cf. Appendix E), content-oriented lecturers seem to be less willing to negotiate the realities of their subject field with students. As a result, the identity the lecturers develop is of

people whose knowledge or expertise in a particular field gives them the right to control or command others (Tang, 2000). However, in the process they hide their faces. It is with regard to texts such as these that Lemke (1990) observes that they do not help students construct identities in relation to their practices, they simply display the practices and so tend to discourage most students from identifying with them.

5.1.2.4 Conclusion

The discussions presented above suggest that an analysis of Unisa study guides implies that in a student-centred approach to teaching there is a spontaneous interaction between interaction, participation, feeling and cognition. As culturally diverse positions are accommodated and facilitated, both lecturers and students get transformed. In other words, as lecturers allow students to participate in the meaning making process, new unpredictable possibilities for thought and action appear and old choices gradually become no longer viable in the unfolding system dynamics. Thus knowledge flows as the product of a dynamic system and is a set of understandings constructed collectively.

5.1.3 Informing the development of distance learning texts by considering their key linguistic characteristics

The third research question of this study relates to the applied aim. It seeks an answer to the question:

> How can the future development of student-centred texts for distance learning be informed by shedding light on key linguistic characteristics of such texts?

The answer to this research question flows from the data obtained in seeking answers to the previous two research questions. Of relevance are the conclusions reached above (cf. 5.1.1.4 and 5.1.2.4). Below I link these conclusions with the applied aim of the study.

I have reported (cf. 5.1.1.4) that the analytical framework adopted in the present study allows for: (a) a corpus-based analysis and quantitative assessment of the relative 'involvement' features of distance education texts; and (b) an analysis of the 'involvement' features of such texts from a 'semantic' point of view in terms of the effect they will have on solidarity negotiation (Martin, 2000). In this regard, the framework affords academic departments the opportunity to have the discourse of some of their study guides analysed and assessed in order to help

determine the extent to which the department has aligned its paradigm of teaching with the policies prescribed by the national government of South Africa.

Within the context of distance education the findings of the present study suggest that there is a direct relationship between the language features of a teaching text and the learning theory the author of the text advances. Luckett and Chick (1998) demonstrate the usefulness of critical discourse analysis in informing curriculum development at university level. The present study, in similar fashion, demonstrates the value of linguistic analyses in shedding light on matters of general concern across academic discipline borders. Moreover, it shows that there is a direct relationship between the language features of a text and the ideological paradigm underlying the texts. Thus, the research findings of the present study affirm the general usefulness of linguistic analysis in uncovering the underlying ideology of texts.

5.1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion it could be said that the analytical model used in the present study allowed me to determine what the linguistic mechanisms are by means of which developers of distance education teaching texts can: (a) inscribe the social presence of students in the text; (b) develop personal relationships between lecturers and students; (c) present students as independent human beings, who have the potential to evaluate the world in a variety of ways and who have a role to play in the meaning-making process; and (d) present lecturers as learning consultants, who are prepared to mentor students.

5.2 LIMITATIONS AND TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are two broad areas of limitation to the present study, and correspondingly, two areas that could be extended by means of further research. The first area of limitation relates to the study guides chosen for analysis, and the second to limitations brought about by the present study's research design and analytical approach.

It has been mentioned (cf. 3.2) that the courses analysed were chosen specifically because the new guides were developed in collaboration with staff members of the Unisa ICLD, whose task is to support academic departments in implementing the learning theories underlying an outcomes-based, student-centred approach to teaching. Thus, the conclusions reached about the positive directional shift towards student-centredness that occurred at Unisa, do not

necessarily apply to study guides developed without the help of the ICLD. In this regard, a random choice of Unisa study guides would perhaps have yielded less positive results about the relative student-centredness of newer Unisa study guides.

Another limitation posed by the study guides chosen for analysis pertains to findings being based on analyses of study guides from the field of human sciences only. Thus, some further research will have to be done to determine if student- centredness translates similarly in guides from economic and management sciences or natural sciences, for instance. However, Hubbard's (2001) finding that a new study guide from the Faculty of Development Administration was more 'involved' than its older counterpart, suggests that similar trends may well be observed across discipline fields.

If it is considered that more than 3500 courses are offered in the field of human sciences at Unisa, conclusions reached on the basis of an analysis of only six guides seem almost trivial. However, the educational and linguistic foundations have been delineated in some detail and conclusions drawn derive mainly from statistically interpreted data, so the consistent move towards student-centredness that was observed can be taken as a reliable indication of change in the teaching ethos at Unisa.

From a more strictly linguistic point of view, the limitations of the present study relate mainly to the exploration of: the reference of personal pronouns, implicit Appraisal, evaluation through nouns and adjectives, and the field orientation of Appraisal values. I elaborate on these notions below.

5.2.1 Personal pronouns

A quantitative exploration of the personal pronouns of student-centred study guides revealed that such guides had very significantly more personal pronouns than content-centred guides. Based on the research results, conclusions were reached about the use of second person plural pronouns with inclusive reference in student-centred texts. Conclusions were similarly reached about the use of the first person singular pronoun in situations where values of Appraisal are attributed to sources inscribed in student-centred texts by means of case studies.

However, more thorough investigations need to be conducted into the use of personal pronouns in student-centred texts. Of relevance in this regard is Fortanet's (2003:61) observation that

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the pronoun *we* 'has a wide range of referents that go from large groups of people to merely the speaker. The discourse functions of this pronoun are also numerous and they seem to fit into two categories: representation and metadiscourse'. Thus a more in-depth analysis of the reference of *we* in student-centred texts will shed more light on the extent to which lecturers indeed use this pronoun in inclusive fashion.

