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Towards a framework for addressing diverse learners in international, English-medium, print-centred DE : a Zimbabwean case study

Thesis

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Towards a framework for addressing diverse learners in international, English-medium, print-centred DE: A Zimbabwean case study

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A thesis submitted to the Open University in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Institute of Educational Technology, School of Education.

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Dedication

To my mother Meta and son Chakib who taught me that their jigsaws are as important as mine.

Acknowledgements

I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them.

Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract

Towards a framework for addressing diverse learners in international, English-medium print-based DE: a Zimbabwean case study

This study examines an increasingly common distance learning context: where tertiary level and English–medium DE courses are produced, tutored and examined in one country but studied by learners in other countries and who have English as an additional language. Empirical work is drawn from a case-study of agricultural extension officers in disparate parts of Zimbabwe undertaking a professional development course which is produced and mainly tutored in the distant UK.

This long-distance cross-cultural writing relationship between academics and students serves as a basis for the examination of difficulties created by taken-for-granted educational practices embedded in the course structure and materials, particularly in relation to language and academic literacy. The study examines contemporary debates around internationalised learning, including cultural and linguistic imperialism and the desirability of locally-produced courses, and provides an insight into black Zimbabwean perspectives on them. It explores a variety of contextual issues including the wider significance of DE in a southern African context, gendered learning patterns, the linguistic repertoire of the students and their academic literacy background.

Drawing on grounded theory, discourse analysis, literacy as social practice and genre theories, this overseas research aims to provide the UK course producers with insight into some of the particularities of the Zimbabwean learning context and some of the learning and teaching resources which exists beyond their control and ambit. It is hoped that more multi-faceted image of some of their learners may help course producers consider more closely the differences and commonalities between course participants; it may challenge the normative pedagogy embedded in the course and prompt the producers to consider appropriate responses; it may raise the policy question of how to establish, within an asymmetrical donor-recipient situation, a north-south academic relationship of an emancipatory kind.

These aims spring from the conviction that as we move towards globalised educational contexts, dominated by market leaders, significant changes and improvements in educational practice are more likely to come about as a result of an emerging reflexivity on the part of the course producers. Learners and importers of course may not have much influence over such decisions.

Keywords: distance education, Zimbabwe, normative pedagogy, international learning contexts, developmental role, cross-cultural contexts, intercultural education, cultural imperialism, linguistic imperialism

CONTENTS

PART B RESEARCH APPROACH

PART D POLICY AND PEDAGOGY

List of tables

List of figures

Chapter 1 - Background

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter will introduce the origin of the PhD, provide a description of the research and outline the organising principle behind the chapters.

1.2 Origin of PhD Focus

My thesis develops a line of enquiry identified in an earlier report - 'The language needs of Commonwealth students studying at a distance through the medium of English' (Creed and Koul 1990)[1]. Drawing on empirical data from eleven, mainly developing Commonwealth, countries[2], this project attempted to identify what strategies DE writers employed to make their predominantly print-centred, English-medium materials accessible to make their predominantly print-centred, English-medium material accessible to learners who in many cases were unpractised readers and writers, in both their mother tongue and English, the official language of education.

Although the course was **home** produced, the research found that where strategies were employed, they were inappropriate to the linguistic demands of the subject area and, paradoxically, to the social context in which the course was situated. The data suggested that the writers underestimated the academic literacy (reading and writing) demands of their print-centred courses. The report concluded that a key priority was the development of a pedagogy which is sensitive to the sociocultural context in which the course is situated, to the subject area and to a print-centred, distance learning situation.

The report gave a broad overview of a complex area. Given the number of countries and that practical difficulties precluded much research with distant and dispersed students, the report

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[1] Commissioned by the ODA, British Council & Commonwealth of Learning.

[2] Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Thailand.

focused on identifying key concerns for future research and development. One key area was that further student-based and country-specific research was required. Roger Iredale[3], who originally commissioned the project, subsequently recommended that further research should 'take a course that has been created for a specific context and then ask in what other contexts it can be made to work and what needs to be done to make it do so'[4].

1.3 Broad description of study

My study takes up this broad challenge. In a case-study, I examine language and academic literacy issues from the point of view of a Zimbabwean group of working professionals undertaking a DE print-centred, post-graduate course which is produced, tutored and examined in the UK.

Due to the enormous expansion of DE within and across national boundaries, this is an increasingly common learning context and worthy of critical enquiry. The cross-cultural, long-distance relationship provides a good basis for examining whether a course produced in one sociocultural context and laden with assumptions about curricula, pedagogy and organisation can effectively be transposed into other sociocultural contexts. The risk here is that without adequate feedback or knowledge, materials producers make inappropriate assumptions about their learners.

The general aim of the research therefore is to take advantage of an opportunity to conduct research in one particular context and give maximum coverage to feedback from (and about) distant and largely unknown DE course participants. The more particular aim is to examine whether any difficulties are created around taken-for-granted educational practices embedded in the UK course, particularly in relation to language and academic literacy. I also discuss some of the implications at the microlevel of DE instructional design and also at a more macrolevel of course components, structure and tutoring.

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[3] Chief Education Adviser, Overseas Development Agency (now retired).

[4] Keynote address - Dunford Seminar - Language issues in distance education (1993).

English language teachers would conventionally approach academic literacy 'disjunctures' as an unproblematic needs analysis exercise. What difficulties are the students having with their reading and writing? What remedial work shall I do to overcome these difficulties?

This research begins from a different starting point; it puts forward the argument that before considering how to teach somebody else to write in English, educational practitioners need to first ask **themselves** other basic questions. For example:

Why are they learning in English?

Why are **you** teaching them?

Other questions flow from these - What role do or could vernacular languages play in the course? What difficulties, if any, surround the continuing use of English, a colonial language? What variety of world Englishes is it appropriate to teach or accept? What are the expectations of the course in terms of academic reading and writing? How explicit are these demands to the students? Are these assumptions sensitive to the Zimbabweans' sociocultural background? What are their perceptions of these expectations?

These questions have been explored and debated in applied linguistics circles but not in very much depth in general English-medium teaching. The view adopted here is that since the use of both English as an international language and English-medium distance education is expanding exponentially, teachers who are not language experts need to be considering these questions themselves. The importance of the questions is cross-cutting and should be discussed in the mainstream rather than by the initiated few. In this, I believe language and communication experts have not done enough to bring the issues into the mainstream.

The emphasis I place on the recipient-end of the course precludes an equally in-depth analysis of the producer-end although UK data is drawn upon in the analysis (such as materials, TMA feedback, interviews with UK writers).

A point of departure is that I do not work from Iredale's inclusionist assumption that it is possible or even desirable to include changes within the existing course. Instead, on the basis of feedback from the learners (and to a lesser degree their local tutors), I ask

whether the pedagogical implications that follow are inclusionist, exclusionist or a mixture of both. Can the existing course be adapted to be more sensitive to any difficulties that emerge? Do the difficulties suggest that a locally produced course would be more appropriate? Do they imply a combination of local and UK resources?

1.4 How the PhD is organised

1.4.1 Four parts

The PhD consists of fourteen chapters which are arranged under four parts:

1. Locating the research within a broader context - 5 chapters.

2. Research approach - 3 chapters.

3. Data analysis - 5 chapters.

4. Policy and pedagogy - 1 chapter.

The aim of **part 1** is to introduce the research and locate it within two broader contexts - globalising forces within education and the characteristics of DE in African countries. As I do so, I identify a range of research questions and set out the theoretical terrain of my research.

Part 2 focuses on my research approach and outlines first, a condensed version of the research questions, secondly an introduction to the research context and finally, a detailed description of the adopted research methodology.

In **part 3**, the core of the PhD, there are five chapters devoted to Data Analysis. This reflects the overall research aim of providing detailed feedback from (and about) a group of Zimbabwean students to their UK-based DE course producers.

Part 4 summarises the entire PhD, itemises key research recommendations and finishes with a short conclusion.

1.4.2 Chapter introductions and closes

Each chapter, except the last, begins with an **introduction** which outlines the way the chapter will proceed. It concludes with a section called a **close**; this serves the purpose of either summarising or linking the chapter to the next.

1.4.3 Photographs

Photographs taken during the data collection period in Zimbabwe appear throughout the thesis. Their purpose is mainly to give a visual realisation to specific textual references. However, I have also included more general photographs where they capture a recurrent theme of my thesis - the theme of travel; by this I mean geographical, theoretical, methodological, travelling.

1.5 Close

Having given background information about the research, I will, in the next two chapters, locate the study in a broader context.

The huge increase in the export of English-medium DE courses to other countries has been fuelled, on the part of the **producers**, by the market force pressures towards globalisation (of which the English language is a part). This exporting takes various forms - the wholesale selling of courses or different types of collaborative relationships between educational institutions in different countries. The course I am examining is an example of the latter. It has also been fuelled, on the part of **receivers in developing countries**, by the growing need for flexible educational opportunities.

As a consequence, my study draws on and is part of, first, current debates around **globalised or internationalised DE courses** and, secondly, the **history, role and characteristics of DE in developing countries**. These will be discussed separately in chapters two and four and in each, I will draw out key problem areas. Each will then be

succeeded by an emerging theory chapter which sets out some of the theoretical principles I adopt to address these problems. As these chapters proceed, I will draw out research questions that naturally emerge in relation to a print-centred context. These will appear in bold.

Chapter 2 - Globalisation and internationalisation[1] in print-based Open and Distance Learning

2.1 Introduction

Globalising forces are increasingly apparent within higher education. Examples of this trend include the growth of educational courses made available to a global market, international links between institutions and the actual internationalisation of institutions.

These expansionist tendencies are particularly pronounced in open and distance learning (ODL forthwith). They are manifested by the selling and exchange of ready-made ODL courses between different countries, co-operative course development and the increasing use of ODL within and across national boundaries. This case-study is an example of the latter.

This chapter will examine how economic and other factors underlie the increasing use of ODL at both a national and international level. I highlight and discuss four problematic areas that emerge in an international, cross-cultural context - the **diversity** of learners, education as **cultural imperialism**, the English language as **linguistic imperialism** and the inevitable 'tug' between various **local and global configurations** in course design.

2.2 Economic Factors

The expansion of ODL has been driven mainly by the economic trend within tertiary education in general towards more market-driven and accessible provision, the effects of which can be seen at both a national and international level.

2.2.1 National level

From the early 1980's, for example, the dominant purpose of education in the UK and

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[1] My distinction refers to courses with general global appeal, such as an MBA course, and 'niche' courses tailored to a smaller, specific body of students and possibly within particular countries, e.g. courses aimed at professionals working for or within developing countries.

higher education in particular, has been largely defined by government policies in relation to economic success. These policies have placed educational providers under an inescapable pressure, particularly in the form of output-related funding, to, first, **expand** student numbers rapidly without a pro rata increase in teaching resources (Sussex 1991, Mar-Molinero & Wright 1993) and, second, to place an **emphasis** on provision which is geared towards developing skills and abilities required in the workplace and the needs of the UK economy for retraining.

To meet these challenges, it is unsurprising that supported resource-based learning, ODL and differing types of independent learning are actively promoted by governments and educational providers and regularly feature on agendas for expansion. In the world of ODL, these orientations have manifested themselves as particular **trends** during the last two decades.

In the 1980s, the trend was towards the **expansion** of existing single (dedicated DE) and dual mode (DE and face-to face teaching) institutions and the **establishment** of new ones, within both developed and developing countries. In the nineties, we find the increasing **adoption** of ODL methods by institutions traditionally associated with conventional face-to-face teaching and the **convergence** (or integration) of ODL into mainstream courses (Harry 1995).

2.2.2 International level

The massive expansion of ODL across national boundaries is also a natural concomitant of these orientations. The economic and geopolitical imperatives of international markets, most notably in Europe, North America and Australiasia, have prompted higher education institutions to implement aggressively competitive and ambitious strategies for expansion to enhance, maintain and entrench their advantage as world market leaders of educational provision.

The British Open University, for example, is actively pursuing its commitment to becoming a European University and to creating a 'pan-European network to service multinational

24

companies, organisations, professions' (International Activities Strategic Review Group Report, 1994). It will be expanding out from its traditional regional organisation within the UK into international regions and partnerships within Europe. It is also attempting to expand its role as an agent for the extension of high quality education in the Third World.

2.3 Other contributory factors

In addition to the demand for mass higher and vocational education, other developments have played a contributory role in the expansion of ODL. **New technologies**, such as the Internet and the World Wide Web (and the re-emergence of older technologies such as videoconferencing) have facilitated new spatial and temporal configurations in the educational setting. **Multilateral agencies** such as the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Open Learning Agency in Vancouver, the consortium International Francophone de Formation à Distance (CIFFAD) and UNESCO have played an influential role in the internationalisation (and arguably the commodification of DE) by actively promoting and facilitating the exchange of ODL courses between institutions.

It could also be argued that ODL has also expanded as the result of a substantial **pedagogical shift** away from a teacher-centred 'dissemination orientation' view of learning towards a so-called, learner-centred 'development orientation' - Boot & Hodgson (1987:6). Together with a primacy placed upon the ability to work independently of a teacher (particularly at a tertiary level) and an appreciation of the differences between individuals' learning styles, this shift has led to a growing pedagogical emphasis on individualised and individual learning, learner-centred and task-based learning.

ODL has gained also new **legitimacy** in the process of this expansion and moved away from its old status as the poor relation to mainstream education. In industrialised countries, ODL has often been stigmatised as the second-chance or even last chance saloon for late-developers. In newly independent, developing countries, DE was initially adopted as a temporary means for delivering new universal education policies. Now, ODL is viewed as a legitimate and permanent feature in educational provision and a key means for overcoming geographical, demographic and developmental barriers to educational provision. It is actively promoted by dedicated DE institutions or units (in mainstream universities)[1].

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[1] e.g. Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi, National Teachers Institute, Kaduna, the new Open University of Zimbabwe, the Institute for Distance, Education in the University of Zimbabwe.

26

2.4 Questions raised by globalised ODL

These developments in ODL have created challenges for DE course developers, four of which I will now address. This will be followed by a discussion about how these questions have led me to adopt particular theoretical foundations.

2.4.1 Diversity of learners

The open access ethos of ODL attracts learners with a wide variety of educational, professional, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This diversity has problematised the very notion of learners themselves. The usual suggestion within mainstream DE instructional design of starting 'where your learner is' becomes problematic because they will have varying discursive histories (e.g. cultural, social, educational and linguistic). Is, for example, a course prepared with some mythical 'typical' student in mind and in the process disenfranchising others that do not fit that bill?

Diversity challenges the universality of educational practices and asks DE practitioners to consider whether the theoretical models that frame their practice are open to difference in terms of ethnicity, culture, social groups, gender, language and class? Do we mistakenly assume an understanding of 'ground rules' that surround academic work, for example, in terms of academic reading and writing? To what degree is a course homogeneous or heterogeneous in terms of the assumptions naturalised within its organisation, delivery, curricula and pedagogy? What methodological changes are required to make courses open to difference?

These sort of questions are part of existing, cross-disciplinary debates around the new sociology of education which are belatedly entering the professional currency in ODL. These draw on post-Fordist, post-colonial, post-modernist, post-feminist theories. In particular, they have coalesced around the recent Fordist and post-Fordist debates (Edwards 1995, 1993, 1991; Field 1995, 1994; Raggatt 1993; Farnes 1993) which examine the way that economic factors are central to an understanding of ODL production systems.

Peters (1993, 1989, 1984, 1973) and Rumble (1995a, 1995b, 1986) initiated these

debates when they highlighted the similarity between the Fordist car production process and the centralising, mass-producing, product-orientated tendencies of large-scale DE institutions like Open University. Edwards (1991:17), expanding on the theme, argues that 'the dominant organising principle in the economy' in advanced industrial nations shifted from Fordism to post-Fordism in the late 1980's and that this shift is also reflected in the way ODL is commonly conceptualised. The Fordist car production model, developed by Henry Ford, is characterised, like much ODL production, by a small range of standardised products which are mass-produced within a highly centralised, hierarchical organisation. Economies of scale are achieved by long production runs. However, the model is not equipped to respond to the shorter-life, lower-volume demands of specialised 'niche' markets and has created the need for a consumer-led, small-batch, flexible Post-Fordist production system.

The view I adopt in this thesis is that Fordist and many post-Fordist visions of ODL are an inadequate response to the challenges of globalised education and to an increasingly diverse student body. I will highlight areas of concern and identify approaches with which I sympathise.

The 'dysfunctional paradigm' (Raggatt, 1993:21) of Fordism has been critiqued for being incapable of responding to the flexible needs of diverse learners because it emphasises the primacy of the package and 'tacitly assumes the subordination of the needs of the individual to that package' (Sewart, 1988:248). The pre-determined content and commodified nature of many DE materials can lead to what Evans and Nation (1989:56) describe as 'instructional industrialism' or a 'conceptual closure' (Rumble 1989b:31) in which 'conventions of "good writing" and "good broadcasting" preconstruct a largely passive student' (Harris 1987:139), undifferentiated in terms of what and how they learn.

This underlines how in print-based learning, the opportunities for controlling what and how students learn is considerable. In cross-cultural settings, the political and ideological dimensions of such teaching add another layer of difficulty. Multinational publishing and technological companies who produce and market materials and technology for a global audience exercise a considerable control or monopoly over what type of texts are globally

available or 'privileged'.

Inevitably, these considerations have prompted alternative Post-Fordist visions of ODL but there is a danger that some of the emerging **post**-Fordist visions of DE are only industrialised learning in a more sophisticated form. Edwards (cited in Field 1994:3) argues, for example, that developments in the economy have created,

> 'a range of 'post-Fordist' reflexes in education and training, legitimated by a discourse of student-centredness.. yet in fact open learning is simply an educational adjunct to the Post-Fordist concern for flexibility and capitalist restructuring'.

Westward (1991) is concerned about the parallels between some post-Fordist accounts of learning and the increasing vocationalisation of adult education. Thorpe (1995:21) argues that, although the convergence between ODL and mainstream education has brought benefits - the opening up of a field previously occupied by relatively small group of DE professionals and the introduction of new concepts of education - it represents, 'not so much the triumph of open ideologies, more the impact of market forces and government policies, heightened by recessionary conditions'. Chambers (1994:6) articulates the key concern that

> '..pride of place in the literature is reserved for managerial, technical and technological aspects of its provision..Discussion of the philosophical, ethical, socio-political and pedagogical questions..is much thinner on the ground'.
> *Chambers, 1994:6*

In this particular case-study of a globalised course, I shall be looking at exactly those overlooked questions.

2.4.2 Education as cultural imperialism

The push towards globalisation raises difficult questions about education as cultural imperialism. When different cultures come together in an educational setting, communication between those cultures is commonly determined by their relative status. Dominant cultures tend to assume their practices are universal and consequently regard other cultures as minorities and in terms of a deficit model needing remedial help. Globalised DE courses, produced by market leaders, risk promoting uniformity in cultural and educational practices. This context asks us to consider the definition and ownership of knowledge and, in a situation that brings different bodies of knowledge up against each other, draws attention to the potential for devaluing indigenous knowledge structures and practices.

DE course writers - usually a team of academics and instructional designers - 'make a selection of content from stocks of social and cultural capital available to them, but which may not necessarily be from knowledge stocks that are familiar' to students in other countries (Guy, 1989:50). To what extent, then, do curricula and pedagogies in different fields of study - business management, environmental science, farming, wildlife management for example - reflect and entrench the values and practices of particular dominant groups? It is argued there is a historical (and prevailing) tendency within DE instructional design towards a 'technical-rational' (Carver 1993) or 'technical-vocational' (Chambers 1993, 1994) orientation in which education is a vehicle for reproducing the values of interest groups in society. The orientation places an emphasis on learning as competent performance in occupational or professional contexts - 'learner characteristics are identified, learning objectives specified, what is to be learned ascribed to hierarchies or incremental stages' - Chambers, 1994:56.

What do these dominant educational practices exclude or marginalise? Do we assume universal practices in academic reading and writing which create difficulties in different sociocultural contexts? Do we judge those difficulties from a deficit model rather than acknowledging different practices and contextual conditions?

2.4.3 English as linguistic imperialism

The spread of English is an accompanying, integral part of globalising forces and within this century, we have witnessed a phenomenal[1] rise in the use of the English language throughout the world. It therefore becomes important for English-medium teachers to question such taken-for-granted status, to ask why it has acquired such a dominant position and whether this is desirable.

Some would argue (Jesperson 1938/69, Strevens 1980) that the **lexical flexibility** of English has facilitated its rapid spread. English has a large vocabulary and mechanisms for infinite expansion of that vocabulary - by word compounding, the reflection and blending of Latin (through French) and Germanic roots, the frequent use of,

> 'the passive voice., the gerundive,..particle constructions (e.g. stand in, stand up, stand over, stand out, stand for, stand up to) and the generality of inflectional morphology (no gender for nouns, little variation in verb paradigms)'.
> *Kibbee 1993.*

Of course, to **French** language defenders, it is precisely these qualities which translate into instability and impurity. Others would argue that English has become a global language as the result of **historical** circumstances rather than any **intrinsic** qualities of the language itself.

> The predominant position currently enjoyed by English is a historical contingency arising from the mercantile and colonial expansion of the British Empire, which was followed by American economic and technological hegemony. Of course, it may also be maintained that English has succeeded because it is rich in monosyllables, capable of absorbing foreign words and flexible in forming neologisms, etc; yet had Hitler won World War II and had the USA been reduced to a confederation of Banana republics, we would probably today use German as a universal vehicular language, and Japanese electronics firms would advertise their products in Hong Kong airport duty free shops (Zollfrei Waren) in German.
> *(Eco 1995:331)*

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[1] Statistics about its use vary slightly (e.g. Peirce 1989, Webster 1997, Walker 1997, Kaplan 1993) but the consensus suggests that between 750 - 800 million people use English on a daily basis, half of them as a mother tongue and the other half - mainly former colonies - as an official language. It also accounts for 85-90% of Internet messages, 80- 85% of all scientific and technical information (in abstracted, published or computer stored form) and 75% of the worlds mail, telexes and cables.

Kaplan (1993) argues that the United States, which uniquely survived WW2 with its scientific and educational infrastructures in tact, emerged (**could** emerge) as a powerful political player in international governmental and educational structures as well as a highly productive, dominant economic power. The rapid accumulation of English-medium information which ensued (and which in turn was made more widely accessible via new international information systems) resulted in the English language emerging as a major global language and the main official language of scientific information. This position became increasingly entrenched by the cost and logistical problems of translation to such an extent that its predominance in the fields of Science and Technology amounts to an actual hegemony. If you want scientific information and an education, it will come in English.

As a result, the English language therefore has become a highly prized commodity invested with notions about progress, access, status and power. This contributes to widely held assumptions within the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession and in English-medium education in general that teachers involved in facilitating access to this language are contributing to a process that is **inevitable, neutral** and **beneficial** (Pennycook 1996a, 1994, 1990).

In post-colonial developing countries, however, the very non-neutrality of the English language and its relationship to power becomes particularly pronounced and polarised. This polarisation is clearly articulated in debates within the language teaching and language planning professions about the cultural politics of English as an International Language (EIL) and English as linguistic imperialism - e.g. Pennycook 1996a, 1994, 1990; Kaplan 1993; Dissanayake 1993; Kibbee 1993; Markee 1993; Nicholls 1993; Valentine 1993; Phillipson 1992, 1988; Fairclough 1990, 1985; Bloor 1990; Peirce 1989; Kachru 1986a, 1986b.

The issues raised in these debates are important for English-medium teachers because they problematise, largely unquestioned, assumptions about the very desirability of both learning English and learning through the medium of English. At what expense do producers of English-medium ODL courses, in whatever culture, assume that the use of English as an International educational language is beneficial, natural and inevitable? Have these

assumptions, for example, contributed to the marginalisation of indigenous languages and varieties of English? These are large questions over which, some would argue, we have little power. The view adopted here is that these questions are not, outside language-centred disciplines, considered in very much depth at all and that in these matters, many practitioners can unwittingly reproduce inequalities in their educational practices. Exploring the practical dimensions of these theoretical questions within particular contexts raises, at the very least, the potential for insight and change.

2.4.3   Local/global configurations

The paradox of globalisation is that it is accompanied by a strong impulse towards localisation. The dominating tendencies of global education engage practitioners in considering the merits of various strategies to affirm difference and to foreground local contexts and social practices. Different questions and solutions commonly recur:

One solution is for minorities/the less dominant to adopt a **separatist** response by opting out of a global context and preferring locally-produced and locally-sensitive courses. Its key disadvantage is that it could jeopardise the potential for learners in developing countries (i.e. future decision-makers) to participate in English-medium international arenas where they might increase their influence and power but also to challenge dominant ways of doings things.

What about addressing the risks **within** a globalised course? One dilemma to consider here is that economic imperatives often drive developing nations into a participation in the global market and their economic security becomes linked to the successful integration of capitalistic views into their culture. Does this inclusionist route suggest that the teacher's role should be an extension of these dominant practices and focus on **inducting learners into dominant**, usually western, values and practices of a particular field of knowledge so that they might have access to and participate within international professional arenas? This is a pragmatic route but it is normative and risks defining learners and their own sociocultural background from a deficit model.

Can you **value differences** within a globalised course? Edwards (1995) and Giddens (1990) argue that despite the risks, a global context could, given a principled pedagogy, act as a powerful site for the recognition of difference: as the result of bringing different cultures into contact, this intercultural 'classroom' could promote the assertion or protection of differences (e.g. national, ethnic, gender) as a reaction against dominating tendencies and uniformity.

Giddens (1990:7), for example, suggests that this meeting of differences could provide the basis for an **'intensified reflexivity'** or the questioning of underlying assumptions on the part of both the users and producers. Edwards (1995:245), suggests that the 'integration of the globe .. reconfigures rather than supplants diversity in its contradictory effects... providing a basis for the recognition of, and support for cultural difference'. Both suggest that a tension between risks and dynamism, commonalities and differences, can be seen as desirable and competing elements that coexist within global courses.

But how might this be achieved? Some DE course developers attempt to promote this 'intensified reflexivity' by reflecting diverse sociocultural contexts exclusively at a **content** level. Common strategies include:

- incorporating cross-cultural perspectives and cross-national comparative material [1]

- tasks which explore general issues in the course by means of local-level case-studies[2]

- importing appropriate course materials developed by other institutions [3]

The view adopted here is that these strategies are valuable but carry risks in themselves. One question - a classic question found in multicultural education - is whether these type of inclusionist strategies are desirable or adequate? From the point of view of the producers of

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[1] Williams, Jenny (1995) National and International perspectives: implications for designing distance learning materials.

[2] For example, Diploma in Agricultural Development - Wye College, University of London.

[3] Report of the International Activities Strategic Review Group, Open University, UK (1994:3).

34

the course, do you, in an attempt to accommodate diverse audiences, compromise a strong framework or do you enrich it? Do you, for example, 'dilute the very Britishness'[1] of the courses (and the status of the British qualifications), which initially attracted the learners in the first place? How can you internationalise a course in a comprehensive way but avoid a tokenistic gesture or heritage approach towards other cultures? Is this a tinkering around the edges approach which only succeeds in blurring difference? The challenge for the practitioner is to construct a principled and pragmatic pedagogy that clarifies rather than blurs difference.

The empirical work sets out to explore which of these three different routes - **separatist, induction, site of difference** - the participants themselves actually favour and whether it is possible to achieve some balance between them.

2.5 Close

The following chapter is the first of two theory chapters and sets out some theoretical areas and principles that I have adopted to address the questions in this chapter.

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[1] Report of the International Activities Strategic Review Group, Open University, UK (1994:8).

Chapter 3 Emerging theoretical framework 1

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the beginnings of a theoretical framework for addressing the problematic areas identified in the last chapter and for framing the research approach. Chapter 5 will also serve the same purpose.

3.2 A Foucauldian conceptual framework

The view adopted here is that Foucault's notion of discourse could provide the underlying framework for addressing the four problematic areas - diversity of learners, cultural and linguistic imperialism, local/global configurations - discussed in the previous chapter and around which other theoretical areas, relevant to a print-centred learning context, can coalesce.

Foucault uses the term discourse as a fundamental organising principle of society. Discourses refer to how particular organisations of knowledge (or ways of thinking) are normalised in social institutions and practices in such a way that they allow things to be said but at the same time constrain what is 'rational and warrantable' (Potter & Wetherell 1994:47). The discourses of, for example, democracy, development, education or applied linguistics map out what,

> can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations.. Thus discourses construct certain possibilities for thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations.
> *Ball, 1990:17*

Becoming a part of an academic discipline is therefore not so much a question of assimilating a immutable canon of knowledge but more an evolving membership into the social practices of a particular community, not of learning **from**, but learning **to** write and speak appropriately. Acts of language use therefore always imply a position within different

particular social orders and one person simultaneously positions him/herself (and others) within many different socially constructed orders - family, gender, age, class, ethnic group, political, institutional, cultural, national. Examples would include the variety of ways in which we construct notions of, for example, motherhood, courage, national identity, scholarship.

Discourses are inseparable from power because power-holders, such as established institutions, are well-placed to project their own discourse, institutionalised practices and membership as taken-for-granted or universal ways of doings things. Where sub-ordinate groups - ethnic minorities, women, learners, for example - accept the conventions as natural in terms of interacting and behaving, 'they sustain and legitimise the relations of power that underlie them' (Chick 1992:9). Discourses can therefore be seen as systems of power/knowledge. But in Foucault's sense, the power dimensions of discourse are not seen 'as simply oppressive and distorting' (in the way we tend to use the term ideology) 'but also productive, making things possible' - Edwards, 1995:249.

To Foucault, **all** discourses are partial and socially constructed representations of truth which are contingent upon the historical and ideological factors that surround their origin. One example of a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis can be seen in Edward Said's (1978) examination of an Orientalist discourse, a colonial discourse by which European culture was able, and continues, to construct, define, manage and have authority over 'the Orient'. This was achieved by a 'series of we/they contrasts (East/West, Orient/Occident, undesirable/desirable, primitive/modern etc.) that produce an essentialised and homogenised Other ('The Arabs', 'Muslims', 'the Oriental Mind', 'the Japanese', etc.)' - Pennycook, 1994:128.

