Using Discourse Analysis Scales to Encourage Thoughtful Revision in a Kinneavy-Framed Advanced Composition Course

John Hagaman

In a recent survey of 374 advanced composition instructors, Michael Hogan concludes: "Empases in the courses appear to be largely traditional and, to a degree, repetitive of those things we do in freshman composition." 1 Hogan's conclusion is surprising because research in composing has led to practices that can make the advanced course truly advanced. I refer, for example, to heuristics, protocol analysis, the discourse matrix method of analyzing textual structure, and sentence-combining. Not all aspects of composing have been examined with equivalent intensity, however, and according to Nancy Sommers, revision lacks even a single theoretical study. At present its "principles" unknown. 2 In the same article, Sommers observes that most basic texts describe revision simplistically as a final "cleaning up" act rather than as part of the on-going composing process.

Though little study may have been given to revision, advanced composition instructors can help students revise thoughtfully by placing them in situations in which revision matters. Students become audiences for each other's writing in small groups, and through supportive response as well as questioning of ambiguities, they are encouraged to re-examine their drafts and revise before submitting the paper for teacher evaluation. When audience response is successful, students are often motivated to rethink a paper, resulting in the revision of whole sections of it. I would like to describe a complementary method, use of discourse analysis scales, that provides advanced writers with ample data on which to make decisions about revision.

First, however, it is necessary to explain how Kinneavy's theory frames my course and affects the sequence of discourse analysis scales. 3 I use aspects of Kinneavy's theory as described in A Theory of Discourse for at least three reasons. First, Kinneavy provides students a comprehensive view of writing by describing four kinds of discourse, each dependent upon aim: expressive (focus on the writer), reference (focus on a reality), persuasive (focus on the audience), and literary (focus on the text). Second, he illustrates each discourse type amply, providing teachers a range of examples for classroom use. Third, and most important for a course which seeks to view revision as a thoughtful act, Kinneavy analyses the logic of each aim. Although reading accounts of logic doesn't enable students to write logically, awareness can make students better readers of the logic of each other's prose, and sometimes, of their own. While critics of Kinneavy say his aims oversimplify and are based on analysis of written products rather than on works in progress where writers' intentions can be examined, 4 I find writing improves when students keep in mind a central, yet not exclusive aim to guide their writing strategies. (Kinneavy himself at least partially acknowledges multiplicity of aim for he writes, "In each case there is a question of emphasis on one element, but this does not at all imply exclusion of the others." 5 )

The Course

The course I designed begins with expressive writing and proceeds to persuasive and reference discourse. (Literary discourse is excluded because of the brevity of a one-semester course and the needs of management majors who make up half the enrollment of each advanced section.) While Kinneavy acknowledges a psychological ordering of aims in which expressive writing might come first,
he begins *A Theory of Discourse* with reference discourse because of its full treatment of scientific logic and concludes with expressive. (p. 75) I begin with expressive writing to emphasize writers and the selves they create in writing, an on-going concern in the course. In addition, concentration on the writer, followed by attention to audience, underscores the rhetorical situation in which discourse occurs and makes writers attend to context in writing reference discourse later. Specifically, there are eight major assignments in this progression, seven of which are accompanied by sets of relevant discourse analysis scales. After freewriting exercises and a journal assignment, students write their first paper, a personal narrative or autobiography. Then a letter of application and resume are assigned to provide a bridge to persuasive writing: both the creation of a self and the satisfaction of an audience are crucial here. An additional correspondence assignment (good news, denial or decline, and persuasive request situations) keeps attention on audience and is followed by an essay in which writers persuade a general audience to accept their views of a controversial issue in their discipline. Next, a proposal is assigned that bridges persuasive and reference discourse by requiring clear-cut analysis and conveyance of information, but with a persuasive edge. The proposal describes a student's final writing project, most often a formal report or journal article, and is followed by three reference assignments: (1) exploration of a problem, (2) identification and clear conveyance of information needed in the problem's solution, and (3) scientific proving of an hypothesis that helps solve the problem.