More research also needs to be done on the use of the first person singular pronoun in student-centred texts. The present study found that although this pronoun is used very significantly more often in student-centred than in content-centred texts, it is rarely used to refer to the lecturer or author of the study guide. This could be because the study guides analysed often have multiple authors. However, Tang (1999) identifies six identities behind the first person pronoun in academic writing: I as general representative of humankind, I as guide through a text, I as architect of a text, I as recounter or reporter of a process, I as opinion-holder and I as originator or conceptualiser of ideas. As each of these identities behind the use of I has implications regarding the power of the referent, it should, in student-centred texts, impact on the relationship between lecturers and students. Thus, more research needs to be done on the identities behind the use of I in student-centred guides.

5.2.2 Implicit Appraisal

The interpersonal effect of values of Appraisal was explored in the present study, particularly because a quantitative exploration of such values was made possible by establishing a relationship between some 'involvement' features and the values analysed in Appraisal. Thus the present study was able to provide an overview of the interpersonal style, the construction of personas for lecturers and the modelling of an intended audience. However, the disadvantage of analysing the Appraisal values of texts by exploring such values in terms of 'involvement' is that implicit values of Appraisal (cf. 2.2.4) through, for example, grammatical metaphor (Martin, 1995) and inference (White, 2002) are overlooked. As a result, I could not account for the interplay between explicit and implicit values of Appraisal.

Such implied Appraisal poses some theoretical and analytical problems in that they could be seen to be of a pragmatic rather than semantic nature (White, 2002) and are best left as a topic for further research. In this regard, shorter stretches of text would have to be analysed to determine if the implicit Appraisal values of student-centred texts corroborated the findings of the present study on the interpersonal effect of the explicit Appraisgal features of such texts.

The effect of both explicit and implicit appraisal on learning could also be explored by conducting focus-group interviews and assessments with distance education students. For instance, such interviews could be conducted to determine: how students respond to attitudinal language (particularly the use of affect); if students indeed experience that the expression of affect impacts on their relationship with their lecturers; and if this improved relationship has a positive effect on their learning. Focus group assessments could also be conducted to compare the learning outcomes achieved by students who used content-centred texts with the learning outcomes achieved by students who used student-centred texts.

Heese (1993) demonstrates the usefulness of such focus-group assessments in empirical research in distance education settings. She reports how assessments conducted with Unisa students and lecturers shed light on the impact that a self-study reading course, developed by her, had on the participants' performance. The insights she acquired from these assessments allowed her to inform the course development process at Unisa with a focus on the enhancement of reading competence.

5.2.3 Evaluation through nouns and adjectives

Another shortcoming of the present study is that evaluation through nouns and adjectives was not explored because the corpora analysed were not tagged. Biber associates these two features negatively with texts with a high informational density. In the context of the present study it could be said that such features are associated with content centredness. However, it would be interesting to explore how evaluation through these features differs between student-centred and content-centred texts.

5.2.4 The field orientation of Appraisal values

It was mentioned (cf. 4.2.2.1) that in analysing academic research reports of novice and experienced writers, Hood (2004) found that there is a systematic difference between the entities evaluated by novice and experienced researchers. Hood refers to this phenomenon as the 'field orientation' of values of Appraisal and differentiates between the subject field or research domain and activities performed by the researcher as fields towards which Appraisal values can be orientated. Hood's findings show that different values of Appraisal can be

associated with the different fields. In similar fashion to Hood, I also found that Appraisal values can be orientated towards different 'fields' or domains: the subject content or the students.

My research findings also suggest that Appraisal values used in evaluations of the subject field differ from those used in evaluations concerning the students. For instance, research results reported earlier (cf. 4.2) reveal that values of Appraisal often collocate with personal pronouns (e.g. *... friends that* you feel comfortable *with,* I hated *my work*). Such collocations occur very significantly less frequently in content-centred guides. Thus, it is my opinion that the Appraisal values used in student-centred texts are not only oriented towards the subject field, but often also towards the student and his or her reality (or a reality the student can associate with). In contrast, the field orientation of Appraisal values used in content-centred texts is by and large oriented towards the subject field (e.g. *The* most comprehensive study, *This is probably the* most important study unit). However, as my focus was on the frequency and nature of the Appraisal expressed rather than on the field orientation of the appraisal, further research is needed to clarify the difference in the field orientation of student-centred as opposed to content-centred texts.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The adoption of a new teaching policy in South Africa, which advocates a shift from an objectivistic, content-centred teaching approach towards an outcomes-based, student-centred one, was a major stimulus in my decision to explore the linguistic characteristics of student-centred as opposed to content-centred texts. The main focus of the study was on how transformative principles of teaching are realised in the discourse of distance education teaching texts.

A brief overview of some of the most relevant pedagogic perspectives underlying the notion of student-centredness was given. The notion of student-centredness was then interpreted in linguistic terms and in this regard, the study integrated Biber's (1988) construal of 'involvement' with the insights advanced in Appraisal Theory. As a result, the focus of the study was on interactive, affective and attitudinal language.

The discourse of different sets of distance education texts, developed before and after a student-centred approach to teaching was adopted, was then analysed and compared. The findings have indeed shed light on a variety of linguistic characteristics of student-centred texts,

thus providing insights into how transformative principles of teaching make themselves felt in print-based distance education teaching texts.