Foucault's conceptual framework centres on 'seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false' - Foucault, 1980:118. The focus shifts away from whether or not a discourse gives us a 'true' representation of the 'real world' to an examination of the ways in which a discourse, largely

mediated through language[1], constructs certain things as 'known', certain perspectives as 'true' and the consequences of accepting them as true. One consequence is that powerful discourses have tended to obscure or exclude discourses that emerge from different historical circumstances. Foucault's concept of discourse, however, is fundamentally different to Marxist-based analyses of oppressive ideologies which tend to work from deterministic, class-based oppositions - oppressed/oppressors, powerful/powerless, exploited/exploiter. To Foucault, there is no ideal or preferred world outside discourse as implied by these approaches; there are only competing discourses about reality and situations in which powerful discourses prevail. However, since discourses are all socially constructed, historically contingent versions of reality, they are, in theory, open to challenge. The problem of challenge, however, is that if all positions and identities are socially constructed can we even stand outside them to gain a better understanding?

3.2.1 Two framing principles

These notions impose responsibilities for educators because,

> educational sites are subject to discourse but are also centrally involved in the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses, the 'social appropriation' of discourse. Educational institutions control the access of individuals to various kinds of discourse.
> *Ball, 1990:3*

The implication is that teachers and learners need to engage in a reflexive pedagogy which acknowledges that established academic discourse communities, 'impose requirements for recognised participation' (Lankshear, 1997:42) but which also goes beyond just the reproduction of dominant discourses and practices. This suggests an in-course pedagogy in which two seemingly competing strands coexist.

First, a pragmatic **'acculturation'** element which makes explicit the implicit, taken-for-granted social practices that surround dominant discourses and practices. In terms of my focus on language and academic literacy, this would mean raising the learners awareness of

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[1] Visual, written and spoken texts.

the characteristic linguistic conventions and literacy practices appropriate to a given academic discourse community.

Secondly, a **'counterdiscourse'** (Peirce, 1989) element which promotes an awareness, while teaching within the British academic tradition, that it is not the only intellectual tradition and which makes room for alternative discourses and social practices that emerge from different sociocultural contexts. This strand also introduces the potential for an 'intervention between English and the discourses with which it is linked' - Pennycook, 1994:69.

The dual pedagogic aim draws broadly on Critical Language Awareness (Wallace 1992, 1990; Clark 1991; Ivanic 1988; Shor, 1988), the pedagogical branch of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1985, 1990); central to this approach is the notion of the reflective practitioner (Schon 1987, 1983; Kolb 1984), an awareness of the contingency of one's own practices.

Both these elements are interventionist strategies which aim to foster a 'critical' awareness about the socially constructed character of all knowledge and practices and the normative authority of dominant languages (such as English) and academic literacy conventions. These strategies are employed to contribute to a broader emancipatory aim - to introduce a greater potential for self-assured decision-making or choice on the part of the learner.

That choice may, for example, take the form of the student knowingly conforming to dominant discourses (by reproducing them as they are) or in resisting or challenging them (by breaking new ground). Critics of this approach, including bilingual learners themselves, argue that a learner may not actually wish to take up a critical position and will choose to conform to conventions, e.g. when taking UK oral and written examinations. (The irony here is that learners from a teacher-led, transmission approach to education may be particularly resistant to challenge. They may well expect unitary models of knowledge and practices and be unused to a plurality of scholarly positions). A CLA approach both accepts and accommodates these expectations but aims in addition to help a learner 'conform with open eyes, to recognise the compromise they are making, to identify their feelings about it,

and to maintain an independent self-image' - Ivanic 1988:6.

How does this broad pedagogy translate more specifically into my focus on language and academic literacy? There are two levels to consider here: first, **language planning** issues and secondly, **language pedagogy**.

3.3 Language planning framework and questions

In language planning, I unequivocally adopt a pro-English medium stance on the basis that it is a means whereby Africans can participate in national, regional and international arenas and reject the separatist view of translation into indigenous languages since it carries risks of marginalising learners from international arenas. I will argue, for example, in chapter 5 that communication through English provides a powerful basis for several potential emancipatory objectives.

Nevertheless, a pro-English route does not preclude questions about how English as an International Language (EIL forthwith) and certain discourses that surround it have acquired their dominant position and at what cost. I examine the origins of these discourses and argue that language and English-medium teachers typically ignore the cultural politics of EIL[1] and largely 'function as instruments of dominant ideologies' (Deneire, 1993:169).

What these policies exclude informs my research questions. For example, one tendency is the assumption of monolingualism (rather than bilingualism or multilingualism) as the norm. This stands in stark contrast to the norm in African countries where black Africans will typically speak in at least two to three languages - their mother tongue, a national lingua franca and a world language - and moreover have done so from an early educational level.

Opting for the English-medium route need not preclude course producers from cultivating an ethos of multilingualism throughout the course. The research question here is:

What roles vernacular languages do or could play in and around an English-

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[1] Phillipson 1988, 1992, Pennycook 1990, 1994, 1996, Pierce 1989, Kaplan 1993, Kachru 1986a, 1986b, Bloor 1990, Dissanayake 1993, Kibbee 1993, Markee 1993, Nicholls 1993, Valentine 1993, Fairclough 1990.

medium course?

If they are significant then the next (pedagogical) research question becomes:

How can multilingualism be maintained in the face of globalising forces of which the spread of English is an integral part?

Another question is:

What is the role of English in a post-colonial, resurgent Africa?

This will necessarily include an examination of:

What ambiguities surround the use of English in Zimbabwe?
What aspirations do the Zimbabwean learners have within English in the course and beyond?

The next language planning question becomes - if English, what **type** of English is

promoted within the course? Is the structurally simplified English, typical of traditional DE

instructional design (e.g. Rowntree 1990; England 1987; MacDonald-Ross 1978) an

adequate basis for contributing to, say, an acculturation route? Should one promote

standardised English within the course or acknowledge as legitimate varieties of **World**

Englishes, such as Zimbabwean English, Indian English, Nigerian English (Quirk 1985;

Kachru 1986a &b)?

My empirical work therefore includes an examination of:

What varieties of English exist in and around the course?
What sort of English do the Zimbabwean students wish to learn?

3.4 Print-centred pedagogy framework and questions

Although language planning questions are important, the more important question to me is not **which** language but rather **what pedagogy** within a print-cented, English-medium course?

3.4.1 Literacy as social practice

A long distance print-mediated relationship between the UK course producers and the reading/writing student in Zimbabwe provides a site for the examination of difficulties created by the discourses around taken-for-granted academic literacy practices. As an overall approach, I will draw on a **literacies as social practice** perspective, a wide field that embraces different approaches (e.g. Street 1984, 1990a &b; Kress 1985; Martin 1985; Wallace 1992, 1990, 1986; Lankshear 1987, 1993, 1997; Gee 1990; Cope & Kalantzis 1993; Freebody & Welch 1993; Barton 1994; Maybin 1994; Luke & Walton 1994).

In general terms, literacy seen as social practice provides a broader framework for thinking about literacy events than the behaviourist and cognivitist accounts that currently predominate the area of textual communication in both mainstream DE and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). These tend to work from Street's (1984, 1990) 'autonomous' model of literacy which makes cognitive, universal and utilitarian claims for literacy practices. This model promotes the view of academic reading and writing as a transferable, skills-based, context-independent competencies and tends to work from a deficit model of students' knowledge. An 'ideological' model starts from the basis that literacy practices cannot be understood outside the cultural and social contexts in which they are embedded.

Many of those context-orientated approaches to academic literacy that exist fall into the 'academic socialisation' model (Lea & Street, 1997) which equates with the induction route mentioned in the previous chapter. This views academic literacy 'as a fairly fixed repertoire of knowledge to which students need to accommodate' - Stierer 1997:2.

This is characteristic of university approaches in the USA (Tomic & Davidson 1997, Bizzell

1992) but also some practitioners in the UK (Swales 1990) where the need to open up

access to previously excluded groups, including those for whom English is an additional

language, has been a more self-evident need. The UK tradition towards writing support has

been far more 'sink or swim' for in-coming higher education students although there is an

established tradition of discipline-specific, English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP)

but for second language learners only.

3.4.2 Reader-response approaches

In contrast, my aim in the data analysis is to illuminate aspects of the literacy practices that

emerge from the social contexts of both the culture of reception (the wider Zimbabwean

context) and the culture of production (the UK academy). The complex interdependence of

text production and text reception through concepts such as intertextuality are usefully

captured in Jones' (1990) illustration, reproduced in Figure 1. In this, he graphically

illustrates the relationship between reading and writing to a wide cradle of social relations.
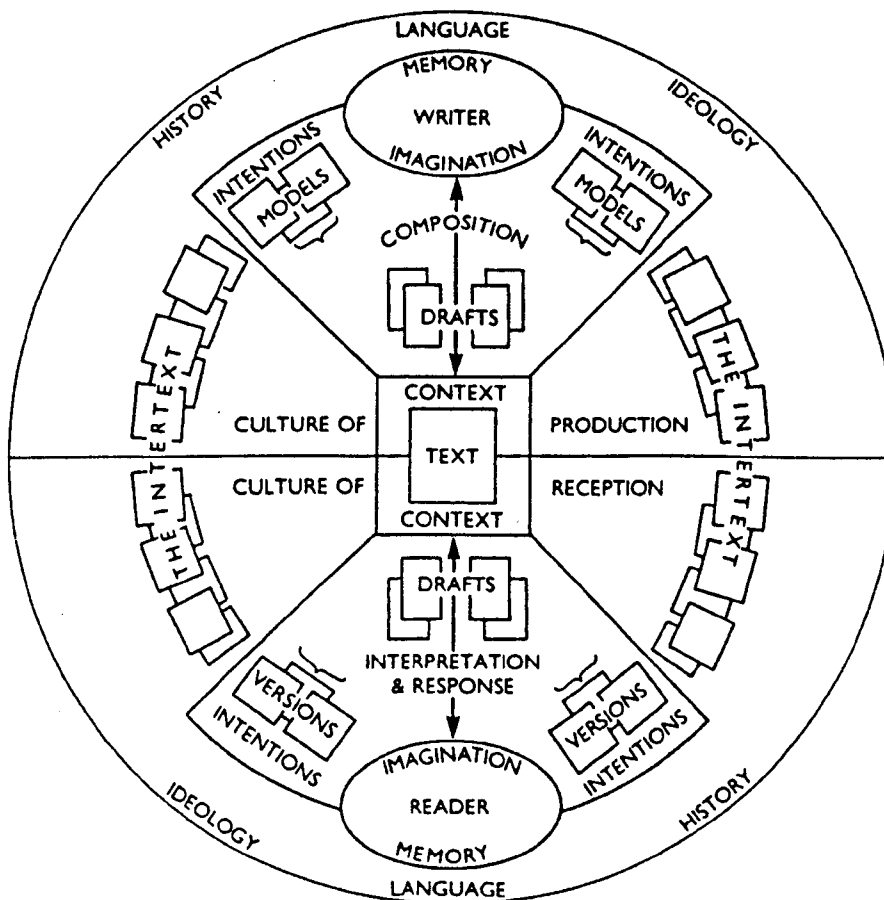
Figure 1:
Reader,
writer, text
(reproduced
from Jones,
1990:166).

Reader-response approaches (e.g. Hirvela, 1996; Selden 1989; Iser 1974, 1978, 1980; Bleich 1978; Fish 1970, 1980), which originate from the field of literary criticism, work from a much broader conceptualisation of literacy than mainstream personal-response models of reading (e.g. Bassnet and Grundy 1993; Collie & Slater 1987; Duff & Maley 1990) which regard reading as de-coding the author's meanings, in a one-way passive relationship to text. In contrast,

> the reader-response approach acknowledges the fact that learners bring many forces into play when they read a text, and that, as a result, the interpretation or reaction they describe are a reflection of themselves as well as the text.
> *Hirvela, 1996:127*

Jones, for example, draws on a wide range of fields such as literary criticism (e.g. Iser 1974, 1978, 1980; Rosenblatt 1939, 1978; Eco 1981; Jones 1990; Hirvela 1996), semiotics (Barthes 1972, 1977; Eco 1981) and linguistics (Kress 1985; Fairclough 1985, 1990, 1992).

Reader-response theories challenge the supremacy of authorial intent in a text and instead assign more importance to the interpretation of texts with the reader making at least an equal contribution to this interpretative process. This perspective works from the view that 'text is the history of choices made during composition' - (Jones, 1991:157). The writer composes, often in several drafts, by drawing on a multiplicity of remembered textual models and on the social history, language and ideological values of the cultures and communities in which he or she lives. As part of this culture of production, the writer 'occupies a position of tenuous independence' (op cit: 159). This stands in contrast to the notion of the individualistic, creative, authorial self.

What the reader retrieves form the text is dependent on the match between the culture in which the text is produced and the culture in which it is encountered. This will include an examination of the social dynamics involved in the meeting of different literacy practices and a focus on the social practices which surround different literacy practices and the institutions (ideologies) in which these are situated.

I will draw on Jones' model as it provides a useful conceptual framework for considering different literacy relationships which occur in print-centred DE - the reading student

and the writer of the academic materials; the student writing TMA's and the reading tutor. It also provides a model for thinking about pedagogical strategies.

My main focus in this study is on the culture of reception and the particular social practices (or histories) which occur around the DE texts and which give texts specific meanings in a Zimbabwean community.

However, since I will be particularly interested in disjunctures between the two cultures, I will inevitably have to discuss the general literacy practices and assumptions within the culture of production. This would include analysing and evaluating texts as discursive products, including an awareness about the conditions of their production and reception ands as text-genres (argument, evaluation, narrative).
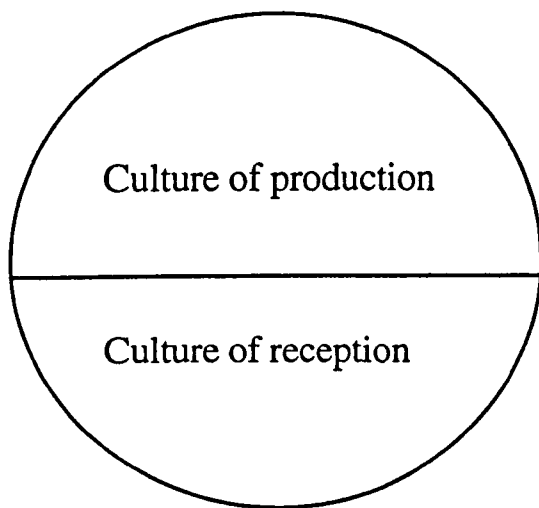
Figure 2: Cultures of production and reception

The research questions here become:

What assumptions (expectations and requirements) about appropriate academic literacy practices do the course producers make?

How explicit/transparent are those assumptions within the materials and feedback to students?

To what extent do they converge with or diverge from the students' notions and traditions of academic literacy practices?

I will examine the data that emerges from these questions to feed into the broader question:

What implications do points of conflict or difficulty hold for policy and practice at the microlevel of textual strategies and at a more macrolevel of course design?

I use this basis reader-response framework to inform my research methodology and to help me think about the methodological and pedagogical dimension of the acculturation and counterdiscourse strands. I start this process here.

46

3.4.3 Acculturation strand

The pedagogical strategies in this strand will aim to facilitate the learners' participation in the particular academic discourse community. Success in educational contexts (and the social advantages this success might bring) depends on the familiarity with, access to or successful adoption of the (usually western) discourses within a given course.

However, 'to ignore the cultural, social and textual considerations of the students is to put in jeopardy the likely success of particular groups of students' - George 1995b:40. The need, therefore is to place an emphasis on identifying the students' shared assumptions and knowledge about literacy practices (rather than attempting to identify their individual needs and psychological readiness for study) and attempt to examine how their experiences can be built upon and extended upon within the course.

For this I draw on a genre-based literacy approach. Although diverse and problematic in itself, genre theory developed as a response to the limitations of 'current-traditional' and progressive pedagogy (process) approaches to writing (Cope & Kalantzis 1993). It emphasises language as central to the learning process and implies that language development should be recognised as an essential and transdisciplinary educational pursuit. Genre theory grew out of two strands of influence.

The first influence was from mainly Australian-based linguists and language educators who aimed to apply Hallidayan (1976, 1986) systemic functional linguistics to mainstream language education (e.g. Christie 1989; Kress 1985; Martin 1985; Derewianka 1990; Cope & Kalantzis 1993). Briefly, Halliday's model highlighted three aspects of the social context which have linguistic consequences. The subject matter (field), the social relations between the writer and reader or speaker and listener (tenor) and the medium of communication - whether text is written or spoken - (mode) all impact on choices made at the level of vocabulary and grammar (lexicogrammar).

The second influence came from the fields of second or foreign language learning,

including English for specific academic purposes (ESAP) all of which have increasingly focused on discipline or profession-specific use of language (e.g. Swales 1981, 1990; Bhatia 1993; Dudley-Evans 1986, 1989, 1990).

Both influences emphasise the view of language as social action and that different social actions - arguing in a debate, writing in a diary, writing a narrative story - result in linguistically distinct written or spoken texts (or genres). Genres are referred to 'as **social processes** because members of a culture interact with each other to achieve them; as **goal-oriented** because they have evolved to get things done; and as **staged** because it usually takes more than one step for participants to achieve their goals' - (Martin, Christie & Rothery, 1994). Members of discourse communities - such as within a particular academic field - will therefore share common purposes of communication or genres.

The pedagogical applications of genre theory, however, include polarised stances. On the one hand, there are overtly political approaches. Kress (1985:253) implies that middle class learners will have more experience of the written language while learners from less literate homes, need a more 'positive-action' approach.

> In my view there are genres; they, and access to them, are unevenly
> distributed in society, along the lines of social structuring. Some genres - and
> the possibility of their use - convey more power than other genres. As a
> minimal goal I would wish every writer to have access to all powerful genres.
> That is not the position in our society now.
> *Kress 1985:252*

The pedagogical extension of this view has often been translated into the prescriptive, direct teaching of text-types, one that emphasises the distinction between written and spoken language. Street, on the other hand, criticises this approach on the basis that it tends to reify dominant genres and fails to acknowledge the shifting nature of literacy practices.

Although I agree that the norms governing and defining a given discourse and its membership are not necessarily precise, static or immutable, I nevertheless adopt the view that there are important commonalities and conventions which, if you are writing materials, have to be attended to. However, I agree with Barrs (1994:249) that learning 'written genres is more complex than the genre theorists imply'. She criticises the direct teaching of genres

48

on the basis that it underestimates the crucial relationship between reading and writing and that students learn about writing from their reading. I anticipate that some explicit writing advice is likely to be important, particularly at the outset of a course, but that a student's awareness of genres, which are complex and dynamic, is likely to arise as the result of examples (rather than models) placed before them in the course. Barrs also criticises the tendency to emphasis the differences between spoken and written language 'rather than the continuities' (op cit:248).

As stated earlier in this section, the emphasis should be on building on the literacy practices of the learners within the course. The emerging pedagogy needs therefore to be focused on strategies which assist the Zimbabwean learners to make connections between their discourses, their particular backgrounds and textual histories and the discourses found in the subject area.

3.4.4 Counterdiscourse strand

This strand will attempt to relativise and break up, by pedagogic intervention, a unitary and unified model of an academic discourse community, its knowledge and its theories of learning. It will emphasise the notion of participants with multiple knowledges and diverse interpretations.

At the **macrolevel** of course production, this implies challenging the assumption that there is one 'caretaker' of knowledge and pedagogy. Edwards (1995:265) adopts this route by returning to old debates around the distinctions between Distance Education and Open Learning (Rumble 1989, 1990; Lewis, 1990). He argues that DE is so fundamentally imbued with modernist Fordist discourses - a university-generated canon of privileged knowledge which emphasises the role of the producer and the organisation of production - that, by its very nature, it marginalises alternative knowledge systems and values. An Open Learning concept of education, he argues, recognises that learning opportunities exist beyond the 'control and ambit' of the actual producers. In terms of my research, this route implies placing an emphasis on exploring the potential for alternative sources or providers of learning opportunities in the local context and focusing on the 'articulated requirements

of diverse learners, in diverse settings, to which providers of learning opportunities need to respond'.

At an **instructional design** level, the counterdiscourse route implies challenging the personal-response approach to reading. Reader-response theories and other pandisciplinary debates in, for examples, semiotics (Barthes 1972, 1977; Eco 1981), linguistics (Kress 1985, Fairclough 1985, 1990), social psychology (Potter & Mulkay 1985; Billig 1988; Potter & Wetherell 1994), philosophy (Foucault 1980) have expanded the way we think about the construction of meaning away from comprehension (of something fixed) towards interpretations (of something relatively unstable).

In these accounts, the formal properties of text are 'traces' of wider social practices which integrate language, thinking, values and shape the ways of acting or talking about a subject, person or event. Several discourses can be recovered from a text. The implication, then, is to encourage a plurality of readings rather than a single authoritative reading and to emphasise that texts can invite or be subject to more than one reading. This is not, however, to say that texts are open to an infinity of readings.

> Texts direct the behaviour of readers .. the more 'open' a text, the more it encourages the play of memory or of intellect, and liberates or enlarges response. The more 'closed' a text - the workshop manual, the political interview - the more it aspires to close down interpretation, and to constrain response. Closed texts require obedient readers. Good readers, however, decide when to submit to the authority of texts, and when to take liberties.
> *Jones, 1990:163*

3.5   Close

The research questions raised in this chapter underline the importance of defining, in theoretical and methodological terms, notions of accountability in ODL courses. Where those courses are destined for use in developing countries, they suggest the importance of defining a developmental role.

From this point forward, I will begin the process of dovetailing into African and Zimbabwean 'specifics' which characterises the rest of this PhD. In the next chapter, for

example, I turn to additional factors that arise specifically from an African context (and in particular from a Southern African Anglophone context) which, I argue, are relevant to the study context. I will approach these by examining problematic areas that have emerged around the use of DE in developing, and particularly African, countries.

Chapter 4 - History, role and characteristics of DE in developing countries

4.1 Introduction

In industrialised countries, DE is just one of a range of educational options within rich, flexible and highly developed educational systems. In Anglophone and Francophone African countries, by contrast, DE has had a far longer and more significant tradition. This tradition is directly related to the colonial histories of these countries and also to the aspirations of the emergent post-colonial nation states.

In this chapter I will attempt to put my Zimbabwean-based research into perspective by first considering both the role and defining characteristics of DE within this pre- and post-colonial context and then, as with the earlier chapter, by examining some difficult questions that emerge. In contrast to globalising forces in education, the experience of DE in Africa repeatedly affirms the need for DE models and practices which are 'sensitive' to local contexts. This has generally been taken to mean home-grown initiatives but I argue that there is still a pro-active role for western DE course producers to play in encouraging the development of such models and practices in both globalised and locally-produced DE courses.

I will be drawing on available literature from developing countries in general but will focus mainly on a sub-Saharan African context and, where possible, within the Southern African context of my case-study.

4.2 DE in pre-independent African countries

The few **government-sponsored** DE programmes that existed in pre-independent Southern African countries, such as Zimbabwe and South Africa, were targeted mainly at basic education for the children of white settler farmers in remote areas. Gordon (1994:132) describes the Zimbabwean situation:

> White children, for whom education was non-fee-paying and compulsory, had access to education facilities and tuition of the highest quality. Schooling for black children was neither free nor compulsory and educational provision was inadequate in terms of both access and quality.

For the majority of black students, the low quality of mainstream education was a reflection of divisive educational systems. In general, secondary education tended to be precarious and of low quality. This was due to the lack of classrooms, trained teachers and school materials. Access to higher education was circumscribed and rare.

Under these circumstances, **commercial** correspondence courses, both imported[1] and home-grown[2], assumed enormous significance in pre-independent times as the only alternative route for many black Africans to acquire a secondary education of a higher quality than that which was on offer under a colonial administration. To put this in perspective, in 1975, 60% of Zimbabwe's (then Rhodesia) Africans taking Junior Certificate and O level examinations were doing so by means of commercial DE (Dahwa 1993).

DE also provided black Africans with one of the few potential routes for access to higher education. In 1951, for example, the University of South Africa (UNISA) became the world's first dedicated correspondence university and became a key route for enabling black Africans from all over the region to acquire degrees (including, for example, the imprisoned Nelson Mandela). Zindi (1995:35) highlights the ironic situation of black Zimbabweans who, despite their opposition to apartheid policies in South Africa, registered with UNISA and moreover had to pay for the privilege in foreign currency.

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[1] International commercial correspondence schools - Wolsey Hall, Rapid Results, The British Tutorial College, International Correspondence Schools and Transworld Tutorial.

[2] Locally based correspondence schools, e.g. Central African Correspondence College (CACC).

54

4.3 DE in post-colonial Africa

At the time of independence, new African governments implemented ambitious educational reform programmes to redress the racial imbalance and to expand the quality and range of educational opportunities available for black Africans. New programmes were required to fulfil the aspirations of an ever-increasing school population and to provide large quantities of literate and trained indigenous manpower. DE was generally adopted as a tool to assist in this national development but it assumed divergent roles and importance according to the educational policies of different African countries.

In the West and Central African sub-region, for example, governments tended to concentrate efforts on expanding mainstream school infrastructures (buildings, teacher training, books and libraries) and DE was employed exclusively at a tertiary level (e.g. National Teachers' Institute, Nigeria, 1976, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, 1968, COSIT, University of Lagos, Nigeria, 1975, Université Marien Ngoubi Service de l'Enseignment par Correspondence, Congo, 1961).

Within the East and Southern African sub-region, in contrast, DE was adopted at a range of state-supported educational levels from school level, to teacher-training colleges and universities (University of Zambia, 1967, Malawi College of Distance Education, 1965, National Correspondence Institution, Tanzania, 1979, Francistown Teacher Training College, Botswana, 1965-73, Zimbabwe Institute of Distance Education, 1990). The more prominent role of DE in the post-colonial policies of these countries appears to have been influenced by an established tradition of DE - in commercial correspondence courses, white settler DE provision and the existence of UNISA.

In general, DE's role in independent sub-Saharan African countries was often originally conceived as an emergency measure to plug a temporary infrastructural gap in educational provision. Nowadays, DE has moved centre stage and is employed as a permanent and respected tool for the delivery of educational provision. This shift in status is due to a general educational crisis brought about by economic austerity, a massive rise in school populations and the growing

legitimacy of DE itself.

4.3.1 The promise of DE

DE in Africa became invested with the 'promise' (Arger 1987, 1990, 1991) that it could solve the

big educational problems of quality, quantity, access and cost; it was perceived as a

democratising force within education which, because of its potential wide reach, could overcome

inequitably distributed resources such as reducing the urban-rural divide (and drift). In contrast

to the inconsistent quality of mainstream education, pre-packaged DE courses appeared to

provide a consistent, standardised 'quality control'. Furthermore, economies of scale might

be achieved with largely centralised systems[1]. It also promised to halt,

> the brain drain, over-dependency on expatriate advisors/experts, irrelevant
> curriculum and, particularly, growing neo-colonial links
> *Arger, 1987:42.*

4.3.2 The reality of DE in Africa

In practice, the promise of DE in Africa has fallen far short of reality; this has been widely

discussed by, for example, Crooks 1983; Arger 1987, 1990, 1991; Jenkins 1989, 1990;

Cripwell & Creed 1989; Rumble 1989b; Guy 1989, 1991, 1992, 1995; Creed & Koul 1990;

Armengol 1990; Dodds, 1994; Glennie 1995; Zindi & Aucoin 1995; John 1996 a & b.

The general picture that emerges from this literature is that DE organisations had, and continue to

have, severely limited logistical capabilities to prepare, produce and deliver the sort of large-scale

distance education programmes that were originally envisaged by newly independent African

governments.

In addition, the massive demand to produce educational programmes rapidly, has been matched

by low investment in the **particular** institutional infrastructures (paper, training of writers and

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[1] This is significant as it would attract foreign aid.

tutors, student support systems, evaluation and feedback services) and frustrated by **general** infrastructural problems in society at large (e.g. the lack of a sophisticated mass distribution system - reliable postal services, power supply and efficient printing capabilities). Macro-issues such as economic austerity (e.g. the imposition of IMF structural adjustment programmes), massive population growth, increasing participation rates and inconsistent political support have all impacted on the development and quality of DE in the region.

Dodds, a 'committed veteran' (John 1996:11) of DE in the sub-region evaluates DE's development in the following way:

> 'the story of distance education in Africa..has been a story of hopes, successful experiments, inadequate resourcing and often disappointing long-term impact. It is essentially a story of hope deferred..'
> *Dodds, 1994: 27*

4.4   Questions raised by African DE

But is that 'hope deferred' only the result of inadequate investment in the promise? Along with others - Arger 1987, 1990, 1991; Guy 1989, 1991, 1992, 1995; Cripwell & Creed 1989; Creed & Koul 1990; Johns 1996 a & b; Hawkridge 1997 - the view adopted here is that the promise of DE in Africa foundered largely because it was based on an imported and limited modernist ideology (or the emulating of western educational models of progress), which was assumed to have universal relevance but which proved inappropriate to African conditions and needs.

A general summary of the literature suggests that the potential of English-medium DE to fulfil the promise of mass, quality education is contingent on a mixture of political, logistical, institutional and pedagogical preconditions which in African contexts cannot necessarily be assumed. This would include:

- a sophisticated mass communication system (reliable distribution networks, power supply and efficient printing capabilities)

- an effective and systematic administrative, tutorial, production system

- DE course writers who have been given the opportunity to develop professionally and to identify pedagogic strategies appropriate to specific educational and cultural context

- quality materials submitted to a process of continual revision and adaptation

- a highly developed formal educational system and intellectual base from which DE can draw

- committed and sustained political support

- learners accustomed to the demands of self-directed study and with a home environment conducive to study

- learners accustomed to a print-rich, resource-rich environment and with highly developed English-medium academic literacy skills

4.4.1 The need for locally sensitive DE models

Guy (1989:58) summarises the conclusions reached by the literature cited above,

> In order for distance education to fulfil an appropriate role in the third world, its underlying assumptions must be critiqued, and rather than reproduce the structures of the developed world, distance educators must seek to generate appropriate and sensitive models and practices, derived from forms of research which are reflective, participatory and emancipatory in intent and procedure and are situated in the cultural contexts of the third world.