**Discourse Analysis Scales**

What are discourse analysis scales? They are continuums that identify relevant semantic, syntactic, and rhetorical features of an assigned discourse and provide descriptive and evaluative information of use to writers in revision. Below are four sample continuums:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Formal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONA</strong></td>
<td>Describe the informal and formal elements:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ignored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUDIENCE NEEDS</strong></td>
<td>Who are the audiences intended? What are their needs? Which needs are ignored?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodic dominate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Loose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SENTENCE PATTERNS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich in connotation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Denotative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DICTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

One advantage of the scales is that they provide a writer with specific and relatively complete information about a particular paper. Scales can be designed to describe particular features that follow from the central aim of a given piece of discourse. The resulting data is more objectively conveyed that responses such as "You failed to..." or "You neglected to..." A second advantage of the scales is that they help students read more critically, if their perceptions are accurate.
Design and Use of the Scales

Designing continuums and leading students in their successful use are two necessary tasks for teachers interested in the scales. I have arranged continuums for each assignment according to features of logic, organization, and style, classifications borrowed from Kinneavy who uses them to characterize each discourse aim. An important consideration is how many scales should be used with each assignment? The number varies from assignment to assignment with thoroughness being one concern and avoidance of overquantification being another. Mine range from nine to twenty, and recently, I have been reducing them. Each teacher should experiment to determine the appropriate amount for specific assignments. As I have reduced the number of scales, I have added non-scale questions to provide readers and writers additional information. For example, writers are asked to identify specific intentions they had in writing that might influence readers, and readers are asked to locate a paper’s key idea, describe expectations the key idea creates, and identify a major strength of the paper and an aspect of it in need of revision.

With students I use the term reader response sheets instead of scales to lessen their scientific sound. The sheets are distributed at the time an assignment is made and are applied in class to sample papers. After students are familiar with each continuum and the variations of numbers, they write papers and apply the continuums to their own drafts. Next, students exchange papers in groups of four, and after completing reader response sheets for each paper overnight, they discuss them as a group. Because the scales take time to complete and I want students to take them seriously, I collect and grade them based on completeness and insight. The grades are averaged and count part of the semester grade. In addition, I complete reader response sheets for each paper and return all copies to writers.

Reader Response Sheets

To illustrate the scales as they appear on reader response sheets, I include paired features which form the basis of each continuum in three assignments. I recommend teachers interested in using this approach select from the features or create their own, experimenting with assignments and their students.

EXPRESSIVE

( A personal narrative or autobiography )

STYLE

Persona

:central/peripheral
:informal/formal
:optimistic/pessimistic
:seems authentic/unauthentic
:aware/unaware of audience

Language

:idolect/standard
:connotative/denotative
:frequent/infrequent use of images
:1st/3rd person pronouns
:frequent/infrequent use of superlative adjectives and adverbs
LOGIC

Apparent/not apparent
Predominance of intuitive or associative logic/
induction or deduction
Emotionally valued goal evident/not evident

ORGANIZATION

Patterns apparent/not apparent

The expressive scales immediately direct attention to style, then to logic and organization. While Kinneavy describes stylistic features last, I place them first to focus attention on the writer's persona. Persona provides writers a means of understanding the various effects of available language options. I selected persona instead of self or authentic-I, some of the terms Kinneavy uses, since it applies to each aim. For example, if a writer decided not to create an authentic-I in a persuasive paper, but an assumed identity appropriate to the paper's context, persona would still apply. Under style, both the persona and language used to create it are considered. Scales also include two kinds of expressive logic which Kinneavy identifies, emotive and conceptual. Kinneavy writes, "Whatever thought processes are going on in the expressive components of discourse or in discourse which is predominantly expressive, they should not be reduced to a simply conceptual or simply emotive component. The logic of expressive discourse must embody some emotional and some intellectual components..." (p. 421) While students keep journals and freewriting, only the more public form of expressive writing is shared and scales applied.

