

Coping with Interdisciplinarity: Postgraduate Student Writing in Business Studies.

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education, University of
Technology, Sydney in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy.**

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The original idea of venturing into a research of this nature came to my mind while I was engaged in research for my Master's degree on the dramatic significance of non-verbal aspects of communication in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama at the University of New South Wales. My research was truly interdisciplinary, yoking the resources of English literature with those of linguistics and communication studies. Peripheral to these, of course, were interdisciplines such as women's studies, cultural studies, and critical theory. I first realized the huge potential of interdisciplinary studies while pursuing my studies in TESOL at the University of Technology, Sydney.

It is also significant to note here that I have been a working student, employed at the Sydney International Campus, Central Queensland University, in the capacity of a lecturer/tutor, Faculty of Informatics and Communication. Obviously there were immense advantages in associating myself with the academic community as well as the student population, especially my students, while being steeped in this research. For example, I was able to witness a significant number of difficulties encountered by students while coping with interdisciplinary knowledges in their diverse writing tasks.

I am grateful to the University of Technology, Sydney, for having granted me a five-year faculty scholarship for full-time doctoral research.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis critically investigates how student writers cope with interdisciplinarity in business studies at postgraduate level. The corpus of knowledge student writers have to grapple with today seems to distance itself from the traditional mono-disciplinary contexts. Texts as well as the students who construct them are being continuously informed and conditioned by new values and imperatives of relatively new discursive practices. Hence, student academic writing (henceforward ‘student writing’) especially at postgraduate level can be regarded as a complex academic endeavour where students have to take up multiple writing positions. Analyzing student texts against the backdrop of the enormous intertextual and interdiscursive resources pertaining to interdisciplinarity is a major component of this thesis.

Electivization of the curricula, on the other hand, while providing student writers with a wide range of choices, has created yawning gaps between what is commonly known as prior knowledge and what is yet to be learnt in the form of new knowledges. These epistemological considerations, i.e., how disciplinary knowledge is acquired, evaluated, contested, and strategically used also constitute an integral part of this research.

Also of importance in the above contexts are the often lengthy and generically diverse assessment tasks students are required to accomplish within specific deadlines. The nature and structure of assignment topics and assessment tasks have in the past two decades or so undergone tremendous changes owing in large measure to disciplinary as well as socio-economic imperatives. Student writing has several dimensions in terms of the mode of assessment, egg. examination-based, presentation-based, research-based, observation-based. This thesis, however, will focus on research-based writing tasks.

Based on the findings of this thesis, a paradigm called critical interdisciplinarity has been proposed in the concluding chapter of this thesis. Pedagogical and curricular considerations play a vital role in critical interdisciplinarity.

By virtue of their encyclopaedic dimensions, knowledge domains relating to academic interdisciplinarity in student writing lend themselves to a wide range of future research

projects. An attempt has been made here to critically explore only a tiny proportion of this inexhaustible repertoire of knowledge.

(Key words: *archival property, authorial interdiscursivity, coded reality, dependent interdiscipline, disciplinarity, discursive objective, discursive reality, discursive textuality, extra- disciplinarity, facilitative interdisciplinarity, independent interdisciplinarity, interdiscursivity, interdiscursive relational shift, interdiscursive semantic shift, intertextuality, microdisciplinary analysis, multiple-embedded interdisciplinarity, referential interdisciplinarity, soft technoculture, transgressive intertextuality*)

Note: The key words are explained in the glossary.

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