Who, though, should be doing this critiquing? Who are the protagonists for directing this methodological change? Hawkridge (1997:5), unequivocally argues that only local DE practitioners can drive through this change as the result of investment and experimentation with home-grown DE models; that DE should not be considered as a 'universal panacea' and that 'each country should generate its own model to suit its own needs and conditions'.

It would be difficult to disagree with this conclusion. Nevertheless, does the **other** route - 'overseas' and 'western' DE course producers and production - have any value? If so, what? I will now consider the merits of both routes.

4.4.2 Home-grown initiatives

There is certainly mounting evidence of this locally-based process. One example is the strengthening of national and cross-national DE organisations within the sub-region - the Distance Education Association for Southern Africa (DEASA) and the West African Distance Education Association (WADEA).

Even with imported DE courses, there is a growing appreciation (on the part of both buyers and vendors) of the complexities involved in adapting DE courses to suit local needs. There has been a definite shift away from the euphoria apparent in the 1980's which saw the role of multilateral agencies (such as the Commonwealth of Learning) largely in terms of a DE clearing-house operation, 'a kind of repository of materials..with price tags provided by the 'haves' and statements of needs from the 'have nots' - Dhanarajan & Timmers, 1992:10. The buyers are increasingly far more experienced than the 'have not' label would suggest and are increasingly taking exception to the idea that adaptation is 'like pushing raisins into a ready-made cake"[1]. Questions are now being raised about whether 'versioned' courses[2] or home-grown courses (which draw on western models) genuinely confer control.

4.4.3 The role of western DE course producers

Nevertheless, I adopt the view that western DE producers still have an important, pro-active role to play in encouraging the development of models and practices sensitive to different

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[1] Comment by a Trinidadian materials developer involved in the local level adaptation of Wye College 'Agriculture in Development' course - 1995.

[2] Typical models of versioning appear in the International consultancies in Open Learning, Draft document, OU international Relations, 1996. The differences between them depend on whether the donor institution's contribution is limited or substantial.

sociocultural contexts both within globalised **and** locally-produced DE courses. The key question here is whether it is possible, **within** an asymmetrical donor-recipient educational context, to establish a north-south relationship of an empowering kind?

My argument is that the move towards locally-produced DE should not lead us to entirely renounce the value of 'overseas' and 'western' DE course producers or production, either as a transitional **or** permanent measure. I would argue that **both** routes are important. This research, however, is focused on assessing the importance of the second route in a developing country context.

One value lies in the fact that European course producers, particularly those who work in dedicated DE institutions, have, unlike many African distance education producers, the luxury of submitting their materials to a process of continual revision, and themselves to a process of professional development. In contrast, African counterparts, often hard-pressed lecturers in mainstream universities have only had the benefit of a short 'how to write DE materials' training and as a result can work from recipe book techniques of DE instructional design. These techniques become fossilised through lack of further writing development and because the lack of financial resources mean that African DE materials are often produced in a hurry and are expected to have an undesirably long shelf-life. UK DE producers then, very often have the resources - technological, training and experience - that their African counterparts do not at present and which are crucial to the quality of the learning materials.

The role of European DE course producers also becomes important because educational opportunities at tertiary level in sub-Saharan Africa are receding rather than expanding. Current World Bank economic structural adjustment programmes (ESAP) and policies have resulted in severe cutbacks in social programmes. Studies (Brock-Utne 1996, Buchert 1995, King 1995) show that the focus of education aid amongst many multilateral and bilateral donor agencies is increasingly shifting away from higher education in favour of a concentration at basic education level:

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> To meet minimally acceptable targets for coverage and quality of lower levels of education in most countries, as a general rule the tertiary sub-sector's share of stagnant real public education expenditures cannot expand further, and in some cases may have to contract. Some combinations of efficiency improvements, increased private contribution to costs, an constrained growth of - in some countries and fields, outright cutback in - production of graduates must be sought.
>
> *World Bank ESSA paper, 1988:95*

As a consequence, World Bank (ESSA 1994, 1988) policies have prescribed an emphasis on utilitarian outcomes of universities by:

- only funding skills for which there is a market demand

- encouraging links between higher education sectors and the private sector

- diversification (i.e. cost-sharing) of funding, including user fees, university partnership with business, privatisation and diversification of the higher education system

- introducing a new conditionality for higher education funding, i.e. only after measurable results in equity and quality at primary and secondary levels

Critics point out that such policies underestimate the contribution of higher education towards raising the quality of basic education (King 1995). They also ignore the 'lack of local industrial dominance and no powerful private sector with which the State can share responsibility for higher education' in African contexts (Brock-Utne, 1996:338). The policies result in cutbacks in arts and humanities, 'exactly those fields which could most easily have restored the African Heritage' - op.cit:337. Mkandawire (1990:26) points to the erosion of a research and library infrastructure, book hunger, the under-representation of books originating in developing countries and the high mortality rates of indigenous journals.

It therefore becomes important to recognise that the conditions for the development of home-grown DE models are not necessarily favourable. Tertiary level opportunities for African learners are rare, precarious and subject to a constant battle for sponsorship. ESAP policies

have actually increased the dependence on higher education imports[1] and 'donor-recipient', 'North-South' relationships. This adds another layer onto an entrenched history of imported educational models and expatriate teachers.

I would argue that, as a result, the role of western distance educators becomes charged with a heavier burden of responsibility than perhaps we sometimes appreciate. I shall pursue this line of argument and seek to test its validity by further empirical research within Zimbabwe.

Is it possible, within an asymmetrical donor-recipient situation, to establish a north-south relationship of an empowering kind?

4.5   Close

In the previous chapter I have laid out some of the theoretical and pedagogical foundations for this relationship but from the perspective of an educators' responsibilities within a **globalised** context. In the following chapter, I will build on those foundations by looking at theoretical areas more directly concerned with **African** contexts.

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[1] Such as the internationally available commercial DE course I am studying.

Chapter 5 - Emerging theoretical framework II

5.1 Introduction

This second theoretical chapter extends the previous discussion in chapter three and considers issues specific to a Zimbabwean context and to DE in African countries that need to be taken into account in the research design.

Together, the two chapters contribute towards a broader framework for addressing diverse learners in international, English-medium, print-centred DE. They also form the underlying framework from which I identify the emphases, specific to both globalised DE and African contexts, I need to adopt in my research questions and research methodology.

This chapter considers three areas specific to education in developing-country, and particularly Southern African, contexts. First, I consider the cultural politics that surround different concepts of 'development' in education and 'position' myself within them. Secondly, as a prelude to detailed empirical work with the Zimbabwean students, I flesh out some African **language planning** factors to consider. I examine the arguments 'for' and 'against' English-medium teaching in Africa and then explore how African writers rationalise their use or avoidance of English, an imposed colonial language. I consider what pedagogical lessons we might draw from each of these areas. Thirdly, I identify some **pedagogical** factors specific to a Southern-African context which might need to be accounted for within an international DE course. As I cover these three areas, I will be adding detail and emphases to the research questions already identified in preceding chapters.

5.2 Conceptualising the development role

A recent international strategic review group within the Open University recommended that,

> The university should seek to ensure that its activities in developing countries operate to strengthen academic development within those countries. This means designing those activities so as to ensure their impact is positive[1].

How do those general aims translate into a more defined developmental role? How do we conceptualise 'development'? Researchers tend to draw on one of three dominant discourses when thinking about educational (by extension language and literacy) issues within colonial contexts - **modernisation** theory, **underdevelopment** theory and a **Gramscian** concept of hegemony (Küster, 1984). I will briefly explore these now and examine their implications within the particular course under study.

However, I want to emphasise that I work from the premise that there are lessons to be drawn from each but that no one discourse presents either a full, 'true' or ideal picture. Each would, if applied in an African context, tend to underrepresent African contributions. The three of them together, however, provide:

• more dimensions for thinking about the context

• an underpinning framework which give coherence to disparate, often paradoxical, strands that emerge in my research (for example in 9.4, 9.6)

5.2.1 Modernisation theory

Modernisation theory, which grew out of the optimistic aftermath of the Second World War, conceptualises development as a natural evolution of traditional, undeveloped, agricultural and static cultures **towards** a dynamic, civilised, industrial and differentiated modern society. Preston (1986:17) characterises it as an essentially anti-Marxist, Western model of capitalism which offered, 'an elaborated authoritative interventionist ideology of

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[1] Report of the International Activities Strategic Review Group (1994:6)

development, where the idea of development..rests upon a concern for economic growth'.[1] The transition can be planned and driven by the introduction of advanced European models.

From this perspective, the role of educational aid programmes has been (and continues to be) regarded as innately beneficial and associated with bringing advancement to backward regions. These programmes are the 'instrument of opening up conservative structures and belief systems to the values and attitudes declared necessary for modern socio-economic development'- Küster:6. The 'promise' of DE in Africa was predicated around this type of modernist discourse.

Various shortcomings and implications of this model have been highlighted (e.g. Parker 1970, Atkinson 1972, Adick 1989):

- the ethnocentric, uncritical deduction that a European model of industrialisation can act as the basis for all human development

- the primary emphasis on economic factors and its vested interest in a global expansion of capitalism

- the inappropriateness of a European model to different cultural, social and political contexts

- the way the model positions developing countries in terms of a deficit, deviant model and regards traditional African norms and resistance (or indifference) to innovation as obstacles to progress

Key to this study is the way that a modernist perspective tends to either deny completely the potential of Africans as agents of change or obscure the way that Africans and African contexts can and have taken an imposed model and shaped it according to their own aspirations.

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[1] The prescription of an economic package for modernisation remains a key tenet in current international relations (even within the shifts from Keynesian interventionist policies to more laissez-faire interpretations

In terms of this specific research, this would mean fleshing out the existing research questions to include an emphasis on the ways in which African participants shape the particular course and deal with difficulties created by materials from a non-African contexts.

What difficulties are created by the discourses around taken-for-granted educational practices embedded in the (specific course) materials which originate from a non-African context?

In what ways do the learners shape or supplement the non-African course (particularly concerning language and academic literacy)?

What Zimbabwean aspirations surround the course? Can the course accommodate Zimbabwean practices and aspirations?

5.2.2 Underdevelopment theory

The poor economic performance of independent African states and their persistent dependence on former colonial powers underlined the limitations of modernisation models and gave rise to the underdevelopment school of thought from the 1970's. From this perspective, underdevelopment is attributed to the global process of capitalistic dependency (of which the spread of the English language is a part), in which the First World continually makes the Third World economically dependent.

This 'cultural imperialism' theory is a widely applied frame of analysis in studies of colonial education and draws on Carnoy's (1974) *Education as Cultural Imperialism* and Rodney's (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* landmark texts. According to this perspective, education has played two roles: first, to reproduce international divisions of labour which benefit a colonial economy by equipping Africans with only limited skills; second, to promote the internalisation of a capitalist, middle-class, Christian ideology (e.g. European notions of discipline and individual achievement). This would assume an African humility and obedience (and implicate Africans themselves in their own exploitation).

> Colonial schooling was education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment..(It) was an instrument to serve the European capitalist class in its exploitation of Africa. Whatever colonial educators thought or did could not change that basic fact.
>
> *Rodney 1972:264, 275*

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of monetarism).

Moyana (1989), for example, argues that Rhodesian settlers,

> set out to use the schools as a processing plant for the alienation and
> domestication of the Africa child, thus turning that child into an obedient,
> pliable and worshipping servant of things white and Western.
> *op.cit:35*

Key to this theory is the development of a coopted, culturally alienated African elite who

assume leadership positions and act as intermediaries between distant capitalist centres and

African masses.

Mazrui (1975) and Altbach (1981) argue that the effects of structural imperialism are clearly

evident when one looks at both the historical development and current state of African

universities. They tend to be based on 'other' educational models - their agendas, curricula,

methodologies; they use English-medium academic literature (books and journals) produced

and controlled by industrial countries. This has had the effect of distancing or divorcing

education from local contexts and local people (e.g. with low English language skills). It has

also circumscribed intellectual activity to such an extent that African intellectuals and students

have largely been positioned as **consumers** rather than **producers** of knowledge.

Ama Ata Aidoo, the Ghanaian author and playwright and Ezekiel Mphahlele, the South

African writer summarise the human effect of this particular legacy of colonisation:

> .. as yet Africans have not even understood that African writers are to be
> read..we are still so primitive and I'm using this word..not to say the Western
> notion of African primitiveness, with our grass skirts but we are so
> uncomfortable..you come to literature or things like that, and it's then that you
> really understand a term like neocolonialism. We are so, so gauche. Because
> of the colonial experience we still, unfortunately, are very much lacking in
> confidence in ourselves and what belongs to us. It's beautiful to have
> independence, but it's what has happened to our minds that is to me the most
> frightening thing about the colonial experience. Until quite recently, we
> thought that a book was written by a white man..
> *Aidoo in Duerden 1972:26*

> We have discovered that a number of the universities in this continent teach
> literature according to the traditions of British universities, as many of these
> universities were attached to British universities by special relationships..there
> are quite a few lecturers of English..who have not been emancipated yet, who
> are not convinced yet of the importance of African writing in university
> teaching.
> *Mphahlele in Duerden 1972:96*

Mazrui goes so far as to suggest that African universities can be conceived of as 'multinational corporations', acting as central distributors of knowledge throughout African educational systems. Interestingly, the packaged and distributed nature of distance education courses (produced elsewhere) seems to actually materialise this process and embody this disenfranchisement.

Kaplan (1993:156) argues that English-speaking nations now hold a virtual information cartel in the science and technology domains, the access to which is increasingly being protected and controlled 'in the name of national security and economic stability'[1].

He also highlights that this control over the flow of information is more restricted between north/south axis nations than between the east/west and sets up a particular demand (and a dependency) on part of the neediest nations.

> It is not an accident that the few states which have been able to devise means to penetrate the great science and technology information storage and retrieval networks are not poor states. Solving the information access problem is an expensive process, and only relatively wealthy states have been able to attempt solutions. The fact remains that the states most in need of scientific and technical information are precisely the poorest states, those least likely to be able to devise viable access strategies. The states with the least effective access capabilities tend to lie in the southern segment of the north/south polarisation.
> *Kaplan (1993:156)*

A key **criticism** (Cross 1987, Mangan 1988) of underdevelopment theory is its tendency to set up simplistic groups (colonised/colonisers, exploiter/victim, powerful/powerless, resistant/obedient). The dangers of this include:

- the overemphasis of a macro-economic perspective

- the obscuring of differentiation **within** groups, e.g. gender, race, status, age

- overestimating a colonial power's ability to achieve all-pervasive dominance

Similar to modernist theory, the underdevelopment theory tends to obscure the part played by

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[1] Protecting 'patents, copyrights and industrial processes' - Kaplan:156.

African contexts and roles. It ignores, for example, that African values, demands and non-compliance all played significant roles in the success and scope of educational provision and also that capitalist interests were not necessarily irreconcilable with African ambitions. The impact of colonial practices is also directly related to the social context in which they are transposed. For example, the educational provision for blacks in British settler colonies was far inferior to the non-settler colonies of W. Africa.

In common with modernist approaches, the underdevelopment theory disregards an African contribution so that we can ask further questions made prominent by this theory.

What range of stances do the learners adopt towards 'foreign' cultural practices around language and literacy - hostile, obedient, admiring, etc? Is there evidence that the students represent a coopted, culturally alienated elite?

Do they have confidence in things Zimbabwean?

Is there evidence of conflicting interests among the Zimbabwean stakeholders? (Ministerial importers/learners, male/female)

To what extent are the recipients of the course positioned as passive consumers?

In what ways could the course contribute to the 'the overall academic development' of the country in which it is situated?

Could, for example, the course or components of the course be produced in Zimbabwe?

Could the course contribute to the development of academic literacy practices required for the course and beyond? This might include help towards developing the student's ability to write for academic journals?

5.2.3 Gramscian hegemony

A Gramscian (Gramsci 1986) framework emphasises the ideological nature of power. From this perspective, hegemonic power is exercised more through the **consent** of subordinated groups than their forceful **coercion**. Dominant practices become conventionalised or accepted as 'common sense assumptions' through compliance on the part of dominated groups rather than by coercion.

Power holders exercise ideological power because they are well placed to project and protect

their discourse conventions as right, natural and universal ways of doing things. Where dominated groups accept those conventions, they sustain and legitimise them. Intellectuals (including teachers) play a key role in ensuring the hegemony of a dominant class because they promote and privilege certain views of the world and ideologies.

A Gramscian concept of hegemony provides a useful framework for balancing some of the limitations of the other two theories. By contrast, it recognises the plurality of social forces involved and avoids an overemphasis on economic factors.

Before considering hegemony within educational practices, it is important, however, to consider the extent to which a Gramscian framework is fully applicable to a colonial context. In a colonial context, consent is fairly limited. In Zimbabwe, for example, the Smith-style settler state ran more by coercion than consent. Implicit within the concept of hegemony is the idea of a unifying discourse, accepted by all members of a society. This idea is in direct conflict with the racialist policies of past colonial educational policies. Küster (1984:32), for example, suggests that in Zimbabwe the aim of the European education was to promote a feeling of unity among British and Afrikaans **white** settlers who were divided by class distinctions and antagonisms. As far as the majority of black Zimbabweans were concerned, the colonial government actively pursued segregationist policies which **withheld** the 'white' literary and academic type of education and positively limited the activities of African intellectuals. Ironically, it was precisely these withholding practices which set up an African demand for a broader education. The degree to which this demand reflects consent or pragmatism is therefore open to question.

British, Americans and Australians dominate the applied linguistics, English Language Teaching (ELT) and English as an International Language (EIL) professions. As a result, their teaching practices are exported through educational aid programmes and globalised textbooks and tend to assume a universal status. Three areas within current language teaching practices could be said to amount to a pedagogical hegemony - **standardised English**, the applied linguist's claim for **descriptive neutrality** and the predominance of the **Communicative Language Teaching methodology (CLT)**.

Standardised English - Fairclough (1990) argues that the acceptance of a standardised English (by African parents, for example) has been secured in different ways; by codification (reducing variation within a language through dictionaries, grammars, etc.); by the proscription and stigmatisation of other social dialects, in terms of correctness of form and in

terms of manners, morality, life style, etc.; by 'the colonisation of the discourses in a wide range of social institutions, thus making competency in the standard dialect or language a pre-requisite for elevation to positions of power and influence' - Chick, 1992:9

Descriptive neutrality - The degree to which the EIL profession is largely framed around an assumed descriptive neutrality - descriptive views of language and language varieties - can also be said to amount to a hegemonic practice because they preclude other ways of thinking about language. Up to the 70's, the predominant view was of language as an abstract system of sounds and structures. On the basis of a description provided by a teacher, a language learner's objective was to learn and reproduce rule-bound patterns and the criterion for success was accuracy. From the 70's, attention shifted to the description of what we were doing with language within specific contexts. This sociolinguistic perspective highlighted that language choice is influenced by who is speaking or writing, to whom, where, and for what purpose. The criterion of success is fluency and appropriacy or 'communicative competence' - Hymes, 1979.

Although sociolinguistics is, by definition, directly concerned with social context it tends to distance itself from the 'role of language in the establishment, maintenance and changes of social relations of power' - Chick, 1992. In sociolinguistics, discourse refers to 'a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence..at its most general, a discourse is a set of utterances which constitute any recognisable speech event, e.g. a conversation, a joke, a sermon, an interview' - Crystal, 1980:114. Studies within this approach have focused on identifying systematic correlations between variations in the linguistic form (phonological, morphological, syntactic) and social variables. This has included the identification and description of the sociolinguistic rules that determine the progress of discourse (e.g. Labov 1972; Halliday 1973), the formal cohesive relationships between sentences which give them an overall coherence (e.g. Quirk et al 1972;

Halliday & Hasan 1976; Widdowson 1978) and the description of language in context, in particular the linguistic choices and rhetorical moves that are characteristic to a specific context of communication.

Studies in this latter category are focused around describing the language varieties characteristic of particular professional groups[1] or, in the case of the World Englishes debate, describing how 'outer or expanding circle'[2] varieties of English around the world characteristically deviate (for example in syntax, phonology, lexis and rhetoric) from 'inner circle' central English norms[3].

The pedagogical extension of the 'professional' and 'academic' varieties of English, typical of the majority of ESP and EAP programmes, is to adopt an 'acculturation' approach to language teaching. That is to say, to teach those norms with a view to successful induction into a given linguistic community. For example, doctors characteristically talk and write like this and if you wish to become a successful doctor, then you must learn to do the same.

The pre- and post-70's approaches have often been regarded as alternatives, with teachers lining up behind either. However, in the process of description and teaching, both unintentionally legitimise and entrench dominant conventions of appropriacy as if they were natural and necessary; they do not, for example, explore in addition how the communicative practices of dominant groups have come to be accepted as correct, appropriate, the norm. Ivanic (1988) advocating a Critical Language Awareness approach argues these dominant practices have,

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[1] Examples are the characteristically initiation-response-feedback (IRF) nature of teacher-led discourse in classrooms (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Stubbs 1976, Coulthard & Montgomery 1981), the typical organisation of discourse in the medical field, particularly doctor-patient interviews (Friedson 1979, 1975, Rueschemeyer 1983).

[2] From Kachru 1992.

[3] Examples of studies about African varieties of English - Christophersen 1992, McArthur 1992, Chevillet 1993, Mesthrie 1993, Desai 1993, Louw 1995. Contrastive rhetoric, e.g. Kachru 1995.

excluded most people from any realms of action. For example, people who don't use language in an academic way don't decide what counts as knowledge; people who don't use language in a legal way don't make laws. This amounts to a totally different view of 'accuracy' and particularly of 'appropriacy'. Instead of saying that certain ways of using language are correct and appropriate in certain contexts, the critical view of language emphasises the fact that prestigious social groups have established these conventions: they are not 'natural' or necessarily the way they are.

Ivanic (1988:4)

Communicative language teaching methodology - Despite English language education being a significantly international phenomena there has been a tendency towards a unified, normative world teaching methodology - known as communicative language teaching (CLT forthwith). CLT was the pedagogical extension of the 1970's shift to sociolinguistics (Dell Hymes, John Gumperz and William Labov), functional linguistics (John Firth, M. A. K Halliday), philosophy (John Austin, John Searle) and American-based humanistic approaches (Moskowitz). It represents an expansion of the view of language as something we have to include something we do. Language is acquired through meaningful communication - through 'doing'. CLT therefore promotes a much more student-centred, experience-based, multi-skilled pedagogical approach, with syllabuses typically taking 'realistic' contexts, topic areas, functions (suggesting, requesting) and notions (classification) as their basic organising framework.

Inevitably, the norms embedded within this exported methodology imply particular understandings of language, of student-teacher roles, of warrantable topics, of the importance of particular types of student 'initiative', of education as 'student-centred' rather than 'teacher-centred', of plagiarism as an 'objectively describable and lamentable crime, of 'correctness' being less important than a will to speak' - Pennycook 1994:178.

The view taken here is that adopting a Gramscian approach to development provides further endorsement of the Critical Language Awareness (CLA) pedagogy identified in the previous chapter which balances the two 'acculturation' and 'counterdiscourse' elements (and therefore the research questions will remain the same). CLA is a response to the inadequacy of the two dominant, non-critical descriptive views of language and language varieties. CLA approaches accept that both views are important and pay attention to both form and function.

However, they incorporate an element which asks questions about the conditions on which sociolinguistic rules are based and how they acquired and maintained a powerful, dominant or hegemonic status. Fairclough, outlining the difference between descriptive and critical discourse analysis observes,

> 'sociolinguistics is strong on 'what' questions (what are the facts of variation) but weak on 'how' questions (why are the facts as they are?; how - in terms of the development of social relationships of power - was the existing sociolinguistic order brought into being?; how was it sustained?; and how might it be changed to the advantage of those who are dominated by it?)'.

Fairclough 1990:8

They reveal what the conventions are but do not drill the learner into reproducing them. Emphasis is placed on raising awareness; on helping a learner understand how language and rules of accuracy and appropriacy are not fixed but shaped by social forces; on making a self-assured choice in how they use language and whether or not to conform to conventions.

5.2.4 Lessons drawn

The three conceptualisations of development stress the importance of recognising that no language or pedagogy can be neutral or apolitical and, as a consequence, teachers should take on a broader role than simply one of reproducing teaching practices. In particular, they emphasise the importance of becoming involved in the cultural politics of specific educational contexts and exploring the conflicts that emerge around educational practices which have been assumed as universal. In globalised educational settings, they imply the need to locate and understand the specific by reference to the global and universal. This is slightly different to the total renouncing of claims to universality and objectivity in teaching practices but abandoning the notion that a theoretical stance can be divorced from practice. These ideas reflect Foucault's (1980:126) concept of a 'specific intellectual' in contrast to a 'universal intellectual'. They also suggest that a particular emphasis should be placed on a 'listening intellect' (Kothari, 1987:290). The type of listening is important. As Ryle (1997) points out,

There is an expression used in Lusophone[1] countries, in Angola and
Mozambique, to describe a show put on for outsiders..the expression is para
Ingles ver - "for English eyes". A lot of what people say to reporters and aid
workers is para Ingles ver.

Aid agencies and workers are surrounded by a mystique of power, wealth and opportunity.

This would imply listening to a wide range of participants within an educational context -

students, teachers, administrators, cultural and political workers, etc.

A point I feel strongly about is that listening is distinct from pretensions of empathy and,

the claim to share an understanding of the position and feelings of others, but
rather the recognition of the impossibility of such claims and hence the
requirement that we listen and try to hear what is being said.

Simon, R (1992:72)

Johns (1996a:3) alerts us to fact that the 'preoccupations of (DE) practitioners in Africa are

perhaps different, in so far as the (technological) reforms that are taking place in the West are

marginal to the immediate concerns and experiences of their own work'. I now wish to turn

to identifying areas, within my focus on language and literacy, which seem to me to emerge

specifically from certain African contexts and which continue the four lines of enquiry

identified in the preceding chapter.

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[1] Portuguese speaking

5.3 Language planning: factors to consider

In this second part, I explore African **language planning** factors which impinge upon English-medium teaching. I examine the paradoxes surrounding English-medium teaching in Africa and then explore how African writers rationalise their use or avoidance of English, an imposed colonial language. I consider what pedagogical lessons we might draw from each of these areas.

In post-colonial African states, the polarised debates about English-medium education is often framed around those who argue that the relationship between 'centre' and 'periphery' (Phillipson 1992) English-speaking countries is that of dominant and dominated with the English language acting now, as it had done in the colonial past, as the linguistic extension of cultural domination. This neo-colonial line of argument suggests that colonialism continues to cast a longer shadow than is assumed and that one of the ways this is manifested is in the continuing maintenance of colonial languages - English, French, Portuguese and Spanish - as the main medium of instruction [1] throughout the educational systems of independent sub-Saharan African countries. The argument (Phillippson 1992, Pennycook 1994) here is that the imposition of English has not only displaced and replaced main African languages 'to the detriment of local culture and human rights' (Bloor, 1990:33) but has also resulted in the imposition of the Anglo-Saxon, Judeao-Christian culture that accompanies it.

On the other hand, there are those, very often Africans themselves, who, even in full knowledge of the 'linguistic imperialism' arguments and not as blind 'victims' nevertheless positively choose to embrace the English language. Reasons include the view of English as a lingua franca and therefore a tool of African political unity within and between African multilingual countries; the view that English should be regarded now as the property of Africans, to be 'appropriated' (Pennycook, 1990) by them to such an extent that it reflects the wide range of African experiences and discourses; that English is a key (and inescapable)

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[1] For example, from early primary levels, African pupils from a range of mother tongue backgrounds learn some subjects through the medium of the imported colonial language and increasingly so as they move up the educational system. Higher education, for example, is (officially) conducted in English throughout English-

76

means 'whereby Africans can increase their power in international professional and political arenas' (Bloor, op cit:32). Bloor also alerts us to other more practical difficulties in developing the use of indigenous languages. First, that a large majority of African languages, rich in an oral culture, usually have limited traditional or modern writing (literature or otherwise) and often have no established orthography. Secondly, a severe shortage of teachers in certain linguistic groups would make it very difficult for some children to receive mother tongue education at all. This would only perpetuate certain inequalities as the educated African classes tend to emerge from specific language groups. Lastly, the multiplicity of different mother tongues in the classroom make it logistically impossible to cater for every represented language.

The heated nature of these debates often have the effect of disguising the different lines of argument and it therefore becomes important to unpack them first. By doing so, four main arguments emerge in each of the anti- and pro- English-medium stances (Schmied 1991:102) and these are outlined and expanded upon below.

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speaking Africa.

5.3.1 Anti English-medium arguments

1: The psycholinguistic argument

Counterargument

Mother tongue (MT) education and, in particular, literacy is crucial for a child's fuller cognitive development and should be promoted via MT 'maintenance' programmes.
1. Threshold hypothesis - a certain conceptual and analytical threshold in mother tongue language development has first to be reached before introducing a second language (L2). Too early exposure to an L2 can retard both L1 and L2 cognitive and academic development - 'subtractive', as opposed to 'additive bilingualism' (Cummins, 1976, 1977). 2. Interdependence hypothesis - an initially high level of competence in L1 is a determining factor in the high development of high levels of proficiency in L2 (Cummins 1980, 1984; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). 3. Both hypotheses relate to Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which is strongly related to literacy, i.e. cognitively demanding and context- reduced skills required for academic success, i.e. in contrast to Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BIC), largely undemanding oral and context-embedded situations (Cummins, 1980, 1983, 1984).

Early education (including literacy where possible) can be carried out in mother tongue. However, the cognitive benefits of multilingual education make it superior to monolingual education, e.g. flexibility and originality (Torrance et al 1970, Landry 1974); semantic development (Ianco-Worral 1972); well developed communication skills as a result of becoming more sensitive to other language groups (Ben-Zeev 1977a, 1977b); richer linguistic repertoire and an expanding consciousness (Bisong 1995)
Why settle for a monolingual education when the child lives in a multilingual society? It is educationally more appropriate to equip children for life in a multilingual society.