PERSUASIVE

( A controversial issue in the writer's discipline )

LOGIC

Ethical appeal (persona)

:satisfies/ignores audience needs
:shows good will/antagonistic to audience
:knowledgeable/ignorant of subject
:trustworthy/untrustworthy
:formal/informal

Logical appeal

:predominance of intuitive or associative logic/induction or deduction
:deduction: conclusions follow/don't follow premises
:induction: conclusions follow/don't follow
:induction: conclusion established adequately/inadequately from data
:fallacy-free/faulty
:seems plausible/implausible
Emotional appeal
: appropriate/inappropriate

Patterns apparent/not apparent
Effective/ineffective handling of features of
traditional or Rogerian form

STYLE

Natural/contrived diction
Clear/ambiguous language
Concrete/abstract language
Vivid/trite figures
Suitable/unsuitable readability index
Correct/incorrect usage

The persuasive scales continue to focus attention on persona (here through the ethical appeal), but the persona's awareness and satisfaction of audience needs has priority. In addition, logic and organization are more fully developed than in expressive writing with attention directed to both emotive and conceptual logic, thus applying the logics discussed in expressive writing. Rather than use the Aristotelian terms example and enthymeme as Kinneavy does, I use the closely related induction and deduction, believing the distinction between them is one of degree, science being more rigorous than persuasion which may approximate logic at times. In addition, induction and deduction transfer to scientific discourse and lessen the technical vocabulary required of students. In effect, my arrangement of continuums illustrates the overlappings between aims that I call to student attention. Rather than compartmentalize each aim which critics of Kinneavy claim he does, I want students to examine where features of one aim might function successfully in another context. Compartmentalization is also lessened by such continuums as the one on fallacies. While Kinneavy insists persuasive discourse such as advertisement rightly contains fallacies, other forms of persuasion may not. The continuums allow students to assess various kinds of persuasion and determine how successfully specific features are managed in light of the rhetorical situation in which they appear. Finally, the reader response sheet asks readers to consider classical and/or Rogerian persuasive arrangement (Kinneavy describes only the former) and style.

REFERENCE
(Scientific proving of an hypothesis)

LOGIC
Predominance of intuitive or associative logic/induction or deduction

Induction
:a adequate/inadequate amount of data to support generalizations
:relevant/irrelevant variety of data
Deduction

: logical/illogical

ORGANIZATION

Patterns apparent/not apparent
Adequate/inadequate handling of features of
basic scientific form

STYLE

Appropriate/inappropriate persona
Satisfies/ignores audience needs
Loose/periodic sentences
Jargon clarifies/obscures
Compressed/wordy technique
Concrete/abstract diction
Denotative/connotative meaning
3rd/1st person pronouns
Correct/incorrect usage

The scientific scales begin asking readers to characterize the discourse's logic overall, noting both untuitive and conceptual logics as established earlier, and then induction and deduction. Features of organization are considered next, followed by scales that focus on the paper's persona, the satisfaction of audience needs, and clarity of expression. The former two concerns were central in expressive and persuasive discourse, respectively, and you still contribute in this case, but to a much lesser extent. The features used in the scientific continuaums are fairly close to those Kinneavy identifies.

Over the last three semesters the scales have encouraged more writers to revise than in previous semesters, and I have been more satisfied with revisions. Students like them because they pinpoint problem areas on which writers can profitably concentrate. I like them because while they don't appear to deter writers from drafting entirely new papers (in fact, I've seen more total revisions the past three semesters than in others), they often encourage revision of specific problem areas rather than superficial and indiscriminate revision of an entire draft. Many students also feel they are better readers of prose after the course. For example, last summer's students averaged a 4.3 rating on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most positive response to the question, "To what extent did the course help you become a more critical reader of prose?"

Presently, I am analyzing the reader response sheets of a current advanced class (those of students, myself, and an experienced teacher not teaching the course) in hopes of understanding better such questions as (1) In a semester course, to what degree can students improve their analysis and assessment of others' writing? their own writing? (2) In what discourse aims do students show greatest improvement? and (3) To what extent do reader response sheets help writers revise their work? Which students are helped most and in which aims?

If teachers lack sufficient knowledge to teach principles of revision directly, we can at least provide advanced writers with contexts in which revision might occur and give informed responses to their writing. Discourse analysis scales are one way of providing these responses, and Kinneavy's A Theory of Discourse, one source for determining specific features of assigned discourse.

Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York
NOTES


8 For readers interested in the other scales, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the author.

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