2: The elitist argument

Counterargument

English is the mother tongue or easily accessible language of a educated elite in Africa and children from this background are initially unfairly advantaged over other children who are disadvantaged anyway.

African parents themselves demand English-medium education from early childhood in an attempt to redress those initial disadvantages in time for competing for further and higher education. English is the route to well-paid employment and therefore the route out of poverty.

3: The linguistic imperialism argument

Counterargument

True independence, political and psychological, comes with independence from imposed European languages. The only way to decolonise the mind is to rid oneself of an oppressive language. English carries ideological messages that reinforce the status quo and values of previous colonial dominators (e.g. Ngugi 1972, 1986, 1989, Chinweizu 1983, 1989).

English, as a world language, can no longer be viewed as the property of one or two imperialistic nations. English can be divorced from its colonial past because it is not a language, in itself, that is dominating but the way it is used by dominant peoples. The same language, can and has been used to express very different ideologies, e.g. the Nazis and Karl Marx used German to frame fundamentally different ideologies (Bloor 1990).

A halfway-house argument is that the use of English as a medium should be limited to academic, technical and scientific fields and avoid literary, religious and humanitarian uses of language (e.g. Rogers 1969, Strevens 1971).

4: The cultural alienation argument

Counterargument

English cannot carry the associations and connotations of an African identity. English medium education deracinates the African child and alienates it from its own cultural background.

English can be and has been appropriated or 'colonised' by African writers to convey African culture and experience. African writers, associated with the New Literatures in English, have already proved that it is possible to convey African culture through English.

5.3.2 Pro English-medium arguments

1. The high cost argument

Counterargument

Implementing a major change of language (s) throughout the educational system - in curricula, teaching training programmes, production of textbooks and teaching aids would not be feasible in manpower or financial resources.

Changes to books, methods and curricula are a natural dynamic of the educational process. Why not change the language together with the content? The long term benefits would outweigh the initial costs.

2. The anti-tribal argument

Counterargument

Selecting one African language in multilingual states would privilege one language group over another and thereby threaten the unity of a nation state. Adopting a non-African language such as English may have its disadvantages, but at least it is an equitably distributed disadvantage. English has the advantage of being an ethnically neutral language.

The argument is equally valid for an African lingua franca such as Swahili. An African lingua franca would be preferable to English which could never be regarded as a neutral language.

3. The technological argument

Counterargument

African languages cannot absorb modern terminology particularly in the scientific and technological fields fast enough for immediate use. English serves this purpose.

Modernisation of African languages has been substantial. Swahili, Hausa, Shona, Bemba, Luo prove that African languages can acquire scientific and technical vocabulary very quickly.

4. <u>International communication argument</u>   <u>Counterargument</u>

English has acquired a unique status as an international language of communication in global economic and political relations. It must be taken advantage of.

A very small percentage of Africans actually participate in international communication and this therefore does not warrant an entire educational system being given over to English-medium education from early primary level. English for international communication should be taught as a subject (EIL)1 rather than a medium (ESL)2 in common with highly successful non-English industrial countries such as Germany and Japan. It would be better taught in high quality, specialised ESP3 type courses, e.g. English for Business, Medicine, etc. Furthermore, English medium teaching does not necessarily guarantee advantage because it is largely taught by mainstream African teachers who often have a poor command of English themselves or poorly developed language teaching methodologies.

[1] EIL - English as an International Language

[2] ESL - English as a Second Language

[3] ESP - English for Specific Purposes

The polarised nature of these debates are unsettling for English-medium teachers because we have tended to be only vaguely aware of the wider impact of English-medium education. The passionate arguments alert us to complex issues embedded in English-medium education, challenge us to take account of them in the way we teach and also to define far more clearly the pedagogical focus and limits of our role. That definition immediately becomes problematic because both positions are convincing yet seemingly incompatible. Either way, we become implicated in producing and perpetuating inequalities in the communities in which we teach.

Two key questions emerge here. First, are the polarised arguments incompatible? Could and should, for example, aspects of the two co-exist on the same pedagogical agenda?

Even if one opts for the English-medium route, as I will, this need not preclude course producers from cultivating an ethos of multilingualism throughout the course. For example, although one cannot (and should not) control codeswitching[1] by pedagogic design, one can attempt to promote and legitimise the opportunities for choice within a course for doing so. For instance, opportunities for using African languages might exist in the course (e.g. selective translation in, say, audio and video-cassettes) or perhaps in the mediation of the course, e.g. codeswitching within tutorial and study groups. The research question here is:

What roles do or could vernacular languages play in and around an English-medium course?

If they **are** significant then the pedagogical question becomes:

How can multilingualism be maintained in the face of globalising forces of which the spread of English is an integral part?

5.3.3 The pro-English route

These are important questions but the key question to me is not **which** language but which **pedagogy within** English. As a member of an English language teaching community, I would align myself with the thinking put forward in the 'counterarguments' to the anti-

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[1] Switching between languages

English-medium debates.

More convincing, however, are the rationales put forward by leading African intellectuals and literary figures who positively choose to embrace the English language as a main medium for communication and do so not as blind victims but in full knowledge of the 'linguistic imperialism' arguments and at the same time with respect for their mother tongues. Western language education practitioners, not generally known for their listening skills, have most to learn from examining the ways that Africans themselves have come to terms with the paradoxes surrounding the use of imposed languages over successive generations. They are, after all, centuries ahead of us in this experience.

5.3.4 Africans debating the role of English

Thinking about language and literacy as sites of struggle is not restricted to rarefied language planning circles; it is a reality that becomes accentuated and played out passionately by African writers from English-speaking countries. On the one hand are writers such as Ngugi (1986) and Chinweizu (1983, 1989) who consciously reject using English in their creative work, who associate the abandonment of a mother tongue with betrayal and view those who do as victims of 'Centre' imperialism.

Ngugi wa Thiongo, for example, already an established Kenyan novelist[1] and essayist in English, switched to writing fiction in Gikuyu from the late 1970's and outlined his ideological reasons in his book Decolonising the Mind (1986):

> We have already seen what any colonial system does: impose its tongue on the subject races, and then down-grade the vernacular tongues of the people. By doing so they make the acquisition of their tongue a status symbol; anyone who learns it begins to despise the peasant majority and their barbaric tongues, he becomes alienated from the values of his mother tongue, or from the language of the masses. Language after all is a carrier of values fashioned by a people over a period of time.
>
> *Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1972:16*

On the other are writers like Achebe, Soyinka, Mphahlele, Aidoo who, for various reasons,

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[1] Weep not Child (1964), The River Between (1965), A Grain of Wheat (1967) - London, Heinemann.

have consciously opted to write in English. That is not, however, the same as saying they are anti-indigenous languages. Achebe, for example, hopes that writers continue to use indigenous languages to 'ensure that our ethnic literature will flourish side-by-side with the national ones' - Achebe, 1975:57.

Their reasons include the potential for being exposed to a wider audience both within and beyond Africa:

> my own sort of alibi for wanting to continue writing in English is, well, one gets the chance for communicating with other Africans outside Ghana, even in Ghana alone, say you are writing in English, you are more able to carry yourself over - if you have any message - carry your message over to more people outside.

Aidoo in Duerden:1972:22

This underlines the fact that language choice is not only related to personal political choice but also depends very much on **local conditions** and on the type of public the writer primarily works for. It relates, for example, to whether the African state is **endoglossic** (using one or more indigenous languages as their primary media of communication on a national level) or **exoglossic** (using foreign languages as their primary 'medium of government-controlled national communication in the domains of administration or education' - Herbert, 1992:23-27). Examples of African states in the former category include Tanzania (Swahili), Ethiopia (Amharic), Somalia (Somali); states in the latter category comprise the vast majority of African nations and in most cases the foreign language is English (e.g. Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya), French (e.g. Cote D'Ivoire, Benin, Senegal), Portuguese (Mozambique, Angola) or French and English (Cameroon).

It also relates to whether neighbouring African nations form particular economic and political blocs of nations with an English colonial background in common. The neighbouring SADC[1], Commonwealth countries (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Namibia) and members of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) form a powerful English-speaking political and economic bloc. For Southern African writers,

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[1] Southern African Development Community

English (rather than an indigenous language) became and remains the manifestation of protest against colonial regimes which preferred black writing in the vernacular languages precisely because it kept people divided.

Others salvage positive gains from the colonial language - a liberating exposure to new traditions and the stretching of their creative instincts:

> Now when we adopt the novel as a medium of literary expression, we are writing in a tradition which already exists, that tradition of the novel in the Western world, and we are trying to write about Africa, give an expression to something African through a foreign medium. This creates a number of problems, problems about style and problems in content and problems in the structure of what you want to say. we are. introducing a modification and a partial determinant of form in using the English language. I think this is necessary, and I don't myself want to spend sleepless nights weeping over the fact that we are writing things in English or in French and not in our African languages. People who want to express themselves don't spend that much time trying to debate in themselves whether they should write in their mother tongue or not - they just write because the impulse is there..you just go ahead and do what you want and say what you want to say. Maybe it'll help a lot as African scholars continue to probe traditional literature and get them out as it were, and record them, maybe it'll help. But I seem to think myself that there's going to be a wide gap, for a long time between oral literature, traditional literature and modern African literature.

Mphahlele in Duerden:1972:104:

5.3.5 Appropriating and answering back

Although Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian novelist, has expressed the hope that other writers use indigenous languages for their creative work, he opted to write in English himself and his defence for doing so is illuminating. For example, countering the argument that too much identity or creativity is lost in writing in a second language, Achebe chooses the example of Conrad, a Pole, who became one of the finest writers in English.

He also uses the example of the eighteenth century Nigerian, Olaudah Equiano, who, after surviving slavery and transportation, later wrote his life history in English and thereby managed to challenge the prevailing untruths or half-truths about slavery. This seems to be an argument that a highly effective means of resistance is to challenge oppressors in their own language and in their own forums. Tredre (1997:7) makes a similar point about Ignatius Sancho, an eighteenth-century author who was born into slavery but went on to become

hailed as a black 'Dr. Johnson' in London literary circles:

> His chief weapon was humour, which he used to lampoon stereotypes of the black intellect: 'From Othello to Sancho the big - we are either foolish - or mulish - all without exception'. In one letter, he bade a correspondent 'the prayers - not of a raving mad Whig, nor fawning deceitful Tory - but of a coal-black, jolly African'.

Achebe also argues that English gave African people, 'a language with which to talk to one another. If it failed to give them a song, it at least gave them a tongue, for sighing'[1]. The widespread success of his novels[2] in school literature curricula throughout the continent seems to underline the validity of this African unity argument. Taking this a step further, the way he uses English emphasises that Africans have been far more sophisticated than the 'linguistic imperialism' argument would suggest and 'were not content with sighing in the new idiom they inherited by force. They certainly made the new language sing in new and beautiful accents' - Durix 1987:46. This is the key point. For Achebe, the objective is not to use English like a native speaker:

> The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience.

> I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new Africa surroundings.

> *In 'The African Writer and the English language' in Morning Yet on Creation Day 1975:5 - 62 London, Heinemann*

These aspirations within English as outlined above seem to be characteristic of the 'New Literature in English' or (the more troublesome term) 'Commonwealth Literature', which refer to the literary production of the colonial and post-colonial Anglophone countries.

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[1] Morning Yet on Creation Day (1975:75), Heinemann

[2] For example, Things Fall Apart (1958), No Longer at Ease (1960), Arrow of God (1964) - London, Heinemann.

5.3.6 Decolonising whose mind?

Although there is not much overt political talk along the lines of decolonising the language or the mind, it is also clear that the 'Commonwealth' writers are not victims of linguistic imperialism.

> The fascination for English visible in many writers from the New Literatures does not result in the simple acceptance of a standard: it often leads to a re - examination of its position in relation to the other tongues, dialects or pidgins at the disposal of a particular artist. This process enriches English by showing its adaptability to different environments. Thus it ceases to be the idiom of the coloniser only and is appropriated by various communities for whom it becomes a fruitful source of exchange.
>
> *Durix 1987:50*

Achebe favours 'stretching' the English language so that it can convey an African experience. For example, he interweaves Igbo words and notions into his English writing but, being a natural pedagogue, creates such a rich context that a reader, foreign to the culture, can use their imagination to draw together the connotations. In this way the reader is 'forced to become aware of a foreign reality which he must accept as different. Language encourages the reader to leave his natural propensity for ethnocentrism' - Durix:47.

This is political and can be seen as Gidden's 'intensified reflexivity' in action. It reminds us of a point that frequently gets lost in 'linguistic imperialism' arguments; that is, that 'decolonising the mind' is a two-way process and that perhaps it is by means of an emerging (and belated) reflexivity on the part of the colonisers - perhaps more so than the colonised - that significant changes in educational practice might be brought about.

For example, western writers such as Pennycook and Phillipson have revealed a whole host of cultural politics surrounding the use of English and alerted us to the fact that a clear line cannot be drawn between past colonial and modern educational practices. However, we must be careful and modest in terms of the pedagogical implications we draw from such discussions. Rather than tell us about African experience, they only underline the belatedness of a western understanding of the legacies of a colonial system. Also, a Western understanding of colonialism is not one of personal experience and is therefore fundamentally different in perspective to an African one. Successive African generations

have, after all, had to live, deal and come to terms with the paradoxes surrounding language use over decades. In short, we have a lot to learn from African experience which is why the Zimbabwean students and African literary figures such as Achebe are so instructive in the way they have rationalised their use of the English language.

5.3.7 Locating the site of struggle

The previous discussion throws an altogether different light on the indigenous/English argument. The indigenous language argument is a defensive stance which seeks to safeguard cultures by maintaining linguistic difference while the English route can be seen as a proactive position which seeks to deliberately harness the various advantages of expression within 'another' language. Both positions run risks. The protectionist stance risks cultural isolation and ghettoization while the proactive stance risks being swamped by foreign norms (in, for example, language, pedagogies, sociologies of knowledge). But the key point here is that both stances can be seen as protectionist; they simply differ in where they locate the struggle for the protection and assertion of difference.

In summary, locating that assertion and protection **through** the English language provides a powerful basis for several potential emancipatory objectives. It promotes opportunities for communication between cultures which might serve as the basis for the recognition of, and support for cultural difference; the experience of the contingency of one's own perceptions; the potential for the questioning of underlying assumptions and the exposure to new ideas and forms of expression on the part of all participants; the powerful opportunity to challenge the colonisers both in the colonisers language and in the colonisers forums; the recognition that without those opportunities for comparative study and 'answering back' (or 'writing back' - Pennycook, 1994) there is a danger that alternative voices can be obscured by dominant players and their discourses.

5.3.8 Emancipatory aims within English

The underlying claim here is that emancipatory aims can be achieved through English; that a language which has been a tool of oppression in the past can also be used as a tool for

emancipation; that emancipatory aims could be achieved through English. These reasons begin to marginalise the 'which language' question and focus attention on what language pedagogy might promote this 'intensified reflexivity' within English. What elements might this pedagogy contain?

> 'Once it used to be thought that English would be pushed out by insurgent nationalists. But the fate of English in Ireland seems the more likely destiny of the language in the Third World. Languages survive, Prof. Crystal says, if they promote both intelligibility and identity. For many in Africa and India, English is both a means of peoples making themselves understood in the world, and a way groups within the country can identify.'
>
> *Walker 1997:11*

5.3.9 The Irish example

If promoting intelligibility and identity is the aim, then standard 'remedial English' approaches do not fit the bill; such approaches never knowingly occupy themselves with questions of identity or the paradoxes that surround the language.

> Writers have to start out as readers, and before they put pen to paper, even the most disaffected of them will have internalised the norms and forms of the tradition from which they wish to secede. They will have been predisposed to accommodate themselves to the consciousness which subjected them. Naturally, black poets from Trinidad or Lagos and working-class writers from Newcastle or Glasgow will be found arguing that their education in Shakespeare or Keats was little more than an exercise in alienating them from their authentic experience, devalorizing their vernacular..but the truth of that argument should not obliterate other truths about language and self-valorization. In any movement towards liberation, it will be necessary to deny the normative authority of the dominant language or literary tradition.

As examples of poets who adopted this course, he cites Thomas McDonagh and James Joyce both of whom were experts in aspects of English literature:

> Joyce, for all his hauteur about the British Empire and the English Novel, was helpless to resist the appeal of, for example, the songs and airs of the Elizabethans. Neither MacDonagh nor Joyce considered it necessary to proscribe within his reader's memory the riches of the Anglophone culture whose authority each was, in his own way, compelled to challenge. Neither denied his susceptibility to the totally persuasive word in order to prove the purity of his resistance to an imperial hegemony..these figures..remind us that (poetry's) integrity is not to be impugned just because at any given moment it happened to be a refraction of some discredited cultural or political system.
>
> *Heaney, 1995: 7*

MacDonagh and Joyce adopted a position towards English which acknowledges the

paradoxes that surround its history but worked with those paradoxes rather than denying them. Their position also underlines that there is no national right of ownership attached to English; it can become the property of many communities across national boundaries and include native and non-native speakers alike.

It also stresses the social potential of language and avoids the limited and defeatist view that certain languages are indelibly imbued with imperialism. As Bloor (1990:40-41) argues, metaphors such as 'linguistic colonisation' or 'language of oppression' imply that power resides in the actual language. The human agent - the colonisers or oppressors - is lost 'in the compression of concepts that the metonymy allows'. In other words, a language **can** be divorced from its colonial past because it is not the language, in itself, that is dominating but the way it is used by dominant peoples. A pertinent example is that of Afrikaans, the most reviled language in Africa today because of its seemingly inextricable association with white supremacy. Threatened with an apparent conspiracy to annihilate it, campaigns to rehabilitate Afrikaans have attracted surprising friends. Black, coloured and white writers and intellectuals, all heavily involved in the anti-apartheid movement, have argued that Afrikaans can and should be unshackled from its political baggage; that it should be celebrated for its own sake and become a 'non-racial, vibrant language, owned by all who speak it' - Braid, 1996:10.

5.3.10   Resistance through English

To challenge the 'normative authority of the dominant language or literary tradition', the implication is that one needs to know how a dominant language is characteristically used in established and dominant institutions (such as Western universities) at the same time as developing a potential to **resist** it. This expands on the traditional remedial language development approach which only concerns itself with the reproduction of linguistic norms and supports the earlier notion of both 'acculturation' and 'counterdiscourse' elements.

This duality and the notion of resistance is a recurrent theme in African language teaching circles (e.g. Chick 1992, Janks 199, Peirce 1989) and at political levels. The People's English Commission of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), which is

affiliated with the African National Congress, called for a wider definition of language

competence than is traditionally available. It includes:

> the ability to say and write what one means; to hear what is said and what is
> hidden; to defend one's point of view; to argue, to persuade, to negotiate; to
> create; to reflect, to invent; to explore relationships, personal, structural,
> political; to speak, read and write with confidence; to make one's voice heard;
> to read print and resist it where necessary '

NECC, 1987

5.4 Print-centred pedagogy:factors to consider

This third section identifies **four** areas which seem to recur in specifically African contexts and which might need to be accounted for within the principles of a DE course destined for use by African students - a limited tradition of library and reading culture, gender issues, collectivist values and differential access to technology. These provide some 'bearings' around which to approach data analysis.

5.4.1 Limited tradition of library and reading culture

Print-centred DE materials carry a special burden of responsibility in countries with an often limited tradition of a reading culture and a predominantly multilingual, oral tradition where a European language is used, with varying degrees of competence, as a lingua franca. Award-bearing, English-medium tertiary level courses give primacy to the written word, often assume sophisticated levels of academic literacy and place an emphasis on what are often underdeveloped skills. The typical black and white prose-intensive style of these DE materials make heavy demands on adult learners who are returning to study, are sometimes unpractised readers and writers (often in both their mother tongue and English, the official language of education), new to academic (and UK) literacy practices. Many African DE learners come from rural areas where access to libraries, reading materials and tutors is limited and moreover has been throughout their educational careers.

As a result, DE materials destined for use in many African countries therefore need to:

- be self-standing in themselves, i.e. not work from the assumption that there are additional references/libraries as back-up now or within the past of the learner.

- account for the fact that the students learning background may predispose them towards a passive relationship with print materials and an overvaluing the authority of print.

- compensate by providing a print environment which, in addition to acting as an information source for the particular course, is rich in different varieties (of English and

potentially mother tongues), genres (a scientific article, a newspaper editorial about, say the same subject) registers (informal and formal) of reading materials both to develop reading and to provide examples of different types of writing from which the student-writers can learn.

In terms of the last point, some might argue that that text rich materials result in an extension of western styles of authorship and also that it is counter-intuitive to give readers an extra burden. This is an area I cover further in 12.5. but to clarify the point here, my response is two fold: first, I have already argued that there must be some unequivocal recognition within the course design that established academic discourse communities 'impose requirements for recognised participation' (Lankshear, 1997:42).. If participants are to understand how discourse communities typically present and account for themselves then exposure to their writing becomes an important part of both an acculturation **and** counterdiscourse route. The structurally simplified language of many distance education materials and their typically genre-poor format acts against the best interests of the learner in terms of preparing them for either a 'recognised participation' **or** the development of a critical awareness about the socially constructed character of academic knowledge and literacy practices. A counterdiscourse route might, for example, mix alternative/different/cross-cultural versions of or perspectives on the same topic area (i.e. an extract from an academic article, a field report, a radio bulletin). this sense, text-rich materials should not be viewed as an additional extra but integral to course learning.

The second point - of tackling reading burden - presents challenges. On the one hand, there are persuasive arguments which advocate an increase in exposure to reading materials: Eskey & Grabe (1988) suggest that the quantity of reading is important to develop reading, language and learning. Davison & Kantor (1982) and Schmidt (1980) suggest that the simplified language (typical of much distance education writing) creates learning, language learning and reading problems; that if language is, by nature, abbreviative and assumptive, then true simplification would involve expansion rather than reduction, that taken-for-granted assumptions, for example, should be made far more explicit.

On the other hand, this exposure must be achieved without overtaxing a learner and within ergonomic feasibility, i.e. without the components of the course becoming too unwieldy, heavy, difficult to transport (bearing in mind that working DE students often 'snatch' study at home and in the workplace). The issue, I believe, is one of quality rather than quantity. If one accepts the argument for a text-rich learning environment, then various strategies such as an incremental exposure, a judicious use and mix of tutor-written and imported text types and 'bitesize' text boxes, for example, could be employed to serve those ends without overtaxing the reader.

Do the DE materials provide a text-rich environment and are they self-standing in themselves?

Is the reading and writing support provided appropriate to the learners needs?

What ergonomic factors are important?

5.4.2 Gender issues

As an aspect of inequality and of difference, **gender** has become a significant issue in many African countries and is worthy of exploration. In Zimbabwe, it has become clearer that despite the rhetoric about redressing twin problems of racial and gender under-representation in various institutions, the ZANU-PF[1] government has actively and effectively pursued legislation to dramatically improve the racial imbalance, but the gender imbalance remained during the 17 years following independence in 1980 (UNICEF 1985, Dorsey 1989, 1990, Marira 1991, Gordon 1994).

Dorsey, for example, looking at the composition of University of Zimbabwe academic staff, makes the point that in contrast to the new racial balance, the gender imbalance has remained largely untouched (a 4% increase over 10 years). She found that women represent 21% of the academic staff but are concentrated in the middle and low academic ranks in all faculties and that even those with doctoral degrees are poorly represented at higher academic ranks such as senior lecturer and professor as well as in the university governance. The key factor

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[1] Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)

she identifies as affecting their career prospects was that home and family responsibilities mean women academics are less likely to approximate to the ideal of the 'professional academic'. The constraints to their time and mobility mean they are unable to attend conferences and internal meetings, do extended research and are less productive in terms of professional reading, writing and publishing. Dorsey (1990:104) sums up her research with a plea that the University (and by extension exporting higher education institutions) should set an example in terms of gender issues rather that simply reflect Zimbabwean society.

> In a patriarchal society such as we have in Zimbabwe the system operates to enhance the position of men and relegate women to a subordinate position where it is more difficult for them to compete on equal terms'

The gendered nature of working contexts (and by extension adult students learning contexts) challenges the adequacy of a liberal concept of equal opportunities which operates according to a 'level playing field' (Jewson & Mason 1986)[1] rationale. This corresponds to an increasing focus on gender as a significant category in the ODL profession (Jewson & Mason 1986, Faith 1988, Kirkup 1990, Kanwar & Jagannathan 1995, Bailey 1996). These studies reveal how the liberal, open-access rhetoric of ODL masks the gendered nature of studying contexts and conditions.

> 'The advantages of flexibility (of DE) are counterbalanced by the disadvantages of presumed equality of access to resources..and the disadvantage of teaching structures and materials that are not 'women friendly' either in content or in pedagogy'.
> *Kirkup 1996:53*

> It is important for distance educators to remember that household and families are organisations with a structural inequality of power and not to presume a symmetry with respect to resources, power, privacy in either paid work or the domestic environment.
> *Op cit:56*

The suggestion is that, in terms of gender issues, a distance educator could adopt a more defined and purposeful developmental role by adopting educational practices which flow from other concepts of equal opportunities (EO) - Kirkup (1990, 1996, 1997).

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[1] For example, by means of open entry policies and universally applied 'fair' codes of conduct in selection and recruitment

The **liberal** concept of EO in ODL tends to be focused on 'fair procedures' such as open entry policies, non-discriminatory behaviour and codes of conduct in selection and recruitment. The **legal** approach is focused on formal auditing (gender representation on boards and in recruitment, appearances of women in educational textbooks) and complying with funding conditions. The **radical** concept of EO would also stress the importance of accounting for broad differences between men and women students **within** the course rather than assuming that what is required is assimilation into a homogenous group. In other words, it is not so much a question of **equal opportunities** (or equal access to an existing system) but of **equity** (a challenge to the existing system).

According to different concepts of EO, are the teaching structures and materials of the course 'women friendly' in content and pedagogy?

What are some of the women-friendly implications in terms of content and pedagogy?

5.4.3   Collectivist values

Various studies (Holtzman 1975, Guy 1989, Creed & Koul 1990, Johns 1996a) stress a general African emphasis on collectivist values. An immediate research focus becomes whether Western metaphors and assumptions about learning - individualistic, competitive, independent, tolerating a plurality of scholarly positions - are appropriate in other cultural settings and if not, what methodological implications that has for course design.

Guy (1989) and Holtzman (1975), for example, suggest that a research priority should be an exploration of traditional approaches to learning and interpersonal orientations of distance education students in both the developed and developing countries. Triandis (1986), a social psychologist, identifies different notions of individualism and collectivism as a means of distinguishing between different cultures.

In western countries, individualistic in orientation, self-reliance is interpreted as freedom of expression and freedom to compete with others. Interdependence is based on contractual relationships entered into only on the basis of calculations about personal profit and loss.

In countries with collectivist orientations, pride rests on the achievement of the group and

self-reliance is interpreted as not being a burden on the in-group. What competition exists is between in-groups. Interdependence between individuals is assumed and social harmony among members of the in-group is maintained by minimising conflict, tolerating views and the sharing of scarce resources.

What notions of individualism and collectivism exist among the students?

5.4.4 Differential access to technology

The technology divide between countries is increasingly apparent. This is particularly noticeable at the global DE conferences (e.g. ICDE[1]).

> The present reality is that the technology gap between developed and developing nations is actually widening...most of the developing world has no experience of what readily accessible communications can do for their society and their economy.
> *Nelson Mandela (1995: 23)*

Bates (1997) explains that information technology-based DE depends on a whole host of pre-requisites[2] which are challenging even for developed countries. He stresses, however, that greatest disparity is not **between** countries but **within** countries. There is a widening gap between the rich and poor in terms of access to communication technologies as well as a widening gap between rich and poor nations. The wealthy elites in the poorest countries can communicate globally with each other - 'Johannesburg is better connected to London than it is to Soweto' - Bates, 1997:8.

How does this relate to my research? It becomes important to adopt a proactive pedagogical role if you adopt the view that, despite the economic and infrastructural difficulties, information technology is crucial to African countries, 'if they wish to modernise their infrastructures, survive in economic terms and compete internationally' (Hawkridge 1989:2).

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[1] International Conference of Distance Education

[2] A well-developed national information technology infrastructure including extensive telecommunications networks, international communications standards for data transmission, network protocols suitable for the Internet, natural coverage by Internet service providers, adequate bandwidth to the desktop, workstations for students operating to common standards.

96

This includes a recognition that computers and computer literacy are increasingly essential in all sectors - agriculture, industry, commerce, health, education, defence, local government and that African countries run the risk of isolation from global communication systems which are now computer-based.

Hawkridge (1989) predicted that computers would be introduced into African education in a haphazard manner, **except** in universities. In other words, African universities (and by extension DE tertiary institutions with African students) have an important role to play in introducing large numbers of students to computers and contributing to 'catch-up' with contemporaries in other countries.

In the context of my research, this means working with the existing technological realities (in this case, concentrating efforts into enhancing the quality of low-tech DE materials) but without regarding them as defining characteristics. This implies the recognition that prestigious African universities, businesses and sectors have or (will have) increasingly good Internet and international telecommunications links and develop into high-tech centres of excellence. It highlights the importance of understanding that tertiary level African students represent a privileged elite, some of whom will occupy key decision-making posts in the future. It becomes important to include decision-makers in the information technology process where possible for two reasons. First, to avoid the risk of isolation from the global mainstream and secondly, because they could play a part in a much wider developmental 'fan'[1] as mediators and advocates in a range of other contexts.

The question for my research is whether it is possible to feed into this developmental fan:

Does or could the course contribute to a longer term aim of investment in computer technologies or computer literacy skills?

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[1] Development fan - term coined by Hilton, 1994, (but in relation to language as a cross-cutting issue and referring to a network of social activities and relationships).

5.5 Close

Having discussed the sort of emphases that emerge from both a globalised and Southern African context in the preceding chapters of section A, I will turn to section B of the study - the research approach - which consists of three chapters. Respectively, these provide:

1. a condensed version of the research questions

2. basic information about the course and students

3. details of the research methodology

PART B

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Chapter 6 - Summary of research questions

6.1   Introduction

The various research questions that emerged naturally throughout the theoretical discussion of the two preceding chapters could be condensed into one question:

In the Wye course, which is used by learners in a range of countries, what emancipatory role could the course producers adopt towards strengthening 'the overall academic development' of a country in which the course is situated, particularly in relation to language and academic literacy issues?

This chapter provides a summarised version of more particular research questions which are subsumed under this umbrella question.

The key questions appear on the left in bold. On the right, I have broken them down into more detailed practical questions which form the actual basis of my data analysis. These are dealt with in different data analysis chapters. For example, the language planning questions are covered in chapters 9 and 10 while the print pedagogy questions are dispersed over chapters 11, 12 and 13. For ease, I shall re-state the questions in the introductions of each chapter.

6.2   Language planning questions

What discourses occur around the use of the English language?	What ambiguities/aspirations surround the use of English in Zimbabwe? What type of English is promoted within the course?
Can multilingualism be maintained in the face of globalising forces (of which the spread of English is an integral part)?	What roles do or could vernacular languages and varieties of English (local, national and international) play in and around the English-medium course?

6.3 Print-centred pedagogy questions

What are the social practices which occur around the DE texts and which give texts specific kinds of cultural meaning in a Zimbabwean community?	Culture of production:	Culture of reception:
	What assumptions (expectations & demands) about academic literacy practices do the UK course producers make? What responsibility do the producers of the course assume for the literacy demands of their course?	How transparent are assumptions about academic literacy to the Zimbabwean students within the materials and feedback? Do the Zimbabwean learners experience difficulties around taken-for-granted academic literacy practices embedded in materials which originate from a non-African context? (Identified areas to explore: individualism/collectivism, plurality of scholarly positions, teacher-student relationship, gender issues, study conditions, ergonomic issues, etc) What do they value in the course and do they have suggestions for change?
In what ways could the UK DE producers contribute to 'the overall academic development' of the country in which their course is situated?	Do the DE materials provide a text-rich environment? Are the teaching structures and materials of the course 'women friendly' in content and pedagogy? To what extent are the recipients of the course positioned as passive consumers or active initiators? Does or could the course contribute to the development of computer literacy skills?	Does evidence exist to show that learners & local tutors (need to) shape or supplement the non-African course? What range of stances do the learners adopt towards 'foreign' educational practices (particularly in language and literacy) - hostile, obedient, admiring, etc? Is there evidence that the learners represent a coopted, culturally alienated elite? Do they have confidence in things Zimbabwean? What Zimbabwean aspirations surround the course? Is there evidence of conflicting interests among the Zimbabwean course participants? (Ministerial importers/learners, male/female)

6.4   Implications for policy and practice

Is it possible, within this asymmetrical donor-recipient situation, to establish a north-south relationship of an empowering kind?	What learning and teaching opportunities could exist beyond the control and ambit of the UK producers?
What are the implications in terms of pedagogy, content and structure?	Could changes be made to the Wye materials in terms of content, authorship, origin and pedagogy?

6.5   Close

The following chapter gives background information about the UK course, the Zimbabwean participants and the Zimbabwean context in general.

Chapter 7 - Contexts of Research

7.1 Introduction

The empirical data is centred on a group of Zimbabwean professionals, in Zimbabwe, who are undertaking a DE, post-graduate diploma course which is produced, managed, examined and largely tutored in the UK. In this chapter, I provide background information about, first, the UK DE institution (courses and target audience, etc) secondly, general information about the students and the Zimbabwean context.

7.2 The UK Context

7.2.1 Rationale behind choice of institution

The course under study is one of several courses available on the external programme (EP forthwith) of Wye College[1]. I selected this institution above others[2] for a variety of reasons:

- as a DE organisation deliberately targeting learners from developing countries

- having the largest single cohort of students on a course (11 students in Zimbabwe) in an overseas country (rather than one or two students in a range of countries)

- having an already established rolling programme in Zimbabwe with a yearly intake of students onto the same course (and therefore the potential for research at different levels and possibly on a longitudinal basis)

- as an example of an institution in the process of defining its future role and enthusiastic about bottom-up, student-based qualitative research - should they, for example, be

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[1] Wye is part of the University of London and a centre of excellence in agriculture, horticulture, agricultural economics and the rural environment.

[2] Open University, School of Oriental and African Studies, International Extension College

moving towards local level adaptations of their course, production partnerships or enhancing the quality of the existing materials?

- as an established programme in Zimbabwe, the often protracted, protocol procedures involved in overseas research might be facilitated

- as a course that addresses the real constraints faced by learners in most African countries - a predominantly, paper-based learning context (print materials and UK tutor feedback) and with a minimal local level tutorial system

- having an objective to increase, wherever possible, the participation of women in their programme (in their terms, by introducing gender-related courses)

- because it is a UK-based institution, I would have 'relative' ease of access to key data sources such as DE writers, students TMA's, TMA feedback, exam papers, simple institutional statistics

7.2.2 Background of institution

Launched in 1988, Wye EP was a ground breaking programme on two counts. It was the first **taught** distance course in the history of the University of London's External Programme (rather than just an examination system) and the first to allow graduates from other universities to register for external postgraduate qualifications.

In terms of administrative structure, the EP is a subject-oriented, dedicated DE department within a larger 'mainstream' college (model three in Perraton's typology of DE administrative structures - Perraton, 1991:13). The EP 'niche' courses - in Agricultural Development, Agricultural Economics and Environmental Management - are targeted towards professionals employed in agricultural and related sectors of Third World economies (managers, planners, field workers, etc). They provide an identified (Teshome, 1990:163) need, among people with work and/or family commitments, for the opportunity to gain both professional development and a prestigious UK university qualification.

104

7.2.3 Course organisation

Wye offers modular programmes in the three subject areas under a flexible three-tier system which allows students to select courses at a level which suits their own objectives and pace. The Affiliated Programme, for example, allows professionals to undertake one-off courses in specialist areas of choice (e.g. Livestock Development) while the other two are full-scale courses with compulsory components and options. This system also offers progression routes - the PG Diploma can be studied in its own right but, if passed at 60%, can count towards Part 1 of the two-part MSc. See Table 1.

Table 1: The Wye College three-tier system

Programme	No of courses	Minimum (yr.)*	Maximum (yr.)
MSc	8	2	5
PG Diploma	4	1	5
Affiliated	1	1	1

* minimum year is equivalent to full-time study

7.2.4 Entrance requirements

Standard UK university requirements are outlined in the EP prospectus (1995:22), although in practice, as discussed later in this chapter, Wye have not strictly adhered to the stated English language policy.

> 'The qualification required for registration are the same as for Diploma and MSc registration by internal students of the University of London. For the Diploma either a degree or technical or professional qualification accepted by the University is required, or work experience judged appropriate and relevant by the University. For the MSc a good degree in Agriculture, Economics or Agricultural Economies or other appropriate discipline, accepted by the University is required.'

> 'the programme requires a high level of English Language ability in reading, writing and study skills, equivalent to a minimum of 6.0 overall band score in the British Council Test of English. Applicants may be asked to provide evidence of language ability as tested by the British Council of another recognised body.

7.2.5 General student data

The student numbers per year are relatively small but typical of a small-scale niche DE programme (e.g. 82 in 1988, 117 in 1989). The EP has attracted learners, mainly from agricultural officers in the 30-39 age range but also from ambitious new younger recruits and from older long-serving officers at senior level, eager to keep their positions in the face of competition - see Table 2. The programme has attracted students from over 60 different countries and from a wide variety of educational, professional, language and cultural backgrounds.

Age Profile: All EP students 1988/96
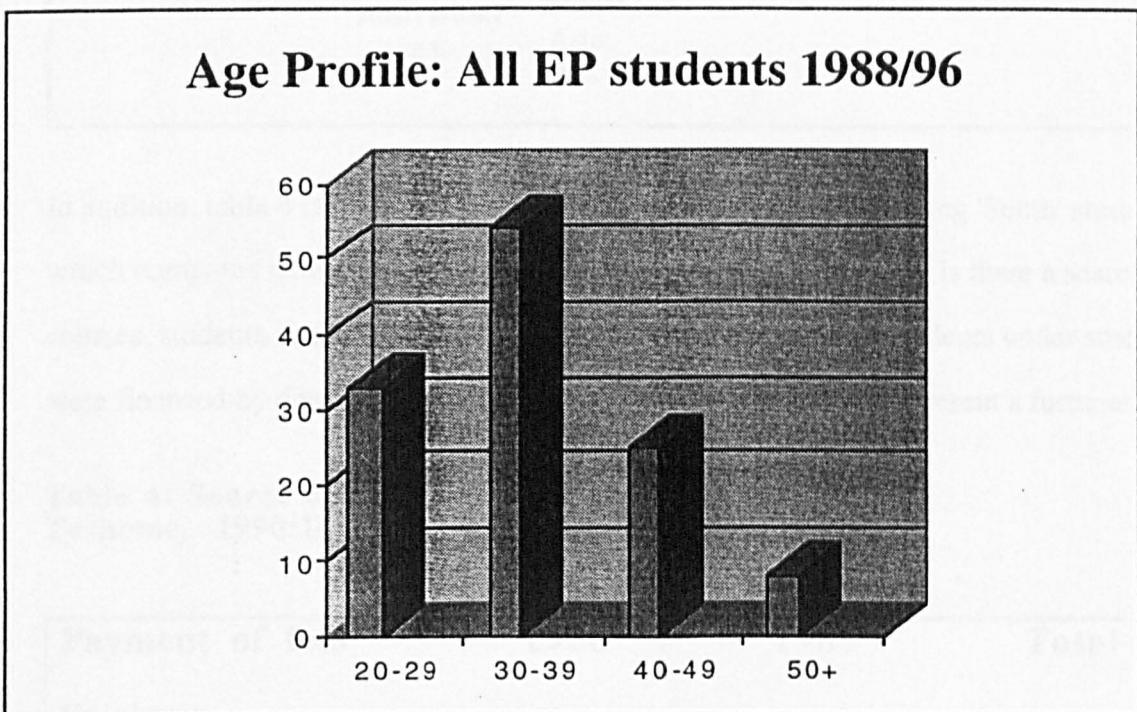
Table 2: Age profiles of EP students 1988/96. Source Wye College.

The high proportion of students from African countries appears to confirm the lack of home-based tertiary-level opportunities (discussed in chapter 6) and the attraction of a flexible system which both recognises professional experience and provides non-graduates with a stepping stone into higher education - see table 3 below.

Table 3: Geographical dispersion of students 1988-96 (Source: Wye College)

Geographical Residence: Students on Agricultural Development Programme 1988-96

- America/Cari 10%
- Europe 28%
- Africa 48%
- Australasia 5%
- Asia 9%
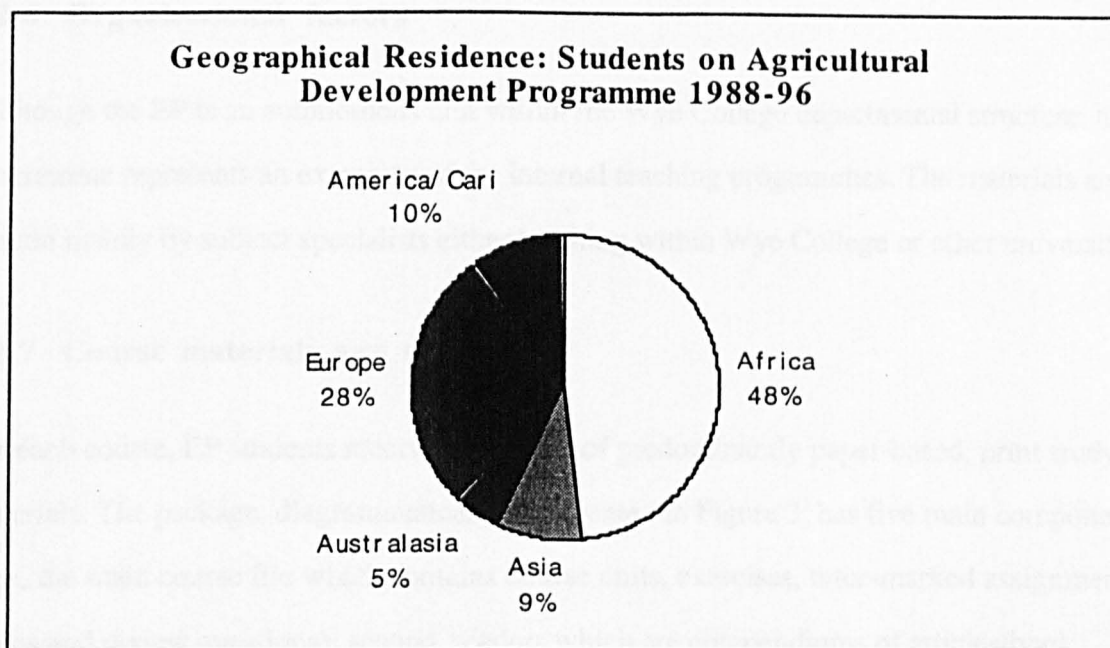
In addition, table 4 reveals a surprisingly high number of self-financing 'South' students which compares with 'Northern' equivalent at a ratio of 1:2. Not only is there a scarcity of courses, students in south often have to pay for their studies. The students under study here were financed by donors through the Ministry of Agriculture and represent a fortunate few.

Table 4: Source of fees for Wye College courses (Source: Teshome, 1990:166)

Payment of fees	1988	1989	Total
Employer			
North*	2	5	7
South	7	5	12
Funded by donors			
North	1	-	1
South	15	29	44
Self			
North	37	34	71
South	17	21	38
Other sources			
North	2	4	6
South	1	19	20
Total	**82**	**117**	**199**

North* = Students of British, other European, North American and New Zealand nationality
South = Students of African, Caribbean, Latin American, Middle East and Papua New Guinean nationality

7.2.6 Organisational factors

Although the EP is an autonomous unit within the Wye College departmental structure, the programme represents an extension of the internal teaching programmes. The materials are written mainly by subject specialists either teaching within Wye College or other universities.

7.2.7 Course materials and support

For each course, EP students receive a package of predominantly paper-based, print study materials. The package, diagrammatically represented in Figure 3, has five main components: First, the main course file which contains course units, exercises, tutor-marked assignment topics and review questions); second, readers which are compendiums of articles/book extracts); third, core textbooks; fourth a study guide giving study skills and exam information to the students; lastly, supplementary (as opposed to integrated) audio and video materials.
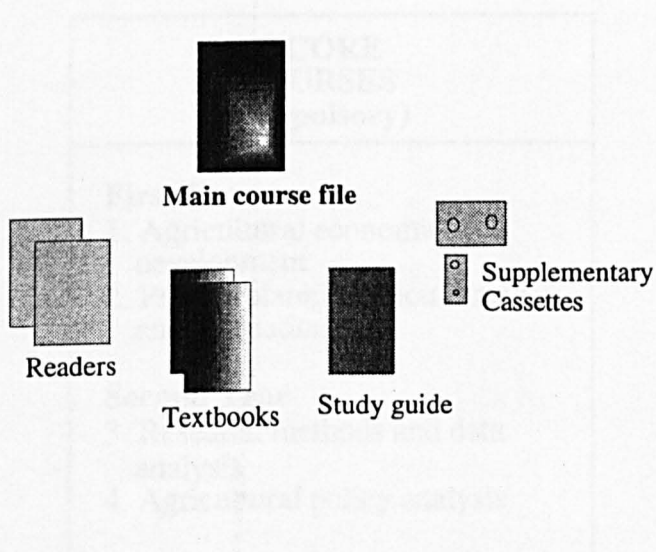
Figure 3: Typical components of Wye course

7.2.8 In-course student support

An accompanying study guide provides the students with a course overview, 'introduces' the EP staff (with photos), gives basic study skills advice (re notetaking, time-management, essay-writing, examination preparation). Student support is provided, in most cases exclusively, by tutors from Wye in the form of written feedback to Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA's) which have a turnaround of about 1-3 weeks. Each yearly course has three TMA's (the third being a mock exam). Students stay with specific tutors within each course.

7.2.9 Assessment

Students are assessed entirely on the end-of-course exam results. TMA's are not compulsory and are not part of course assessment. 'This is based on the belief that there is no way to guarantee assignments are a student's own work' - Teshome (1990), citing research from Bernstein and Bryson (1988:9).

7.2.10 Selected course

For research purposes, I have selected the PG Diploma course in Agricultural Development which, in the case of the Zimbabwean students, consists of 4 compulsory core courses - see table 5. These courses are taken over a two-year period and operate within a fixed exam timetable; the students have limited flexibility over study pace and are expected to read given units in preparation for the tutorials. Further details of each core course appear in Appendix 1. Of those two first year courses - Project Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and Agricultural Economics for Development - I chose the former as a focus on the grounds that, as a non-economist, it would be more accessible.

4 CORE COURSES (compulsory)
First Year 1. Agricultural economics for development 2. Project planning, monitoring and evaluation **Second Year** 3. Research methods and data analysis 4. Agricultural policy analysis

Table 5: Structure of the Agricultural Development course

7.3 The Zimbabwean Context

7.3.1 Selection of core case-study students

The selection of the case-study students was dictated by practical and protocol considerations. All the students, no matter what year, were geographically dispersed throughout Zimbabwe and only came together as a group on one day in two months for their two tutorials at the Agricultural College in Harare. As I was working to a limited travel budget myself, the practical option was to time my visit to coincide with the tutorials in Harare.

Although the course director and administrator at the Ministry of Agriculture were eager to assist me with my research, they also wanted to protect the tutorial time and energy of their hard-working students; my research could not in anyway eat into or disrupt their tutorial and group-study time. In addition, the Ministry and Wye College did not wish me to visit during the one-week summer school in August as this was a very demanding time for students and tutors alike; they also wanted me to avoid September as the students prepared for exams in October. Instead, the course administrator at the Ministry of Agriculture suggested I visit on tutorial days between February and July (i.e. either the April or June tutorial days) and generously granted me permission to keep one group of students (at a level of my choosing) for an extra two days at the college (in return for paying additional accommodation and catering fees). This research was to be conducted between the hours of 10.00-4.00 at the College. This was also generous from the point of view of the students since they were working professionals with home commitments.

The Ministry also permitted me to speak to any other group at the College but outside tutorial times, to only observe tutorials with the tutor's permission and speak to tutors; they also agreed to facilitate visits/interviews with three individual students in different contexts (urban, village, rural). The case-study therefore became shaped by what was feasible - a two-day research period with one core group of students, observations of a small number of tutorials, interviews with tutors, course administrators and 3 individual students (a more

detailed account of this appears in the succeeding chapter).

But what level of student should the two-day research focus on? One strategy would be to focus on the new students midway through their first year (on the June tutorial day); any difficulties faced by them, as students returnees, might be more sharply focused in their own minds. Due to funding uncertainties, however, the new intake of students that year (1996) was cut to five and their starting date delayed by four months so that at the time of the June visit, they would have only just started the course. For a focus on first year students, my choice was to either work with those five students as a group or delay the visit for another year (on the shaky assumption that funding and numbers would be found). A delay would have meant that I was collecting data well into the third year of the PhD. I therefore began to explore the possibilities of working with other years.

Both the second or third year levels would provide me with a larger cohort of students for the two-day research (between 10 and 13 students). In the end, I chose the second-year students for a variety of reasons: this postgraduate diploma intake was likely to contain a **range** of student levels while third year students represented only those who had passed second year exams at 60% and were now progressing to the MSc part 2 - in other words, they were only particularly high achieving students; third year students also diversify into four of ten specialist options (e.g. livestock management, land degradation and sustainability) and at any one time the number of students per tutorial option group could be fairly small.

The second year, by contrast, had recently completed the first year exams, had just started the next core courses and would be in a good position to provide a retrospective overview of any initial or subsequent difficulties on the first year core courses and exams; crucially, this level, unlike the first year, would provide me with a broader range of recent data sources readily available in the UK - a range of TMA's, TMA feedback, first year exam scripts and results.

Nevertheless, having chosen the second-year students for the 2-day intensive research period, I then deliberately pursued other opportunities during my visit to observe, meet and interview students and tutors from the first and third year levels.

7.3.2 Profile of core case-study students

The 10 Zimbabwean students, who were the major focus of my empirical work, were taking the diploma as part of a compulsory, rolling, in-service 'human resource development programme' run by their employer, Agritex (Department of Agricultural Technical and Extension Services), a department within the Zimbabwean Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development. The students are mainly middle management AEO's or Agricultural Extension Officers (1 Principal AEO, 7 District AEO's and 2 AEO's in order of status) working within the very hierarchical structure of Agritex and are located in different regional offices around the 8 provinces of Zimbabwe.

With the exception of the two younger AEO's (31 and 36 yr. old), the learners are aged between 42 and 57 (median average 46), older than the typical Wye majority group age of 30-39. Information about the age groups of earlier intakes for the course (from Agritex) was not made available to me but anecdotal evidence (from informal talks with tutors) suggests that the earlier intakes conformed to the younger age group. The move towards to an older age group was attributed to the fact that in the early years, older middle-management extension officers in the Ministry of Agriculture considered the introduction of the course rather negatively. Various reasons were suggested: as older officers tended to have higher rank, more duties, more responsibilities and larger families, the additional burden of studying was not welcomed; status, title, rank and age were considered extremely important factors in everyday communication within and beyond the workplace - any prospect of failure or poor exam results was extremely face-threatening to older male students who had been away from studying for long periods of time and who would be put in the position of competing with younger students, some of whom were female and/or relatively fresh from college.

This early resistance to the course, however, had produced other problems for older staff: their younger, inferior colleagues had seized the opportunity for taking further qualifications and older officers realised that, unless they too undertook the course, they might find themselves being overtaken, threatened or embarrassed to be in charge of better-qualified

junior staff. For this reason, it was suggested, more older officers were presenting themselves to undertake the course.

In this core case-study group, there are 9 males, 1 female and the majority are non-graduates who, after secondary education, have taken a one-year Diploma in Agriculture from Chibero Agricultural College in Zimbabwe. Two of the students are graduates. The time since any other formal education varies between 6 and 22 years (median average 12 years).

The students were invited to enrol for the course, subject to district/central approval and funding. The Agritex programme has been funded by major donors such as NORAID and the Rockefeller Foundation on a course-by-course basis with students picking up often considerable expenses for travelling and subsistence during tutorials. Successful completion of the course at either Diploma or MSc level is not tied to a salary increase but, although not consistently applied, it is increasingly a deciding factor in promotion.

AGRITEX SCHEMATIC ORGANIZATIONAL CHART - Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development

DIRECTOR

Dep. Dir. (Field)   Dep. Dir. (Agr. Eng.)   Dep. Dir. (Tech.)

                        (Exec.
                        Section)

Chief Agr. Extension Officers   Agr. Ext. Off.   Chief Agr.   Chief Agr.   Chief Agr.   Chief Agr. Specialists (5)
(8 Provinces)   (Liaison)   Specialist   Engineer   Specialist   (Animal Prod., Crop Prod.,
                                                   (Irrigation) (Engineering) (Soil/Water Cons.)   Mgt., Planning & Training)

                                           Ch. Exec.
                                           Officer
                                           (Communic.,
Prin. Agr.   Prin. Agr.   Fin., Rec'ds,   Prin. Agr.   Prin. Agr.   Prin. Agr.   Prin. Agr.
Ext Officer   Ext Officer   Staffing,   Specialist   Engineer   Specialist   Specialist
(Field)   (Technical)   Transport   Senior Agr.
                                                                                                               Spec. (Control)

✳ Dist. Agr. Ext. Officers (5-8)   Provincial Agr. Ext. Spec. (6-8)   Agr. Spec./   Agr. Engr./   Agr. Spec./   Agr. Spec./Senior Agr. Spec.
                                   (Crops, Farm Mgt., Hort., Irrig.,   Sr. Agr Spec. Sr. Agr Engr. Sr. Agr Spec.
                                   Cons., Livestock, Mech., Planning,
                                   Training, Topography, Etc.)

                        AEO's (3-4 per district) ✳

                                                                       Res. Tech.   Res. Tech

        Irrigaton Manager   Agr. Ext. Sup. (4-6)   Agr. Ext. Sup.
                                                                                                             Data Capt. Op
Agr. Ext. Worker   Agr. Ext. Workers   Agr. Ext Workers (6-8)   AEW Equiv.
(Cartographic)   (Irrigation, 3-4) Cons. Team
         Gen. Hands   Field Orderlies   Research Hands

Figure 4: Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water development hierarchy, Zimbabwe.

7.3.3 Agriculture in Zimbabwe

Although Zimbabwe has one of the most highly developed industrial sectors (manufacturing and mining) in Africa, agriculture is by far the most successful and dominant economic sector. About 80% of the population are dependent on farming for a livelihood and according to 1990 figures, four-fifths of its (then) population of about 12 million live in rural areas - Hawkridge (1989:15). Agriculture in Zimbabwe is highly diversified and produces a range of crops some of which are important in the export market in attracting vital foreign currency.

These middle-management extension officers play an important role in delivering and implementing the whole agricultural policy of the Zimbabwean government. Their role at present is to operate as outreach field workers and serve the direct needs of 4 widely different farmer clientele (communal sector, resettlement sector, small-scale commercial sector and large-scale commercial sector) in five different (agroecological) farming regions by generating, providing and promoting agricultural programmes and advice 'which enhance competitive and economically viable productivity on a sustainable basis' - Agritex Mission Statement, 1995. In the future, some of the AEO's will occupy key policy-making positions.

Because agriculture is so key to the Zimbabwean economy, politics are ever-present. In 1982, the newly-independent government re-directed extension services to the small-holder sector with the mainly white, large-scale commercial farmers now paying for extension advice from Agritex or elsewhere (particularly in new ventures such as ostrich farming, hydroponics, floriculture). The AEO's are often caught up in controversial political policies such as resettlement programmes and the recent plan to repossess 5 million hectares of prime farmland, most of it white-owned, using legislation passed in 1992.

7.3.4 Working background

The AEO's live a peripatetic life, visiting farmers and setting up rural training programmes in different aspects of agriculture and sometimes general education (where this might later feed into agricultural aims), competitions, shows, women's savings clubs and diagnostic

surveys. At their offices, they regularly compile reports for central government about productivity levels, rainfall, project identification, monitoring and evaluation, etc. They communicate directly with farmers or farmers representatives but can also convey information via newspapers, agricultural factsheets, magazines, posters, national radio network and by television (in the case of the commercial farming sector who unlike the communal or small holder farmers will own television sets).

As they are full-time workers, the learners study individually at home or work wherever possible, often commuting with study materials. Typical of many DE programmes in Africa, the students are dispersed over a wide geographical area in the eight provinces. This dispersal impacts substantially on opportunities for interaction with other students and local tutors.

7.3.5 Local level administration and tutoring

All Wye students are recommended to send three TMA's per course back to Wye for feedback with the last one acting as a timed mock exam. Although voluntary, it is an established expectation that the Agritex students complete them all.

Unlike many EP students who work solely on a correspondence basis with Wye, the Zimbabwean learners have:

- a local level administration base responsible for distributing the reading materials, co-ordinating TMA's turnaround, organising tutorials, exams, recruiting, etc.

- a 2-day induction to the course, including one 2 hour introductory study skills course at the beginning of each year, delivered by the communication skills unit of the University of Zimbabwe and covering such areas as time organisation, citation, planning essays, exam questions, precision in writing, concise writing.

- a local level tutorial system

Once in two months, the students travel considerable distances (500 - 100 km range) to meet

116

at an Agricultural College in Harare for 2 half-day group tutorials with the local tutor of each course. The local level tutors are expected to revise timetabled course units, attempt to resolve any difficulties with texts, relate the concepts in the generic materials to well-known Zimbabwean projects and policies and provide discussion. Local level tutors do not have anything do with the TMAs which are sent directly to Wye. The small group of local tutors are either drawn from (largely black) Agritex personnel who are specialists in particular agricultural areas (and often ex-Wye students themselves) or (largely white) lecturers from University of Zimbabwe working in the Agriculture department.

Once a year there is an intensive week-long residential school at the same college at which Wye tutors may also make presentations. This is such a strictly-timetabled event and the reason why the Ministry and Wye encouraged me to avoid this time. Between tutorials, the learners are encouraged to meet other students, at their own expense, on a voluntary basis in study groups and to contact other students or local tutors by telephone, radio or mailbag. In practice, this depends on energy, time, finance, proximity to other students or to study centres in Bulawayo, Harare, Mutare and is often omitted. Staying overnight at the College, the students use any free time holding informal discussions amongst themselves about the course, essays, etc.
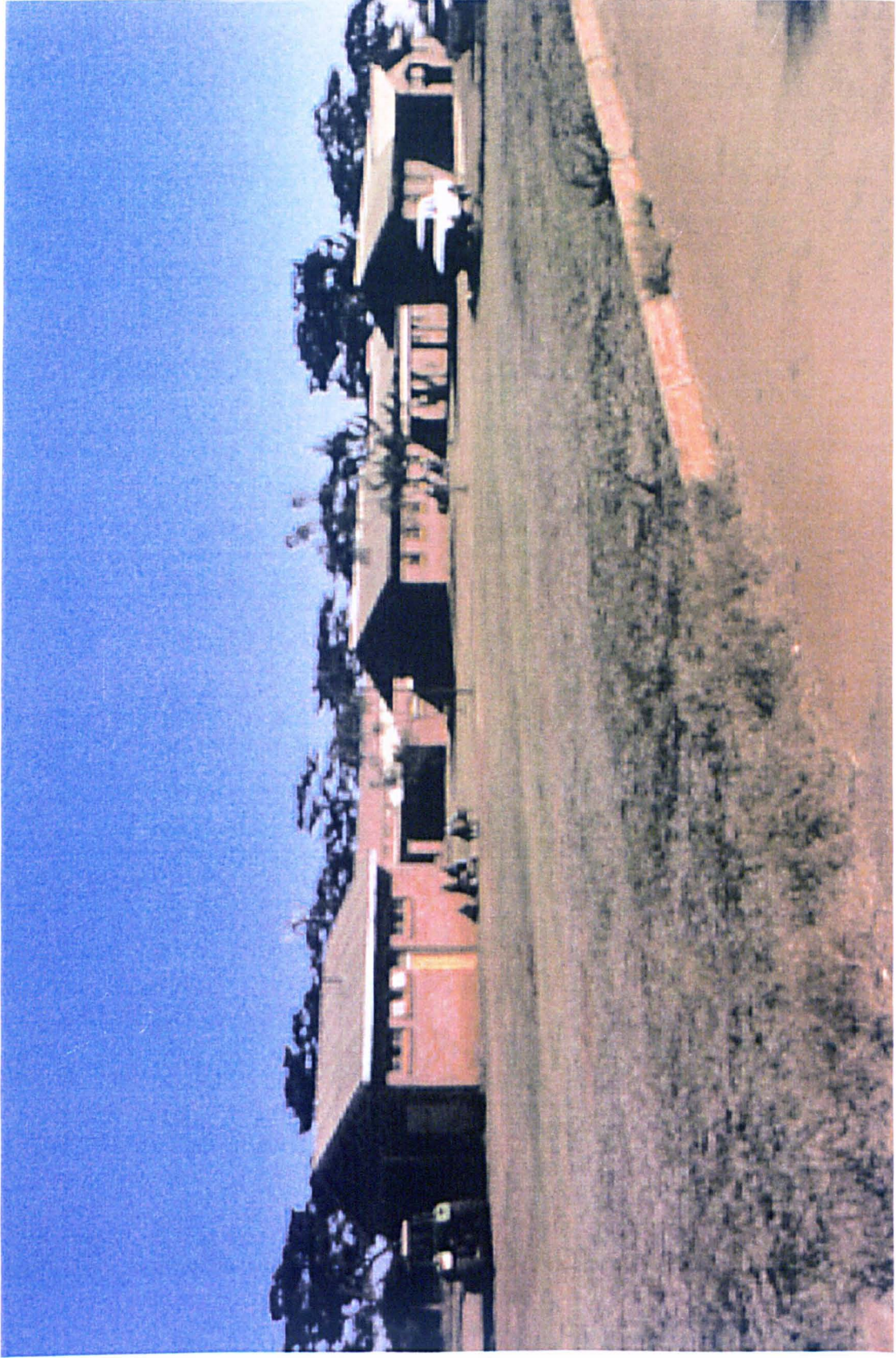
Site of tutorials: Agricultural College, Harare.
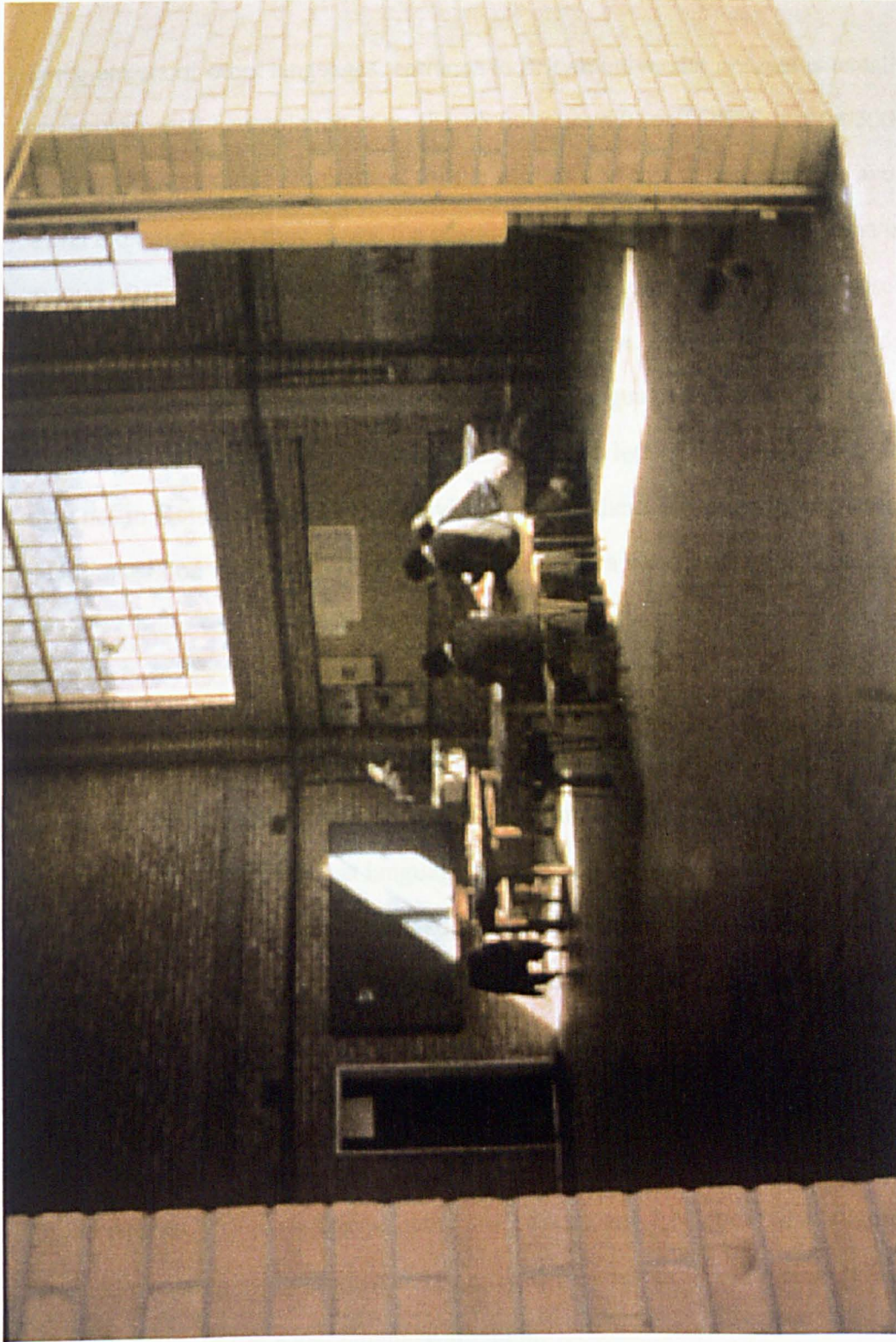
Tutorial in progress, Agricultural College, Harare

7.3.6 Language level of students

For speakers of other languages, entrance to British university courses is usually dependent on the successful completion of an IELTS (at score 6.0) or TOEFL test (at 500). Unusually, Wye have waived this requirement for the Agritex students to help students avoid exam and travel expenses; also they regard the postgraduate diploma as a stepping stone into an MA for mature 'rusty' non-graduate students who can, if given the chance, pull themselves up to the required academic literacy in English during the course. Instead, Wye have judged whether the student has the necessary or potential English language abilities on the basis of a 'general impression' (no formal criteria) of students' informal letters. They acknowledge that letters may not in fact be written by the individual student themselves but argue that the demands of the course soon weed out any struggling students at a very early stage. Where there is doubt, Wye can liaise with the Zimbabwean course administrators and local tutors.

In comparison with students from other parts of the world, the Wye course directors have found the Zimbabwean students to have the least pronounced language difficulties and a generally high threshold in English language competence. This suited my research purposes well because when looking at language and literacy issues, I did not want to be overly diverted into superficial level areas such as grammar and spelling but thrown more on the social embeddedness of language - language attitudes, rhetorical styles, academic English, UK academic values.

7.3.7 Language situation in Zimbabwe

In the Agritex group of students, there are 9 Shona and 1 Ndebele first language speakers and all have been using English since early primary levels. These factors reflect characteristics of the wider language situation.

The major languages in Zimbabwe are Shona, Ndebele and English. Shona[1] and Ndebele are spoken as a first language by 80% and 15% of the population respectively and have been

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[1] Closely related dialect and ethnic groups are grouped under the label Shona, including Zezuro, Korekore, Manyika, Karanga, Ndau and Kalanga

accorded the status of national languages in contrast to their position prior to the country's independence in 1980. Although there is no official language policy, English is the language of government, business, media and education. Most major political speeches are in English (such as on Independence Day) and it is the official working language in the civil service (including Agritex) and courts of law (except the lowest ones). It is usually the major language in the commercial private sector because many firms in urban areas, and farms and mines in rural areas are still being run by first-language English speakers. There are no non-English daily newspapers although recently a Shona-Ndebele weekly, Kwayedza, has been established.

In school, the early years are mainly either in Shona or Ndebele (with English studied as a subject) but from grade three onwards, English becomes the predominant medium of instruction in formal, British curriculum, education. 0 level English language continues to be a requirement for entry to university. Zimbabwean school and higher educational institutions are generally bilingual or multilingual educational settings.

Nevertheless, there is a marked urban-rural divide in the use of English. In the rural areas, where 80% of Shona speakers live, there are many monolingual speakers of Shona who have had little access to education and little contact with native speakers of English.

7.4   Close

The following chapter will provide the rationale behind my research methodology, outline the data sources and discuss how data was collected and analysed.

Chapter 8 - Research Methodology: a case-study

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses opens with a summary of the research methodology and discusses the rationale behind a case-study approach. It moves onto to consider other criteria that inform the research design and the ways in which the data was collected and analysed. The last part of the chapter supplies details about the key focus of the research in Zimbabwe - 2 days of intensive workshops with some black Zimbabwean adult students.

8.2 A single case-study

8.2.1 Research summary

A single case-study approach has been adopted to conduct an in-depth examination of a particular learning situation: a small group of black Zimbabwean agricultural extension officers in Zimbabwe studying a post-graduate DE course which is produced, tutored and examined in the distant UK.

The case-study is used to explore the value of the imported distance education course within Zimbabwe and to ask whether difficulties are created for the Zimbabwean students around taken-for-granted educational practices embedded in the course, particularly in relation to language and academic literacy. The focus is on the Zimbabwean course recipients and their context (the culture of reception) but, as I am interested in identifying mismatches between the two, I inevitably explore some of the practices and assumptions around language and literacy within the UK DE course and context (the culture of production).

The main primary data for the research was collected during a two-week visit to Zimbabwe but other data, both primary and secondary, was also collected prior to the visit. Secondary data - the students' essays, tutorial feedback and exams from their previous (first) year - provided a degree of longitudinal depth to the research and a starting point from which to plan the visit and research methodology. The analysis draws mainly on grounded

theory but also, to a lesser degree, genre analysis.

8.2.2 Rationale behind case-study

In what way is this research attempting to make an original contribution to knowledge? By undertaking a case-study of one particular learning context I aim to contribute towards the development of a new perspective (or a broader framework) for thinking about how to address diverse learners in international, English-medium distance education. This is not to say that the case-study is used to make generalisations about other learning contexts or learners; it is not treated as a microcosm of the wider student body on the course. Instead, the single case-study is used to achieve two other aims: first, to provide new knowledge, particularly in relation to language and literacy, about a group of largely unknown distance students living and learning in a sociocultural context different to that of the course-producers; second, that this more particular knowledge can be used to consider more deeply the difference/commonality divide among course participants and how to respond appropriately. The second aim, dependent on the first, is about gaining a new perspective about the general learning context (an internationalised context) by means of a greater understanding of the particular. This will be discussed further below.

The first aim is important in its own right. Knowledge about distance students in general can be limited because of the practical difficulties of conducting research among distant and disparate learners. The international dimension adds another layer of practical difficulty and complexity. Students are generally known through their assignments, their grades and through general registration information about their age, profession, status and gender. The risk here is that without adequate feedback or knowledge about learners with different social practices around language and literacy, materials producers working in the English-medium make inappropriate assumptions which then infuse their pedagogy. A lack of knowledge is confirmed by the Wye tutors themselves. In a recent presentation, a Wye College course producer (on exactly the course under study) stated that the perceived problems of the course were, among others, 'lack of student-tutor interaction', 'cultural differences and languages' and student isolation (Pearce in AERDD, 1998).

For the Wye producers, specific knowledge about language and literacy issues is also likely to be limited. They are academics with expertise in particular subject areas - in this case agriculture - although during the course of their work as course planners, writers and tutors, they will inevitably have engaged in general language and literacy issues, e.g. Is the student's English good enough to get through the course? What supplementary study skills work should the course provide?

Because they are working in a small, dual-mode organisation, they are unlikely, as yet, to have in place the sort of dedicated support services common in single-mode institutions, either face-to-face or DE. In face-to-face tertiary institutions, for example, there is often additional language support for students (for whom English is an additional language) in the form of extra withdrawal classes. In single-mode DE institutions, there are often dedicated units and communications departments conducting research into students' needs and raising awareness about problem areas on behalf of the subject specialists. In the Open University UK, for example, the Institute of Educational Technology and the Centre for Language and Communication are the drivers behind an increasing focus on English-medium language and academic literacy issues among their own DE learners. However, the Open University, like other wealthy single-mode DE institutions, has greater resources at its disposal than dual-mode institutions and is at the cutting edge of DE research. By contrast, face-to-face institutions making the transition towards dual-mode status tend to add DE courses to the existing university provision by means of departmental initiatives like the Wye College external programme; in other words, in a rather ad-hoc, piecemeal way. Language support may follow once the course becomes established and research or experience shows the need; it may follow when there are enough university-wide DE initiatives to warrant a dedicated overseeing unit or when the communications department assumes some form of university-wide responsibility for supporting DE students.

In summary, then, DE course producers, particularly in dual-mode institutions tend to have limited general knowledge about their students and about language and academic literacy issues. One reason, then, for adopting a single case-study approach is that it can provide

course producers with 'vicarious experience' (Stake and Trumbull 1982, Stake 1992), in the form of a 'thicker description' (Bartolic, 1962) about a particular learning context. A single case-study provides an uncommon opportunity for a dedicated focus on a particular context and for collecting fuller knowledge about that context. By collecting a pool of different data from within and about the Zimbabwe context, there is the potential for exploring aspects of the embeddedness of social practices around language and literacy and for illuminating something of the commonalities or conflicts within the viewpoints held on these issues by the participants in Zimbabwe. Rather than using it as the basis for wider generalisation, the aim here is to capture something of the particularities of a specific learning context in relation to general assumptions around language and literacy in the course.

If and where disjunctures exist between the culture of reception and production, the (second) aim is to challenge the normative pedagogy implicit within international courses by providing evidence to the course producers of a more multi-faceted image (of some) of their learners than is currently envisaged. But what form does that challenge take? If I can provide evidence of some of the particularities around language and literacy practices in a wider Zimbabwean learning situation, then several changes might occur which will ultimately benefit both learners and teachers (and I include myself in the latter category).

Both I, as a researcher, and the producers of this particular international course might begin to understand something about the contingency of our own educational thinking and teaching practices; against some understanding of the particular and unique, we might use this knowledge to make greater sense of a global learning context and our role and responsibilities in it; inevitably we would be drawn into considering how to address the particular needs of this Zimbabwean group in different ways; insights from this research might also provoke research with other particular groups.

This second emancipatory aim, then, is to develop a greater reflexivity on the part of the particular DE teachers which, it is hoped, may contribute towards the development of a more principled policy framework for addressing diverse learners in an international context. The

128

view adopted here is that this emancipatory dimension has the potential for provoking more fundamental policy changes than the sort of tweaking modifications that might follow a conventional needs analysis. In the latter, English language and study skills teachers would typically approach academic literacy disjunctures as an unproblematic needs analysis exercise. What difficulties are the students having in reading the course materials and writing the course essays? What remedial work shall I provide to overcome these difficulties? Here, needs are viewed in a fairly circumscribed and local way and the research springs from a deficit question - what is it that the students do not yet know in order to get through the course?

This research starts from an earlier point and a different conviction; namely, that before considering what and how to teach people from widely different sociocultural contexts, educational practitioners need to first ask themselves a more fundamental question: What do I have to learn myself before I can adequately plan for or teach people of whom I have little knowledge?

A case-study approach is being used, then, not only for its product (new knowledge) but also for its process (greater reflexivity) on the part of the researcher. It is important, then, that a UK researcher is conducting the case-study rather than, say, a Zimbabwean researcher because the research is partly an exercise in reflexivity, a reflexive journey. This springs from the conviction that as we move towards a globalised educational market, which will probably be dominated by key market leaders, significant changes and improvements in educational practice are more likely to come about as a result of an emerging reflexivity and insight on the part of course producers rather than learners who may not have actually have much of a platform for making their own voices heard.

But this raises a problem. Is my research about 'giving voice' to the views of the Zimbabwean students whose experience, as I have argued, is generally obscured? Inevitably, the research will throw up some views of the students but can I claim to speak on behalf of or mediate for the Zimbabwean students? This relates to the notions of objectivity and authenticity and is, I admit, a problematic aspect of the research which only became

clearer during the course of the research and its evaluation. I started out the research thinking that I could act as an conduit between the unknown students and the course producers and could authentically transmit their views. In practice, I found this position increasingly untenable and compromising and the question of whether the researcher is, should be or can be an insider became central. In retrospect, I would argue that it is not possible to have an insider view of a very different sociocultural context and one cannot claim to represent people across such a divide. You might, however, capture something of the differences (and commonalities) between yours and their meaning systems and social practices. This, in itself, is useful so long as it is also recognised that you are looking at everything through your own sociocultural perspective and cannot step outside it, that people do not necessarily have unitary perspectives and that you cannot claim to have an overview of their situation. The reflexive aspect of the research inevitably makes this an outsider perspective or an account of a case from an 'external point of view, one which may contradict the views of the people involved' - Hammersely M, forthcoming: 4. This last point created difficulties for me which will be covered later on when I discuss informed consent and respondent validation.

8.3 Methods used in the case-study

This section discusses research methods and considers six areas: the researcher's self; the notions of generalisability, validity and reliability; unobtrusive measures, triangulation, informed consent and some limitations of the research methods.

8.3.1 Reflexivity

As the previous discussion underlines, the notion of a reflexive researcher grew to be an important element of my research. Reflexivity 'requires researchers, to the extent of their ability, to analyse and display publicly their history, values and assumptions as well as the interrelationship with their participants' - King, 1993:176. By placing myself in an unknown context, I have been trying to re-evaluate some of my own taken-for-granted practices as someone who regularly works in the field of distance education, particularly in the third world, and who has, in the past, also been part of an English language teaching profession.

The latter profession, for example, is imbued with an unrecognised acceptance of the superiority of Standard English, of English as an unquestioned international language and of what is acceptable or appropriate in academic writing. I kept a running diary (Appendix 2). to note down some emerging ideas and difficulties although in practice, as is often the case, I was too busy to write this up regularly. This diary played a part in helping me to chart some reflexive observations, to record emergent thinking and incidents that seemed significant. It was also useful for practical reminders of new areas to research on return to the UK.

In terms of my relationship with the participants, I attempted to address the cultural politics of a research situation in general and within Zimbabwe in particular. At the general level, I tried to either acknowledge or redress the power differential between the researcher and researched. For example, I opened up the methodology and questions underlying my research for discussion. I alternated, according to situation, between handing over control and assuming control of the proceedings but of the two, the former was the predominant feature of the research and I attempted to position myself mainly as a listener. In the workshops, for example, the established routine was that I did not participate at all[1] at certain stages of activities while at another stage, I might ask direct questions to the whole group.

The fact that I was white and British were factors, however difficult to define. At the very least, it meant that there was an inescapable history between us (with interweaving strands of commonality/difference, familiarity/animosity, pride/deference). In answer to this, I accepted that I was 'socially situated' by avoiding either downplaying differences or playing up similarities; I also avoided both a defensiveness or an overfamiliarity.

I also correctly anticipated that they were likely to have a fairly jaded view of the aid world and its expatriate professionals, tired of being 'researched', of being treated as guinea-pigs by non-Zimbabweans with unclear reasons and therefore probably pre-disposed towards the para Ingles ver syndrome ("for English eyes" used to describe a show put on for outsiders). In response to this, I thought through what benefits they might have from the research

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[1] Apart from once when, in a discussion about gender issues, I felt obliged to take the chair aside and point out that the views of the one silent woman participant in the group were not being elicited at all.

process (discussed later).

As Zimbabweans place a heavy emphasis on professional and academic credentials, I responded to this by introducing myself and my academic background openly at the beginning. Although I avoided adopting a directive role subsequently, I attempted to demonstrate a rigour in the management, presentation and quality of the activities. I knew that, as busy people themselves, they would not appreciate anyone wasting their time.

8.3.2 Generalisability, validity and reliability

A single case-study cannot, as in survey and experimental research, provide the basis for generalising across cases or enumerative induction. The concepts of validity and reliability, as defined by a quantitative research tradition, become both unachievable and inapplicable. What I am trying to do here is describe and understand some practices around language and academic literacy as specific to the Zimbabwean social contexts in which the course is embedded rather than, for instance, as universal generalities. The case-study has therefore not been chosen as a 'typical' example in the sense that its typicality can be empirically demonstrated (by, for example, random sampling). On the contrary, the selection of the case-study and some of the data collection choices within it were (as discussed in 7.2 and 7.3) determined by various practical and protocol considerations largely outside my control.

Instead, I am concerned with analytic induction - how some general principles and patterns manifest themselves in these particular set of circumstances. As an alternative to explaining the research according to positivist criteria of objectivity, reliability and validity, I am more concerned with achieving some notion of 'trustworthiness' - Lincoln and Guba (1985).

To reach a degree of trustworthiness, I have worked towards achieving their criteria of dependability and credibility; these differ from the notions of exact replicability and internal validity in quantitative research in the sense that they recognise the particularity rather than the generality of contextualised research. Instead, dependability becomes whether the research design is sufficiently documented 'that the decisions made and the conclusions reached are justifiable in their own contexts' (Edge and Richards, 1997:19) and provide an

adequate 'audit trail' (Halpern, 1983). One aim in the research, and particularly in this chapter, is to lay bare the thinking behind my research methodology and to discuss its limitations.

Credibility, they suggest, relates to the adequacy of the case-study in terms of drawing on different data types which have been collected in a variety of ways from a range of participants. Has there been, for example, adequate triangulation of raw data to strengthen confidence in a statement. Is there evidence of prolonged engagement with the data sources and the emerging issues within the context? Is there sufficient evidence within the data to give the reader confidence in the findings?

I adopted different measures, with varying success, in order to strengthen confidence in my research methodology and findings: unobtrusive measures, triangulation and informed consent.

8.3.3 Unobtrusive measures

I adopted various unobtrusive measures to give me confidence that what I was observing reflected something naturally-occurring rather than a special event put on for English eyes - the 'para Ingles ver' syndrome discussed in chapter five. These included the use of naturally-occurring data, trying to reduce the distance between myself and the students, the use of key informants within Zimbabwe and a piloting phase.

First, I used a lot of naturally-occurring data. As I am interested in meanings and situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, normal course of events, the data, as in most qualitative research, is mainly drawn from natural conditions and settings. I made use of existing data rather than, say, from new or highly structured 'experimental' conditions. For example, I used existing data available from the UK course producers - the students' first year TMA's and examination essays, tutor feedback for the TMA's, course materials and guides to DE writers.

The data that emerged from the 2-day workshops with the students (which constituted the main part of the research) could not be strictly classified as naturally-occurring; on the

contrary, it was the result of a highly-organised piece of action research or a 'natural experiment' (Hammersley et al, 1998:50), designed to focus attention on language and literacy issues and within those domains 'to throw basic rules and norms into relief'. However, these consisted largely of (recorded) informal group discussions between the learners around language and literacy themes with the researcher frequently absent in the discussion stage but present in a later discussion report-back stage. Full details of these workshops appear in section 8.5 of this chapter.

Although the discussions were created by my actions rather than naturally-occurring, they were managed by the students themselves, could develop in a variety of ways and took place in an informal atmosphere. In other words, my primary concern was to provoke free-ranging discussion rather than seeking to control or constrain it around small points. The workshops were designed on the basis that a good party requires very careful planning.

Second, I attempted to reduce distance between myself and the students by a careful choice of roles. For example, I became a participant observer in the feedback session of the activities. That is to say, I deliberately adopted a recognised tutor role which was based on observations of a successful earlier tutorial in the first week piloting stage, i.e. students preparing and reporting back on an activity in a plenary with the tutor who may pick up on certain points for elaboration or clarification. I believe this role permitted me to use mechanical such as tape-recorders, which were a constant presence through both the informal discussion and feedback stages of discussion. (One can never claim that these research tools were totally unobtrusive but I am satisfied that their omnipresence, the fast pace and involving nature of the activities rendered them fairly unimportant to the students. The occasional jocular comments made about me by the students, in my absence and in English, reveal, I think, that they were not particularly restrained by the presence of a tape-recorder).

In the student-directed discussion stage, I absented myself almost entirely in the early discussions to establish that they were in control of the discussions and I was not. As the workshops progressed and where I judged that my presence was largely unobtrusive in the

course of animated discussion, I became a non-participant observer. This was fairly easy to do as one of the discussion groups was taking place in 'my' room at the Agricultural College and I would automatically be there. This was useful as participation was demanding on energy. I also found the intensity of the sessions was producing so much data that I needed to makes notes, reflect on what was happening and physically organise data (such as flipcharts and audio-cassettes) very carefully.

Another third unobtrusive measure was consultation with various experts within Zimbabwe all of whom contributed to the research design and the progressive focusing part of data analysis. They included the regional representative of the Commonwealth of Learning, two white Zimbabwean lecturers from the University of Zimbabwe and the original study skills teacher who provided the DE students with a 2-day induction course at the beginning of their first year. I attempted to make contact with two other experts without success - a black Zimbabwean lecturer with strong views on English as linguistic imperialism and an ex-Ministry of Education senior adviser (on DE) who I had met on a previous visit and who had now moved into the private DE sector.

Their input contributed to the identification of relevant areas. For example, the study skills teacher was able to confirm my initial impressions about writing difficulties for the students, such as distinguishing between different types of writing and a tendency to write-everything-you-know-about-the-subject approach to essay writing. This was helpful because instead of wasting time establishing these same points from the students, I could assume them and devise activities that explored the reasons behind them. The Commonwealth of Learning DE expert confirmed the historical importance of distance education - home-grown and generic - in the Zimbabwean educational system and its growing importance in the face of stringent public sector cuts that have been ushered in by Zimbabwe's structural adjustment programme.

The two lecturers were enlisted as key informants. One was also the head tutor on the DE course and was able to provide more background about the students and about theirs and her views on how the course could be improved upon. She also facilitated all contact with the

Ministry and students and all practical arrangements.

The other lecturer acted as my sounding board for the workshop focus and methodology. He confirmed to me, for example, that a move away from my initial individual interviews towards a concentration on group activities was likely to overcome the 'para Ingles ver' syndrome and tap into energetic group dynamics (I discuss this shift shortly). He also advised me about agricultural and language issues which were bound to ignite lively discussions, e.g. the effect of structural adjustment on the Zimbabwean agricultural sector; the (wrong) presumption that all discussions in agriculture are conducted in English; politically sensitive land resettlement and appropriation issues. All these topics were used in different sessions. As a communications lecturer, he also had long experience of language and literacy issues in Zimbabwe. There was a risk here that 'one selects or acquires key informants in one's own image, thus compounding one's own biases' - Hammersley, 1998: 63. I accept this. I did not know him well but had met and admired this lecturer before in his writings and presentations at various 'DE-in-developing-country' conferences. However, in view of the short time in Zimbabwe, the difficulties in getting access to others and the need to connect quickly, I was not in a position to consult widely.

A fourth unobtrusive measure was piloting within Zimbabwe. In view of the short time in Zimbabwe, my 2-week research schedule was very tightly planned and intensive. The first week was used mainly to orientate myself very quickly[1], meet key contacts, prepare myself for the intensive research workshops in week two and begin to look for critical incidents which might provide insight into the particularities of the social context.

This was a crucial piloting part of the research as there is a limit to how much a researcher can anticipate about another country and the appropriateness of a research methodology before a visit. Planning therefore had to allow for flexibility. For example, during the first week, I undertook a series of interviews: these included semi-structured interviews with three students on a one-to-one basis followed by observing and interviewing other students

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[1] I had been to Zimbabwe 2 years earlier as part of the DE research project discussed in Chapter 1 so a certain amount of 'groundwork' had already been covered.

in a group tutorial situation; I also met up with Ministry of Agriculture personnel and outside 'experts' in DE and English language. These were semi- structured interviews focused around open-ended questions and were designed to be close in character to a casual conversation. For example, in the three individual interviews, the students were asked to discuss in very informal and general terms the relevance of the course to their work, their impressions of the course, any difficulties experienced in returning to study (reading load, writing essays, time-management). Another area was gender issues in work and study. I also asked them about their use of languages in the course of their work and issues around the use of English language for themselves. These interviews helped me to identify sensitive or redundant questions, critical incidents and particular emphases that the later workshops might need to embrace.

For example, one marked emphasis was that on a one-to-one basis, students tended to be very hesitant about discussing any difficulties with the course but were very forthcoming in a group situation. Despite assurances of confidentiality and independence from Wye, I felt that students were wary that I was an external assessor. There was also the question of 'para Ingles ver' - for English eyes only - the feeling that a special show was being put on just for the sake of the researcher which had nothing to do with how they really felt about some of the issues we were discussing. Individual interviews were pleasant, informal but rather superficial, leaving me with very little that I did not already know, e.g. rusty writing skills and no background in different types of essay writing (argument, comparison). In fact my impression was that 'were giving me what they thought I wanted'.

By contrast, I noted that during observation of groups in tutorials and self-study situations, these same and other students were extremely animated, vociferous and generally loud together. These findings were confirmed by one of my key informants:

> the first thing you'll find is that groups are immensely vocal because there is nothing face threatening about it .. if you sit in the group .. and you identify each of them one by one .. they will make an assumption .. which will come as a shock to you coming from Britain .. the assumption .. they will make .. is there is a correct answer .. which you already know

you'll find that their language skills in the English .. as a combination .. is the affective factor and the fear of being asked to contribute will collapse a bit .. so you get better feedback .. if they are allowed to relax and report back amongst themselves .. and come to a consensus .. no one wants to sound stupid .. and so every contribution that comes in .. will be mediated through the spokesperson

Another interesting area was that of gender. The topic of gender issues (in studying and work) only seemed to emerge, and unprompted, in one-to-one situations with female students or where a group was predominantly female. In mixed-gender groups, it was avoided or prompted laughing among the male students. Another sensitive area was the terrific pride in their proficiency in the English language which made direct questions to individuals about difficulties in English inappropriate and face-threatening.

These findings in the piloting stage prompted various changes to the methodology in the workshops. For example, I shifted my 2-day workshops with the targeted students away from a mixture of one-to-one interviews and group discussions towards only group activities. This shift meant that I could devote more time to group sessions and cover more subject areas than I could have done in time-consuming individual interviews. Instead, for example, of having 4 group sessions on one day and the next devoted to individual interviews, I could now devote two full days to 7-8 group sessions. Within the group activities, they were left to 'relax', as the lecturer suggested, and come to a consensus amongst themselves before feeding back in a plenary session via a chosen spokesperson. This was a gamble but in view of the short time available one that I took in order to disrupt the politeness problem and reveal more about the robustness and intensity of viewpoints held in the group.

The downside of this shift was that group dynamics might marginalise individual views. My way of dealing with this was to attempt to build in one-to-one contact with the students in other ways outside the workshops. Each student was encouraged to complete a short, one-page personalised mini questionnaire with three questions - what I like about the course, what I find difficult about the course, how I would improve on the course. I also stated that if anyone wanted to talk individually about any aspects of the course I would be available at breaks, lunchtime and one hour before the sessions. I also wrote to them after the

workshops after my return to the UK with other activities which I had not had time to cover in the workshops and which also happened to be more personal in nature. Most completed the individual questionnaires in Zimbabwe but there were no significant departures from issues brought up in group sessions. No one elected to talk about the course on an individual basis. Initially, I worried that it was because I was unapproachable or too distant but increasingly I was of the opinion that a group situation was a familiar forum for them, that they 'moved as a group' and were empowered by being in a closed and familiar group (in the sense that they felt free to discuss both contentious and individual issues which they might otherwise not). This is not to say they were sheep-like in agreeing with views. On the contrary, the groups were extremely animated and vociferous and contained, as in most groups, a mix of people in terms of ethnic background, social status and political persuasion. Despite the differences, the commitment by all of them towards group discussion was very marked. You would not, in my experience, find similar group work in a UK situation where a need to distinguish yourself within the group and for self-promotion often seems to drive the dynamics of group situations.

Another change I adopted as a result of the piloting phase was a shift away from direct questions - What problems do you have with essay writing? Do you have mixed feelings about using English? - towards a focus on activities which would, in their doing, reveal difficulties (groups planning of an essay) and viewpoints without being face-threatening (e.g. commenting on other people's opinions). I discuss the activities later in the chapter.

8.3.4 Triangulation

The case-study used largely unstructured[1] data from a broad range of sources, collected and produced by a variety of methods:

- audio recordings (and their transcription and in some cases translation)

- observation: non-participant observation Within Zimbabwe, non-participant observation and relatively informal, semi-structured interviews and conversations with a range of

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[1] not coded at the point of collection in terms of a closed set of analytical categories

course participants and 'experts' were the main sources of data in the early stages of the visit.

- elicitation - activities given to participants in workshops to elicit data, flipcharts produced by students

- interviews: semi-structured (with open-ended questions) with 3 individual students (approx. 1 hour each) a group of students (1 hour), 4 tutors (3x8 mins-1x2 hours each), 2 Zimbabwean lecturers (3-4 hours), Wye directors (1 hour), Ministry of Education personnel (1 -2 hours), 1 x study skills tutor on the course (half an hour)

- postal questionnaires - with open-ended questions

- survey of DE writers' training manuals

- formal tests: TMA exam results, TMA examples (3 years of back TMA's from Zimbabwe students, all TMA's and exams of the particular students under study)

- documents: course materials, information and statistics, Ministry of Agriculture documents

- research diary

- visits to place of study (remote rural area, small village and urban), photographs

This multi-method approach to data collection and production was a methodological attempt to recognise and capture something of the complexity and embeddedness of social practices. With a big pool of data, drawn from different sources and gathered by different methods I was trying to create the potential for several things:

- a 'thicker description'

- the potential to capture some of the inconsistencies and conflicts between participants

- to allow the researcher to develop converging lines of enquiry

- for key issues to emerge over a wide set of data

- the triangulation of data

Where possible, I attempted to collect data, about the same area, by different methods (e.g. the analysis of TMA's, the analysis of accompanying TMA feedback, the analysis of students' and tutors' perceptions of TMA difficulties). This was an attempt to reduce the possibility that any consistencies in the findings were due to similarities of method and to avoid the risks of relying on a single kind of data (such as idiosyncratic or uni-dimensional findings). Where different methods of data confirm substantially the same notions or results, the researcher and the reader might achieve a degree of confidence about the analysis.

There are also other more pragmatic reasons for having a variety of data sources: when researching in other countries on a 'one-shot' occasion basis, quantity, even redundancy, of data acts as an insurance policy against loss, last-minute cancellations of meetings, power-cuts and so forth; most important, a wide range of data serves to orientate a researcher to a different cultural context and help to flesh out the particular emphases that emerge from that context.

8.3.5 Informed consent

Wye College agreed to facilitate my research overseas with their students in return for feedback from and about their students in relation to language and literacy issues. Up to the point at which I had collected and started analysing the data, I felt there was no real distinction between the PhD and the Wye College feedback report. I was merely acting as a conduit between the course producers and the students. I presented and justified my work to the students on the basis of this conviction. I was explicit with the informant-students about the purpose and uses of my research and I encouraged the informants to ask me any questions/queries about the research and about myself both within the workshops and at meal and break times. As the students were studying a research methodology course at the time, they were particularly interested in qualitative research which was a new area for them. I also thought carefully about the pay-back to the students. The students were, for example, paid a generous fee for their attendance at the workshops and additional accommodation and meal expenses. The workshops themselves also included discussions about problem areas which were directly relevant to their studies (writing critical essays). To underline the importance of their feedback, I delegated the management of the workshop

discussions to the informants themselves for three reasons: first, to emphasise their control over the activities; second to emphasise that it was a matter of their choice as to how the activity might develop and third, to minimise the power differential between us.

Originally, I also planned to build in respondent validation[1] to my research. The idea was to present my findings back to the participants, before submitting to Wye College, to see whether my interpretations were credible to them and whether their views, understandings and feelings were being authentically represented. I felt that a correspondence between accounts would add a strand of trustworthiness to my research. In the analysis and writing up of the data, however, I became unwilling to show the respondents parts of my research. One example was oral evidence which revealed that these decision-makers did not necessarily hold benevolent views towards the very poor Zimbabwean farmers they served and were also very protective of their status. Occasionally, I had the impression of a self-serving elite. This would be inappropriate to feedback to them but from my PhD point of view was an important point to make; white liberal researchers, like myself, who work in developing countries tend to hold overly romantic views of decision-makers and key intermediaries (like agricultural extension officers) and we invest a lot in their 'multiplier-effect' and can fool ourselves that their and our attitudes always coincide. This type of unanticipated change in methodology related to my growing understanding that what I was doing here was an outsider's rather than an insider's perspective; that rather than acting as a neutral conduit for their views, I was often commenting on their perspectives rather than, say, just organising them for presentation back to the course producers.

I also became concerned that this sort of commenting on others' perspectives might give offence. I have felt the same unease myself in various recent seminars in discourse analysis where somebody else's national or ethnic identity is being analysed. It rings particularly discordant bells when there has been a troubled historical and asymmetrical background between the researched and the researcher. I therefore made the decision that parts of the PhD would be not be appropriate to report back to them but that I could send them an edited

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[1] Pidgeon, N in Richardson, J (1996:85).

142

version of the PhD. However, as the deadline of the PhD loomed, I did not have time over to engage in an additional report and a new editing process. It is unlikely that this type of respondent validation will now be pursued; the time gap between the research and the report would be too long.

8.2.6 Constraints or conditions?

Although all three criteria - unobtrusive measures, triangulation, informed consent - inform my research methodology, it has to be acknowledged that in the situation where, as in this case, a researcher is 'dipping' into a relatively foreign sociocultural context in a different country for a short space of time and working with protocol, practical and financial constraints, the ideal, highly-controlled research design is rarely achievable. This was certainly the case in my research. The limitations in time, access and choice meant that in some areas I could only get data from one source but not much about the same area from other sources. I did not, for example, have the opportunity to talk with the local level black Zimbabwean tutors at great length. My contact with the UK tutors was restricted to their TMA feedback and postal contact. The three individual students I met in the first week were selected for me by the Ministry (not for any sinister reason but more that they were geographically near) and the first interview was 'sat in on' by a Ministry employee.

Also, although one aim (4.4.1) was to undertake research which was participatory 'in intent and procedure' there is clearly only a degree of participation which is feasible in this one-off, short piece of research - Guy 1989: 58. Lynch (1997: ix), for example, cites four levels of participation, within the context of project consultation, each of which confer different rights to the consulted: provision of information, exchange of information, participatory consultation, rightful consultation. Participation in the first means little more than providing information about a project to those who are likely to be affected by it. In other words, there is a 'right' to be informed. At the other end of the scale, rightful consultation gives those consulted the right to involvement in decision making and to sharing the control of a given project. In the context of an international course, this might involve students, or more likely, the importers of a course in the co-determination of the course design, content or employment of tutors. The type of participation achieved in my piece of research is at

143

the level of exchange of information in which 'reactions are invited from those involved, which may or may not result in changes and accommodation or even a process of 'interlearning' among the various parties concerned' (op cit).

But do these acknowledged limitations and constraints compromise the value and trustworthiness of the research? Above all, they mean that I cannot claim this research to be anything more than a preliminary or small-scale investigation. I would argue, nevertheless, that despite those limitations the research has value. Very often it seems that practical problems are used as a barrier or perhaps an excuse not to engage in any overseas research at all; just getting fees from overseas students leads us to think we are getting it right. In an increasingly international learning context, it is important that researchers and teachers on individual courses recognise the contingency of their own thinking and educational practices and demonstrate, in spite of the practical difficulties, the importance of undertaking research among their students.

Second, it is also the case that this type of small-scale research situation is often the norm for educationalists making research visits overseas in the course of, say, collaborative ventures between educational institutions and consultancies; that much research is about dealing with the feasible rather than the ideal and because of that, research strategies need to be developed which help the researcher extract as 'thick' a description as is feasible in the short-time available. For this reason, maximising the pool and quality of accessible data became, for me, crucial issues in the research design. But this in itself presents a research dilemma - in a short, rare one-off situation such as this, there is a tension between trying to get as much data as possible in a short time to get a feel about a variety of language and literacy areas or trying to explore one discrete area - essay writing - in enough depth to produce a really thick description? Both run risks. In the former, depth of description may be sacrificed for breadth. The latter runs the risk of missing out on a broader perspective, of not seizing a rare opportunity. My 'choice', dictated by what was feasible and accessible, was a mixture of both and reflects, in different parts of analysis, the strengths and limitations of both approaches.

Third, is it right to think about the local conditions that shaped my research only in terms of constraints? Rather, is it that some of the criteria and principles embedded within mainstream naturalistic research take-for-granted certain conditions that cannot be assumed in all contexts, e.g. the desirability of research, a willingness to be researched, an ease of access to data and participants, a general open access ethos? Each one of these conditions had to be negotiated very carefully in my research and that would be the case whether the research was 2 days or 2 years long. Rather than 'bringing people round' to doing things according to an ideal naturalistic enquiry or a neat PhD research design angled to please examiners, the recurring theme of this research project is the degree to which my research and myself as a researcher had to surrender to different ways of doing things, different ways of thinking. By surrender, I do not mean admitting defeat but rather letting go of a fixed way of doing things, of opening up to difference, of developing (often with resistance on my part) alternative ways of getting data, of being prepared to rework and abandon careful planning which proved inappropriate or constraining in itself. These considerations developed an awareness of research methodology itself as social practice and an appreciation of what reflexivity means.

Despite the constraints, I managed, as the following section shows, to collect a large amount of data. Where the data has been thin or one-sided, I have, in the analysis indicated this and offered only a tentative interpretation.

8.4 Data Production

8.4.1 Main data sources

As previously stated in 8.3.4., data was collected in the UK and Zimbabwe and included both primary and secondary data. The secondary data was naturally occurring while the primary data was created by the actions of the researcher within 2-day workshops in Zimbabwe. Figure 5 overleaf summarises the full range of data collected from both the culture of production (Wye College) and the culture of reception (Zimbabwe Agritex course). Figure 6 provides further detailed information about the data source in Zimbabwe.

Figure 5: Summary of data sources in the research (based on Jones, 1990)

Interviews:
Course Director
Programme Director

Survey:
Good practice guidelines for
DE writers

Textual Analysis:
Course materials
Study skills support

UK Tutors:
Questionnaire
Tutor feedback

CULTURE OF PRODUCTION

CULTURE OF RECEPTION

Students:
Interviews:1-to-1/group
Observation:tutorials/study groups
Visits: place of study
Workshops: 2 full days
Postal questionnaire

Other
Photographs
Realia- mission
statements, work
writing
Diary

Textual Analysis:
Students' TMAs
Students' exams

Other Zimbabweans:
Ministry of Ag
Admin
DE/ELT specialists

Zimbabwean tutors:
Interviews/letter
Internal report

DATA SOURCES ON ZIMBABWE TRIP

STUDENTS

STUDY GROUP
SITUATION
Recorded observation
- small groups
working together

STUDY
CONDITIONS
Visits to 3 students
- city
- small town
- remote rural area

PILOTING PHASE

Recorded interviews
- 2 x 1st yr (1-to-1)
- 1 x 2nd yr (1-to-1)
- 5 x 3rd yr (group)

Unrecorded informal
discussions with students
1st/2nd/3rd yr

TUTORIAL
SITUATION
Observation of tutorials
- 2 x 3rd yr
- 2 x 2nd yr

2-DAY WORKSHOPS
10 2nd yr
Recorded sessions
Flipcharts
Written material

TUTORS

INTERVIEWS
3 Recorded one-to-one
Letter to Projects tutor

**MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE**

PROFESSIONALS

OTHER

INTERVIEWS/MEETINGS
Unrecorded interviews
- Deputy Director/Agritex
- Administration

MEETINGS
Recorded/unrecorded
- DE
- English language

OTHER
- diary
- slide photographs
- realia (egs of writing
in work, maps,
mission statements,
newspaper arguments

Figure 6: Data source on Zimbabwe trip

8.4.2 Primary data from the culture of production

Most of the data from the culture of production was secondary data but as the data collection and preliminary analysis progressed, I also collected two additional sets of primary data. The first was a mini survey of good practice guidelines available to DE writers and the second, a short questionnaire to the Wye college writers.

In the mini survey, I wanted to look at one literacy aspect of the culture of production by examining characteristic assumptions made about accessible writing in DE materials. My aim here was first to see whether Wye themselves made similar assumptions and whether these assumptions actually matched any emerging needs among the Zimbabwean students. I therefore conducted a small survey of advice given to academics about how to write DE materials. Using the International Centre for Distance Learning database, 3 standard sources were identified:

1. Courses about DE (18 appeared on the ICDL database)

2. Internal institutional guidelines within single-, bi-, or mixed-mode DE institutions in the UK and internationally. I focused on Teacher Education Courses as this is the sought-after subject in DE courses and there is a range of home-grown courses in a wide variety of countries. This was preferable to an MBA course, for example, which tends to only be produced by a small pool of market leaders (USA, Canada, UK Australia) and therefore the writing traditions might only reflect this small pool.

3. Standard books about DE writing (Rowntree, 1990; Race 1994)

Letters were sent out for the first two categories requesting published internal guidelines. (Appendix 7). The materials that were collected were then examined for characteristic notions of accessibility. The collected guidelines were not considered representative of DE writing as a whole - the response rate was low and good practice guidelines do not necessarily reflect actual practice (e.g. where DE writing is developed as the result of team discussions and with different members of the team concentrating on different aspects of one

written unit). Nevertheless, I was interested in identifying normative characteristics among that sample.

The questionnaire to the Wye writers appears in Appendix 5. Wye elected to distribute this since their writing team is fairly disparate and consists of a mixture of Wye- and other university-based academics (65 in total). This went to Wye in a February (eight months into the PhD) to avoid the academic Easter and summer holiday periods with an anticipated turnaround of 4 weeks. However, the sudden death of the Wye director meant that this became an understandably low priority for Wye. It was eventually distributed in the July (as the holiday began) and as a result I think I was lucky to receive 10 returns in the September. This low return introduced a problem: I was using the replies to help me as a pre-visit orientation but the low representativeness of the responses would impact on that orientation. I therefore had to be careful about the weight given to this data and to acknowledge its limitations.

The questionnaire represented a methodological attempt to generate a written equivalent of an informal (recorded) discussion for later qualitative data analysis. I was aiming to elicit informal written answers to open-ended questions and which therefore could be viewed as written interviews rather than a questionnaire. It was partially successful in this as 4 of them were fairly full, discursive replies (Appendix 6 for 1 of these) but the others tended to be very short notes on the question sheet itself rather than separately as I had anticipated. By not actually providing writing space on the questionnaire itself, I was trying to avoid setting limits on how much or how little the respondent would care to contribute and also that if you are given one line as a space for an answer, you tend to give a one line answer (irrespective of whether you have additional things to say). However, this design feature created an in-built problem as the remaining respondents demonstrated by trying to squeeze very short notes onto the small spaces.

I had also originally intended to place an equal emphasis on both the culture of reception (Zimbabwe) and of production (Wye academic DE writing, DE writing conventions, etc). In this original scheme, the questionnaire was to be a piloting mechanism for follow-up, in-depth interviews with 2-3 Wye writers and a mechanism to identify problem areas.

However, it became clear that an equal emphasis was not possible in the PhD time-span, that the Zimbabwean trip required very careful planning and would, in itself, have considerable protocol procedures to overcome. As a result, the main emphasis was placed on the culture of reception and the culture of production was explored largely only from that perspective. It was also an interesting irony of the entire PhD that data from or about Zimbabwe was in fact easier to compile than data from the UK. Wye college, like a lot small-scale distance education institutions has a small core of staff and contracted out tutors and writers dispersed around the country which made contact with them difficult.

8.4.3 Tools used to prepare data for analysis

I used several tools to prepare the primary data collected in Zimbabwe for analysis: the transcription of audio recordings, the translation and timing of selected parts of the audio recordings and a concordancer.

To transcribe the audio recording I became engaged in the politics of representation within different data transcription systems. Ochs (1979), Preston (1985) and Rampton (1995) suggest that orthodoxy in transcription systems can unwittingly reinforce dominant practices, can marginalise and disguise salient features in speech and interaction and are not always suitable for different purposes. One example would be that children's talk does not conform to adult turn-taking and therefore a linear transcription system would not capture the more haphazard and overlapping nature of their talk[1]. Another example highlighted by Preston (op cit), is that the practice of folklorists and some sociolinguists of re-spelling non-standard interlanguage or social varieties of language (ever 'day, sure 'nuff, puttin' sumpin' on) is a stigmatised representation and only reinforces dominant concepts of accuracy or standards; issues of inequality arise if majority and minority speakers are systematically presented differently. Bearing these dangers in mind, I adapted a fairly simple system for transcribing my oral interviews to reflect areas which I felt needed highlighting. See Table 6.

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[1] which might, for example, be better represented in column form

150

Table 6: Transcription system adapted from Gumperz, J (1990)

Symbol	Significance
//	final fall
/	slight fall indicating temporary closure
..	pauses of less than .5 seconds
...	pauses of greater than .5 seconds
=	indicating overlapping & interrupting
==	indicating latching of the utterance to the preceding one
( )	unintelligible speech
(codeswitch)	to indicate a change from English to Shona or Ndebele
(name)	name deleted to protect anonymity
[ ]	non-lexical phenomena both vocal and non-vocal
bold text	stressed words or syllables
>>	indicates what follows is written data
< >	edit point within **one** continuous stretch of discourse

I did not, for example, require the minute detail often required by conversation analysts but I became interested, through interviews, in how respondents spoke collectively, operating as a group. For example, they were continually finishing each other's sentences and I wanted to illustrate this by marking instances of overlapping (=) or finishing somebody else's point (==) in the transcription symbols and also by layering the turns. Another area was to indicate when code-switching occurred. See example below, INF = informant, INT = interviewer.

```
INF1:   but also we have to look at the reason why we cannot meet .. why we meet at such intervals..last year
        we are meeting every month=
INF2:                          =every month=
INF3:                                 =every month=
INF1:                                        =and then (name ) say the funds==
INF2:                                                      ==have run out/
INT:    I spoke to (name ) and er .. his view was that good distance education courses should be self
        standing .. by themselves .. in other words they should be so good themselves that they don't need a
        tutor=
INF2:         =no .. no=
INF3:             =(codeswitch)=
INF1:                  =impossible=
INF4:                      =no .. no=
```

In the quotes, the student informants are identifiable by numbers to ensure anonymity. Other informants such as tutors, local administrators, academics are identified as such. Written responses are indicated by the symbol >> at the beginning of the quote; these are faithfully reproduced and therefore, where present, include mis-spellings, grammatical errors etc.

During transcription, I noted all instances of codeswitching (changing language) within an activity and also timed them with a stop watch. I was interested in charting how much time, when left alone, the students conducted the conversation in English or Shona as I thought this might give me a window on how they operated, in the natural setting of a student study group. Codeswitching invariably occurred during the 1st stage activities (when they were running their own discussions and often on their own) but practically not at all during the plenary (with me) unless the subject was vernacular languages. I enlisted the help of a Shona speaker to translate one of those Stage 1 activities from the Shona into English. The piece was chosen on the basis that it was a particularly animated discussion in Shona.

The third tool was a concordancer which 'enables you to locate all instances of a word or phrase in a group of texts and analyse the context in which those words are found' - !QuickTeX Handbook, Graddol (1995). I used this to explore the use of the word 'you' within the distance teaching materials to see how academics addressed and conceptualised their student(s). Secondly, bearing in mind that 74% of Zimbabwean women were involved with agriculture, I explored the academic texts in terms of the visibility of women and the collocates (co-occurring words) of words like girl, she, women, farmer, domestic.

8.5   Data Analysis

Overall, the research drew generally on grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) - the seeking to generate theory from data rather than the other way round - while recognising later criticisms of grounded theory (Bulmer, 1979; Charmaz, 1990; Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1994) which point out that entirely assumption-free inductivism is impossible. My research, in its procedures and analyses, attempted to recognise that both researched and researcher are at once a product and producer of history and cannot be otherwise. I therefore bring a 'researcher perspective' to the analysis (which includes my

own experiences, values, priorities and professional orientation) which impacts on the way I conduct the research and analyse the data - Charnaz, 1990: 1165. I have to use this perspective from which to build my analysis - it was my only frame of reference - but at the same time try to avoid applying it unquestioningly to the new data or context. I am attempting to find a 'delicate balance between possessing a grounding in the discipline and pushing it further'(op cit.). It is therefore a commitment to change. My approach to the analysis was free of pre-determined hypotheses in the sense that the formulation of precise problems, hypotheses and appropriate research strategies were an emergent feature of the research and the result of progressive focusing.

The practical constraints of the research - particularly in terms of its one-off nature and limits on what sort of data I could collect - meant that while working in the orientation of grounded theory, it was not possible, as originally conceived by Glaser and Strauss, to build the sort of ambitious comprehensive conceptual system 'from purposively sampled sets of relevant cases' - Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996: 101. In my research, grounded theory was used for less ambitious and more achievable research activities which included 'basic taxonomy development, focused conceptual development and cycles of interpretation' - op cit. In summary, then, grounded theory informed my analysis; in some data areas, I was able to undertake the three characteristic analytical stages - preliminary analysis, development of conceptual understandings to wider theoretical interpretations - while in others, the limited data meant that I could only operate at the level of preliminary analysis.

As a minor additional form of analysis, I also used a simple form of genre analysis as a way of examining the students writing and the expectations of the course writers. This was not comprehensive since genre analysis is a PhD topic in itself but was useful to identify, as stated above, 'basic taxonomy development'.

8.5.1. Preliminary and primary analysis

Data collection and analysis were interwoven in a process of progressive focusing; initial engagement was made with existing data to identify future research leads and guide new data collection plans. It was also important to constantly interact with the ever increasing amount

Box 1:

1

Meeting Wye directors

Initial analysis of Zim Ss essays/exam papers

Initial examination of tutor feedback

Initial analysis of DE course materials

Mini-survey of good practice guidelines for DE writers

Questionnaire to tutors

Box 2:

2

Meetings with Zim Ministry officials

Visits:study conditions

Meetings with Zimbabwean experts

Interviews: 1-to-1/other groups/tutors

Observation: tutorials

Compilation of other data: photos, realia, diary

Workshops

Box 3:

3

Short follow-up questionnaire to workshop students

Transcription & analysis of audiotapes

Textual analysis of Ss TMA's/exams

Textual analysis of course materials

Translation of Shona extracts from recordings

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of data from an early stage to avoid being swamped.

Figure 7: Data collection and analysis sequence

The collection and analysis of data evolved in the descending sequence illustrated in Figure 7. 1 and 3 was UK-based research and 2 took place in Zimbabwe. 1 & 2 were scheduled to be completed before the end of the 2nd year of research. The rationale behind the sequence was the incremental building of my understanding about characteristics of language and academic literacy practices that were particular to the Zimbabwean social contexts - an iterative process in which, it was hoped, particular emphases would emerge.

For example, I initially examined the students' TMA s and exam papers for particular characteristics or specific difficulties, compared this with recurrent TMA feedback and then surveyed (in an open-question questionnaire) the Wye tutors (disparately placed around UK) to explain, in more detail, their impressions of the problems faced by students such as the Zimbabweans. This preliminary analysis was used to start framing the

research methodology adopted in Zimbabwe. In terms of timing, the visit to Zimbabwe actually occurred in the 3rd year of the PhD. The original 2nd year visit had to be rescheduled due to the unexpected death of the director of the Wye External Programme.

By continuous examination of the unstructured data, I began looking for common themes, inconsistencies, contradictions or references which related back to literature; I also began comparisons and contrasts with other data. The result of this primary analysis was that leads began to emerge as potentially significant to these particular students, in this particular learning situation and in this particular Zimbabwean context, e.g. the nature of their writing characteristics (e.g. reproduction/plagiarism of course materials, lack of critical discussion of course areas) and characteristics (e.g. a blend between very formal - Latin and formal formulae phrases - and very informal conversational English).

Other critical 'incidents' (Hutchinson, 1988:135) began to emerge in early day-to-day dealings with the Ministry and the group of students - discrepancies between official rhetoric about gender and the bemused cynicism of the women extension officers, the importance of the party line, the importance of status and respect for age.

8.5.2 Category and concept formation

In some areas, I became more 'saturated' in the data: in terms of the interview data, the approach required intensive reading and re-reading to uncover what appeared to be the significant points in what students were saying:

> The selected quotes make up the data pool which forms the basis for the next crucial step in the analysis. The researchers attention is now shifted from the individual subjects (i.e. from the interviews from which the quotes were abstracted) to the meaning embedded in the quotes themselves ..Thus each quote has two contexts in relation to which it has been interpreted:first, the interview from which it was taken .. and second, the 'pool of meanings' to which it belongs. The interpretation is an interactive procedure which reverberates between these two contexts..in concrete terms, the process looks like this: quotes are sorted into piles, borderline cases are examined, and eventually the criterion attributes for each group are make explicit. In this way, the groups of quotes are arranged and rearranged, are narrowed into categories, and finally are defined in terms of the core meanings, on the one hand, and borderline cases on the other. Each category is illustrated by quotes from the data.

> *Marton, 1988:154*

155

Interpretation becomes a 'dialectic' process of keeping a holistic perspective of individual informants while, at the same time, searching for overarching themes, concepts and categories. I began to compare instances across different data, among the range of respondents and through a variety of methods and increasingly some areas of data became marshalled behind particular categories such as perspectives (e.g. on the English language, correct answers and essays, cynical 'playing the game'), relationships (e.g. gender, age, groups v individual, the notion of solidarity), themes (e.g. elitism v illusion of egalitarianism, centrality of agriculture in Zimbabwean culture, the multilingualism and the different uses of language in different domains).

8.5.3 Generation of theory

In some areas, I was able to move beyond the ordering of data towards a more interpretative approach. For example, I explored the range of views about the English language and then linked them to wider Victorian and African nationalist discourses. I also explored the wider significance of an imported course within Zimbabwe in the face of structural adjustment austerity measures, the educational elitism within Zimbabwe resulting in a paucity of educational opportunity and the relatively 'independent' nature of foreign content.

8.5.4 Genre Analysis framework - SAIL

As a tool for simple-level analysis of the students writing (TMA's & exams), I used the SAIL (Staged Assessments in Literacy) framework which is a genre-based approach to teaching and assessing writing. This was originally developed in the Department of Education of the University of Manchester and was employed by the Joint Matriculation Board as a criterion-referenced measure to assess literacy in UK secondary schools.

The SAIL framework specifies a set of criteria by which a whole text is assessed and separate writing criteria were developed for each of fourteen types of writing tasks. The framework therefore takes into account that writing varies across different types of writing tasks, for different audiences and purposes. As a tool for analysing essays, it operates at a rather superficial level. It does not, for example, look at the subject specific implications of genre. However, since that type of genre analysis is a PhD in itself, I did not want to

embark down that road. Instead, I was drawn to this assessment scheme for three reasons: first, it is an unusually comprehensive, criterion-referenced marking scheme[1] and has also been used on a large-scale, public level (for UK national examination purposes). Second, because it has been used on a large-scale in the public domain, it could therefore be said to go some way towards explicitly articulating (to both teachers and learners) what are common but often implicit UK expectations about academic literacy. I felt the framework might give me a window on what expectations lay behind the general impression marking of UK TMA tutors.

Another feature is that it has been used in Zimbabwe before at tertiary level (Beveridge and Johnson 1991, Johnson 1994) and therefore provides some measure against which to compare my own findings. I am examining a small collection of essays (3 batches from the same 10 students but since they did not all choose to do the same essays, there are typically 7-8 of the same essay in each batch). If my analysis corresponded with the two earlier studies, then this would provide confidence that my findings were not arbitrary or idiosyncratic.

How does SAIL work? To begin with, the SAIL framework gives prominence to three dominant features of writing tasks, the combination of which determine the appropriateness of a piece of writing to its communicative context. It defines genre on the basis of 'the **focus** (or selection) of the material, the **use** to which it is put (its function) and the way the material is **organised** (its ordering)' - JMB-SAIL Handbook, 1987:12. See table 7.

Table 7: Dominant features of writing

Focus	*Use*	*Organisation*
writer	specify	time
reader	expand	group
subject	examine	theme

[1] in contrast to holistic (general impression marking) and analytic schemes (e.g. Feature Analysis - Stahl,

Focus: In a piece of writing which emphasises a personal or individual viewpoint the focus of writing is the *writer*; in reports or comparisons, the *subject* becomes the focus; a piece of writing which attempts to influence a reader's opinion focuses on the *reader*.

Use: Chosen material and information can be used to specify, to expand or examine. Descriptive statements require a writer to *specify* or particularise the experience; giving opinions or persuading in writing require a writer to *expand* on information with reasons and illustrations; arguing and analysing something in writing requires an *examination* of information in order to evaluate its implications.

Organisation: This refers to the ordering principles behind giving information in writing. Some require a 'relatively simple *temporal* sequencing of events' while others need a more conceptual ordering in which information is linked to one them. Persuasive writing demands a classification of information which is 'grouped according to the various appeals used to persuade..' - op cit:39.

SAIL identifies 14 main types of writing, each representing a unique combination of focus, use and organisation and, for teaching purposes, allocates each of them to one of six stages[1] on the basis of how demanding that combination is. See Table 8.

1974; Dichotomous scales, Cohen, 1973; Primary Trait Scoring, Lloyd-Jones, 1977).

[1] hence the name **Staged** Assessment in Literacy (SAIL)

Table 8: The relationship between focus, use and organisation & different writing types

Stage	Type of writing	Writing focus	Content Use	Text Organisation
1	Personal account	writer	specify	time
2	Report	subject	specify	time
	Imaginative account	writer	expand	time
3	Instruction	reader	specify	time
	Explanation	subject	expand	time
	Description	subject	specify	group
4	Opinion	writer	expand	theme
	Narrative	reader	expand	time
	Information	subject	expand	group
5	Persuasion	reader	expand	group
	Compare/contrast	subject	examine	group
	Reflection	writer	examine	theme
6	Argument	reader	examine	group
	Analysis	subject	examine	theme

I used this framework to examine an argument essay. SAIL also defines genres of writing according to characteristic patterns of expression that emerge at four different levels - Global, Local, Sentence and Word levels. 'The Global (or rhetorical) level addresses the communicative effect of the entire text. The Local level is concerned with connectedness of meaning between sentences' - Beveridge & Johnson 1991:3. This would include sentence relations such as concession, condition and consequence, reasoning & result. Syntactic choices are paramount at the sentence level and lexical choices are prioritised at the Word level.

For each of the 14 identified genres, there are different sets of SAIL indicators (of achievement). These are a composite of appropriate linguistic strategies across the four levels of text for each genre (or combination of focus, use and organisation). Below are the two for argument and analysis. See Table 9 and 10. The practical application of the marking scheme

appears in Appendix 8.

Table 9: Indicators of achievement for Analysis

Focus	Use	Organisation
	GLOBAL	
Writing Focus	*Writing Use*	*Writing Organisation*
1. Predominant focus on the subject	2. Information is examined objectively	3. Ideas are associated to a common theme
Impartial Consideration of Alternative Views	*Identification of a Problem*	*Parallel Units of Information Organised Hierarchically*
4. Two or more viewpoints on a topic are considered in a balanced fashion	5. The information is used to consider a problem for which there is no clear solution	7. Information is organised into a series of parallel units which have an overall hierarchical structure
	Suppositions, Comparative Evidence 6. The problem is debated by the proposal of contravening suppositions and comparative evidence	
	LOCAL	
Non-personal Reference	*Comparative and Consequential Markers*	*Conjunctions*
1. Information is selected from an impartial stand	2. Words and phrases, for example, this results in: thus	4. A variety is used
	Semantic Links	*Cohesive Links*
	3. Sentences are linked by comparative and consequential relations	5. Substitution and ellipsis are noticeable features

FORMAL ACCURACY

SENTENCE *Sentence Roles*
1. Objective evaluation is a noticeable feature
2. Syntax
2. Advanced forms of sentence structure achieved through embedded subordination

WORD

Focus	Use	Organisation
Length and Legibility	*Word Choice*	*Punctuation*
3. Minimum required length	4. Diverse abstract vocabulary	5. Overall control and effective use of within-sentence punctuation
Drafting		*Paragraph Divisions*
6. More than one piece of text		7. Units with specific communicative functions
		Spelling
		8. Overall control of spelling

Table 10: Indicators of achievement for argument

Focus	Use	Organisation
	GLOBAL	
Writing Focus	*Writing Use*	*Writing Organisation*
1. Predominant focus on the reader	2. Information is used to examine.	3. Information is grouped to support development of argument
Reader Agreement	*Stated Premise*	*Classification*
4. Attempts to involve reader are identifiable & sustained throughout text	5. A stated premise supported by claims and counter claims	7. Ideas categorised and grouped to lead reader through stages of argument
	Evidence	*Topic statements*
	6. Evidence is drawn from a number of contexts	8. Topic statements indicating different stages in argument
	LOCAL	
Personal Reference		*Markers of Causality*
1. Appealing to wide audience by adopting formal and distant style.		2. Establishing causal links between conditions and conclusion - therefore, it follows that, thus
	Semantic Links	*Cohesive Links*
	3. Sentences are linked by condition-consequence; concession-contra; reason-result relations	5. Substitution and ellipsis are noticeable features
		Thematic Patterns
		6. Students classify information with a group or thematic structure
	FORMAL ACCURACY	
	SENTENCE	
Length and Legibility		*Syntax*
1. Minimum required length and legible		2. Complex sentences, e.g. embedded subordination
		Sentence Forms
		3. Rhetorical questions, hypothetical sentences used
		Punctuation
		4. Overall control and effective use of within-sentence punctuation
	WORD	
	Word Choice	*Spelling*
	5. Diverse abstract vocabulary	6. Accurate control of spelling of words with prefixes and suffixes
		Paragraph Divisions
		7. Units with specific functions
Drafting		
8. More than one piece of text		

A shortcoming of the SAIL framework and text-type genre theory is that a lot of essays are a hybrid of genres. Another problem with SAIL is that it does not examine discipline specific text characteristics. A rigorous analysis of the discipline specific features of the Zimbabwean students essays and DE materials would be a major study in itself; what I concentrate on here is a general classification of genre expectations within the course and an analysis of recurrent mismatches between academic expectations and students writing performance. Nevertheless, in recognition of the importance of this I outline further areas for research in my concluding chapter.

8.6   Description of workshops

8.6.1   Workshop sessions and topics

The 2 day workshops consisted of a series of sessions, each of which focused on a particular topic and typically explored some aspect of this topic by means of one or more, student-centred, group activities - see table 11.   **Table 11: Workshop order & topics**

SESSION TOPICS
1. Introductions
2. Course contents
3. TMA issues
4. Language issues
5. Contextualising Text
6. Classical Models
7. Zimbabwean additions

I designed the sessions to equip me with more detailed data for my research questions. For example, Session 3 - TMA issues - focused exclusively on academic writing while Session 5 and 6 focused more on academic reading and how the students related the generic course material texts to a Zimbabwean context; Session 4 centred on attitudes towards the use of English and vernacular languages within the course and outside.

The seven sessions were arranged in a particular order, starting with a general warming-up, moving from familiar descriptive activities to increasingly unfamiliar ground in activities which encouraged a more critical appraisal about aspects of the course they are studying.

8.6.2 Activities within the sessions

The activities within each session appear in full in Appendix 3. To provide an immediate example here, session three on the theme of TMA's, comprised four separate student-centred activities:

1. Discussing the meaning and clarity of TMA feedback examples.

2. Discussing problems that 'other' Wye students have experienced in TMA writing and considering the relevance to themselves.

3. Analysing the meanings of typical TMA or exam question words, e.g. discuss, evaluate, critically assess.

4. Planning an outline of a typical TMA.

In terms of data types, this session generated audiotaped recordings (in English and Shona) and written materials showing me how students decided to plan for an essay.

8.6.3 Organisation of sessions

Each session usually followed the same two-stage format:

Stage 1:   The students engaged in the activities in two separate groups.

Stage 2:   The full group met up for plenary feedback at the end of the (timed) activities with each group reporting their discussions/findings followed by a full-group discussion.

Stage 1 activities were led by a student chairperson. This chair was equipped with instructions - about introducing, managing and timing the discussions/activities - plus

worksheets. The chair nominated a notetaker who was responsible for reporting back on behalf of the group during the plenary feedback. Each group was provided with paper, pencils, flipcharts and an audio-cassette recorder (the management of which was delegated to the group). During the two days, the students remained in the same two groups and, with each new session topic, rotated chair and notetaking roles equitably so that by the end of the workshops every member of the group had covered each role at least once.

8.6.4 Rationale behind session activities

The activities within the sessions were highly organised in terms of their timing and management - separate worksheets to students and nominating chair, set time-scales - but the activities themselves were designed to provide a framework for largely informal discussions around a given topic rather than a set procedure or particular questions to answer. Although I had chosen the general topic for discussion, the rationale behind my activities was to prompt a student-directed discussion that would reflect **their** emphases rather than mine.

To this end, I devised activities which had the potential for:

- generating a self-propelling discussion

- generating complex, contradictory or divergent views amongst the group

- creating an informality which the students were likely to find less threatening or restricting than a 'closed' question approach

- taking different directions (e.g. discussed in part or as a whole, in depth or fairly lightly according to the emphasis placed by the students).

- self-management

A recurrent technique in the worksheets was to ask students to comment on statements - real or mock quotes - from other students and tutors. The statements were usually a mixture of contentious, extreme, unclear comments or else constructed to reflect what I, on the basis of other data, felt might be a recurrent problem area for the students. The rationale behind this

technique was to avoid placing the students in a face-threatening position in which I was asking direct questions or trying to elicit bald criticisms/praise about the course. I felt that discussions about other people's views would reveal something of their own and provide a legitimate vehicle for airing criticism. Also, by using polar or extreme views, I was attempting to signal to the students that the parameters of what was appropriate to discuss were open.

In one activity (see fig 8 below), the Zimbabwean students were provided with 11 typical quotes (real and invented) from TMA tutor feedback to discuss. These included contradictory feedback, veiled references to plagiarism, problems around 'critical' essays.

Figure 8: Workshop handout 1, session 3

Activity 1

<u>Using the pieces of TMA feedback below, discuss the following questions:</u>

Summarise what the tutors are trying to get at.

How are students to know what is required of them?

TMA Feedback

VERY GOOD
IMPROVEMENT NEEDED
SATISFACTORY

You give the two reasons for this process being called a cycle, but with little explanation - you could have developed a more critical discussion.

The main problem is that your answers are too short and do not fully answer the questions. You need a more systematic approach in developing answers.

These are essay type questions, in other words you are expected to write an essay to answer each question.

You will gain marks if you use examples as much as possible.

Use examples but don't go into too much depth or detail.

You are now expected to be an economist. You have to write as an economist, using the language and methods of economists. Practice on some of the remaining questions on the TMA 3.

This should be written in continuous prose. It is only appropriate to write in note form if you are listing a number of specific and related points as for the cycle in Question 4, or if you are extremely short of time.

You've obviously got a very good memory of the course text but the same forms of words come up which causes me to mark the papers down.

There is no one correct answer to this question. Be more experimental and have more faith in bringing in your own experiences and opinions.

I think that TMA's should be 20-30% of the overall assessment and focused around Zimbabwean case-studies.

The first stage of the activities was the most important to me in terms of the **quality** of data it might produce. The students were largely left alone for these discussions (albeit with a recorder) and I took it that these uninterrupted self-directed discussions, prior to when they would be 'on show' in the plenary, might provide a more natural forum for them to express a range of views. Equally important about this stage was its potential as a window on how the group might naturally interact with each other and provide me with data about study group characteristics, gender issues, individual v group observations, language use, etc.

To emphasise their responsibility and independence during this phase, I frequently absented myself from stage 1 discussions (entirely in the initial sessions to set the tone) in order to downplay any responsibility that I might have beyond answering the odd query or providing pens, etc. The audiocassette recorders were chosen to be unobtrusive, long-playing and simple to operate (one was a hand-size battery-run recorder, the other a professional mains recorder with a flat microphone). I did not downplay their presence since they were a permanent feature of all the discussions. In fact, I delegated their management to the students. In this, I was trying to downplay the notion that they were my private possession to-be-used-as-evidence-against-them. In my initial introduction to the sessions, I had explained in detail how I was going to use the cassettes, why I needed them and that absolute confidentiality would be observed.

In addition, I asked the students to speak in English in the plenary for my sake but to use whichever languages they felt comfortable with during the first stage discussion. In other words, I was explicitly signalling that they should not feel, out of politeness for example, bound to speak in English for my sake during this phase if I happened to be in the room. Again this was an attempt to create a natural context for discussion.

8.6.5 Two strands running through sessions

In addition to the linearly-progressing sessions, I added two other strands of research which ran through all the sessions - see figure 9 below.

The **first** was to note where feasible, as a roving researcher but mainly in subsequent audio transcription, **when** and in relation to **what**, code-switching (change of language from English to Shona/Ndebele, etc) occurred. Codeswitching is a highly complex area and worthy of PhD in itself so I was interested in this at a very general level instead of, for example, getting involved in too detailed a categorising of what prompted a change. My main interest was to register what proportion of the time students used vernacular languages when

Code-switch	Before / After	SESSION TOPICS
		1.Introductions
		2. Course contents
		3. TMA issues
		4. Language issues
		5. Contextualising Text
		6. Classical Models
		7. Zimbabwean additions
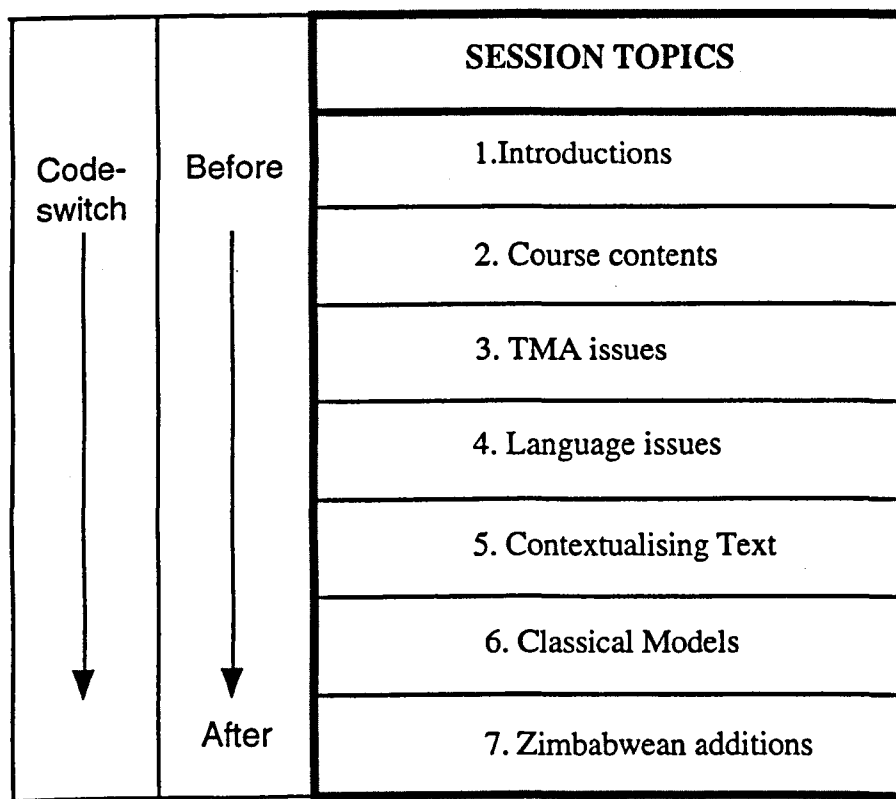
Figure 9: Research strands accompanying workshops

left alone in the stage 1 discussions. I felt this might give me a comparable 'window' on codeswitching in their study group situation; that is to say, when meeting together without a tutor to discuss issues to do with their English-medium course. I was interested in how far an English-medium course was actually mediated in English. I also thought it might be

interesting to have short sections translated from the Shona or Ndebele if feasible.

Secondly, there was a **before** and **after** leitmotif running through the sessions (but specifically articulated in Session 2 and 7). In session 2, for example, the two groups were asked to describe the official course diagrammatically (on flipchart paper) in whichever way they felt appropriate and then add any 'unofficial' ways they supplemented the course such as discussions with work colleagues, spouses, Zimbabwean literature, etc. During the subsequent sessions, the students were progressively asked to think about study and content areas specific to a Zimbabwean context. Session 7 attempted to bring all their views together in a 'course implications' session when I asked them to return and rework those original diagrams.

8.6.6 Problem areas in workshops

Generally, I was satisfied with the methodology I adopted in Zimbabwe. The work put into the design of the workshops paid off in terms of smooth-running and animated, self-propelling discussions in which the researcher was largely redundant. There were the inevitable practical problems - power cuts (and therefore the loss of some oral data), external noise (agriculture students practising tractor driving), the one woman informant absent for some sessions (on gender) as her son had malaria. Timing difficulties resulted in 2 group activities being given to the students to write about individually and forward onto me in England - Appendix 4.

However, one main change I would make would be to take the students away from the familiar setting of the Agriculture College in order to emphasise their independence from a Ministry of Agriculture line. Students were anxious about the destiny and anonymity of the feedback. This would challenge the emphasis on 'naturalistic settings'.

8.7   Close

The following series of 5 chapters, which form the part C of the thesis, present and analyse the data from the Zimbabwe. The first two, chapters 9 and 10 two chapters are focused on language planning questions while the remaining, chapters 11, 12 & 13, focus on

pedagogical questions pertinent to a print-centred context. Data will be presented in a variety of forms but will centre around quotes from (mainly student) interviews and discussions and also graphical reproductions of workshop flipcharts. For example, tables are used to re-present student responses in summary form. Some of the research photographs have, as already apparent, been interwoven through the chapters.

PART C

DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter 9 - Language planning issues 1: the role of English in post-colonial Africa

9.1 Introduction

Both chapters 9 and 10 centre on language issues, with this chapter focusing exclusively on the English language and the following research questions:

What ambiguities/aspirations surround the use of English in Zimbabwe?

What discourses surround the use of the English as an international language?

What type of English is promoted within the Wye course?

The chapter will highlight some of the complexities and paradoxes that emerge from an analysis of data relating to the English language. For example, different recurrent categories emerged in their comments which relate to discourses which surround English as an international language and to English in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The aim of the chapter is to engage in a reflexive discussion about the, often overlooked, cultural politics involved in English-medium teaching and to argue that these need to be accounted for within the Wye print-centred, DE pedagogy.

9.2 Linguistic background of students

All the Zimbabwean student participants were bilingual in English and Shona or Ndebele and many of them multilingual. Since Shona is a majority language in terms of population figures (80%) rather than political power and few mother-tongue Shona speakers can speak Ndebele (15% of population), Ndebele-speaking students tend to be multilingual since they are obliged to use Shona in many circumstances. The group itself reflected this language dispersion - there were 9 Shona speakers and 1 Ndebele speaker. Some of the participants could also use related (Shona) dialects such as Kalanga, Shangani and Chewa. Most had been learning through the medium of English since the age of at least seven.

The very fact that they were bi- or multi-lingual marks these students out as an educated elite. To put this into perspective, 80% of Shona speakers are monolingual (and rurally-based) fulfilling all their linguistic needs, formal and informal, in Shona. The same is not true for urban and educated Shona or Ndebele speakers like these students. For them, English and Shona/Ndebele function in diglossia or 'the distribution of more than one language variety to serve different communicational tasks in society' - Fasold, 1984: 40.

>>[1]Shona and English are used interchangeably as and when the situation demands.

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[1] >> indicates a written piece of data, taken from a postal questionnaire. N.B. any inaccurate spelling or syntax is faithfully reproduced

174

9.3   Aspirations around English

However, what is particularly striking is how much English, in contrast to indigenous languages, is valued by the students as a prized commodity and invested with positive notions about progress, access, status and power. These notions reflect some of Schmied's English-medium arguments (see Chapter 3) and seem shot through with an egalitarian promise:

- The anti-tribal argument:

> although being Zimbabweans .. er .. we indicated the dialects that are there under the two main languages so .. er .. which means some people are going to be left out .. but **English** .. everybody's going to be at the same level

- The international communication argument:

> \>\>Not sounding critical for example, Tanzania made Swahili the official language such that English was excluded but I hear that some of their learned people cannot speak English and hence cannot participate in international fora.

> \>\>Due to its popularity in the world, its now commands some form of power.

- The high-cost argument

> most of the academic textbooks are written in English .. you couldn't change that

- The technological/modern language argument:

> \>\>I use English because it is more precise, its faster for me and I can use the Oxford dictionary for possible meaning in case of doubt.

> you get the information quicker when its in English .. the point might be explained simply .. right to the point in English .. yet in Shona .. Shona to me would complicate matters [laughs]

> definite technological terms cannot be translated into local languages

It is these black Zimbabweans themselves (and their aspirations) who underpin the continued use of English by taking pride in English language skills, particularly writing, and demanding English-medium education for both themselves and their children.

>>When I address my children I use both English and Shona.

Comrade Mugabe has beautiful English .. he is very articulate .. he can speak English better than the English ..

we always compare .. we hear a lot of children from group A[1] schools in the street .. talking very proper .. very good English .. you know .. like you .. but when you ask what type of symbol (*meaning = examination grade*) you have .. he has only got a D but I have got B

>> It is associated with success in education (academic excellence). The language of success is a language used and understood by most people.

---

[1] Prestige, all English-medium schools. In B schools (where these middle-management adults and their children are educated) vernacular languages are used in the early years alongside (and also within) English-medium classes. Typically, students and teachers use vernacular languages mainly when speaking but English when writing.

9.4 Ambiguities around English

The fact that it is **not** understood or used by 'most' of the Zimbabwean population but as the first language of a tiny (but economically dominant, white) minority and the working language of a Zimbabwean (black) elite, alerts us to the contradictions that abound in a country, as mentioned in Chapter 7, with no clear language policy and planning. My use of the term 'elite' refers to educational privilege (rather than political power) and includes these middle-management government officers despite the fact that they occupy middle-management and lower-level, front-line posts in an extremely hierarchical government structure - see figure 4, chapter 7.

Shot through the students' overwhelmingly glowing comments about English, we catch glimpses of more difficult truths.

> they will understand you better if you use the local language ..we have got some farmers who are pig ignorant

> if English is the language they use in the rural area .. then of course we will use it .. but that is not the case unfortunately for Zimbabwe .. people in the rural areas .. speak .. er .. local languages

> we use the vernacular when we are really cornered

> >>I have used English so much that my ability to use Shona in written communication has dwindled.

> >>Reading - English novels and magazines (pleasure and work). Very few Ndebele articles in magazines (work related).

> we want Oxford English .. undiluted

> I do not think there is a Zimbabwean type of English

> >> my education background has been and still is related to the English system

> >>Diary - this is kept in English matching the English calendar's months of the year and days of the week.

> >>I speak Shona and English (not American) on a daily basis

> >>The language of success is definitely English. Maybe I have been colonised too much! Maybe it is because I am in an Anglophone speaking country. (The Francophone will say French, the Portuguese speaking former colonies will say Portuguese).

These examples tell us various things. One is that diglossic situations and English-medium educational systems can reflect and institutionalise inequities in the society by means of an 'elite closure' - Myers-Scotton, 1993:149. In other words, diglossia strengthens the widespread tendency by elites to exclude the masses from any participation in powerful arenas (economic, political, higher educational and professional) 'by establishing language prerequisites, such as competence in an ex-colonial language' - Chick & Wade 1997:274. We can see some of the truth in Ngugi's reasoning:

> We have already seen what any colonial system does: impose its tongue on the subject races, and then down-grade the vernacular tongues of the people. By doing so they make the acquisition of their tongue a status symbol; anyone who learns it begins to despise the peasant majority and their barbaric tongues, he becomes alienated .. the languages of the masses[1].
>
> *Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1972:16*

Not only are social distinctions reflected in the use of different languages but also between different varieties of English.

> The 80's saw many black parents transferring their children from township schools into the so-called 'Group A', a convention that continues to this day...They confused the mastery of English grammar and accent as education and development ... it is common for the 'nose brigades' to make fun of our black brothers and sisters whose phonetics are not pure English and label them SRB, an acronym for Strong Rural Background.
>
> *Kwadzanayi, 1996:8*

Against these realities we, as English-medium teachers, are faced with two uncomfortable problems.

One, if we respond, as Edwards suggests, to the 'articulated requirements' of our students, we need to accept that we can actually become implicated in strengthening inequalities in the communities in which we teach. Does, for example, English-medium teaching 'serve to entrench the power of an elite, privileged group of people who may have little interest in the welfare of the majority of the people in the country' - Peirce, 1989:402? Is it our business?

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[1] This quote also appears in chapter five, section 5.3.4.

178

Two, we stand accused of participating in a process which has, on a long-term cumulative basis, arrested the development of indigenous African languages, particularly in their written forms, and condemned them to the private domain. We have lost sight of the linguistic diversity which surrounds an English-medium course.

9.5 Dominant discourses around English as an International Language

Before continuing with further data examples, I want now to account for some of the complexities within the students' views about the English language by showing their relationship with other dominant discourses that surround the use of English as an International Language.

These discourses have their origins in Victorian imperialism and nationalism which, in turn, impacted on African Nationalist discourses and then later became interwoven with the rhetoric of modernisation, development and the global market. Together, these discourses contribute to the general view of EIL as 'neutral, natural and beneficial' (Pennycook 1990, 1994, 1996 a &b) to such an extent that teachers typically ignore the problems surrounding EIL.

In exploring these discourses, my point is not simply to expose their **non**-neutrality or even the inappropriacy of teaching practices assumed to be universal; it is to participate in a reflexive discussion about my own (and by implication my readers') educational practices. The underlying argument is that we need to be more aware of the complex cultural politics that surround our teaching and, where possible (and I acknowledge that it is not always possible) to construct pedagogies which are more open to the complexities and contradictions that emerge from different sociocultural contexts.

9.5.1 Anglicist and Orientalist discourses

The origins of current rhetoric around English-medium education can be traced to nineteenth century debates between Orientalist[1] and Anglicist tendencies in English colonial policy; that is to say, the provision or withholding of English-medium education.

Orientalist (in favour of education in local languages for both the colonised and colonisers) and Anglicist language planning policies (promoting English-medium education) are often

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[1] Originally from Said's book 'Orientalism' - 1978 - a colonial discourse by which European culture was able

framed as two **competing** ideologies (Phillipson 1992, Kachru 1986a) in which Anglicist triumphed over Orientalist ideologies at the historically defining moment of Macauley's minute:

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of person Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.

> *Macauley's Minute of 2nd February 1835*

This has been interpreted as the result of a discursive shift within colonial policies away from the romanticism of anti-slavery discourse and notions of the 'noble savage' towards an imperialist discourse driven by industrial and economic imperatives, missionary zeal, Utilitarian and Darwinist philosophies.

> 'By mid-century, the success of the antislavery movement, the impact of the great Victorian explorers, and the merger of racist and evolutionary doctrines in the social sciences had combined to give the British public a widely shared view of Africa that demanded imperialization on moral, religious, and scientific grounds'.

> *Brantlinger 1985:167-8.*

English-medium education became a natural extension of the Victorian imperatives to bring light to a 'dark' continent.

Others, however, (Pennycook 1994 1996a, Said 1978, Loh Fook Seng 1975, Viswanathan 1989) view the two orientations not so much as competing but **complementary** discourses 'equally complicit with the project of domination' - Viswanathan, 1989:30. Pennycook (1996a), for example, argues that Anglicist language policies **never** actually led to widespread English-medium teaching. This was precisely because the object was to produce only a small English-speaking elite to service the colonial machinery and to maintain a large body of Africans for manual labour at the same time.

> I am not in favour of extending the number of 'English' schools except where there is a palpable desire that English should be taught. Whilst we teach children to read and write and count in their own languages..we are safe.

> *Swettenham, 1894 - Perak Government Gazette, 6th July.*

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to define, manage and have authority over the Orient.

Although often couched in terms of moral duty, it becomes apparent that the promotion of free, voluntary vernacular education was not a benevolent, altruistic humanist stance but a concessionary measure mainly employed to entrench loyalty, obedience and acceptance of colonial rule and part of a calculated withholding of widespread English-medium teaching. It was therefore 'linked to questions of social control, colonial capitalism and a desire among many colonial administrators to maintain local populations in a state of "happy innocence"' - Pennycook (1996a: 141-2).

These withholding policies perversely led towards more widespread English-medium education fuelled by local African demand precisely because they recognised the role that English played as a gatekeeper to social, political and economic advancement, that vernacular languages were being used to marginalise. It is this strand which seems to resonate throughout the students' responses and helps us understand the complexities, for example, behind their strong resistance to vernacular translation within the course.

It is also this strand that alerts us to the fact that contemporary language policy debates between liberal multi-culturalism (which supports both access to English as an International language and first language education) and more conservative policies (which advocate the transition from vernacular to 'significant' languages) cannot be seen without reference to their respective colonial origins.

9.5.2 Nationalist discourses

The standardisation of English[1] became a natural extension of Victorian imperial and economic imperatives; that is to say, a standardisation of education constructed the idea of a cohesive nation state - a homogeneous ethnicity - within Great Britain and its disparate colonies and served to centralise and facilitate control (over education, language, printing and reading).

Standardised language also reflected a nineteenth century notion that a particular form of

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1 - a standard literary language based on the literary canon

182

English bestowed qualities of the 'ideal gentleman' on the speaker - civilised, educated, moral, rational and capable of abstract thought. 'Vulgar' forms of English, such as the commonly used term in Zimbabwe, SRB (Strong Rural Background), were associated with less admired qualities - irrationality, incapacity to divorce oneself from the emotions of the immediate concerns of the present. In other words, standardised English was a formalised representation of Victorian and colonial constructions of social difference and what they were prepared to tolerate - desirable/undesirable, civilised/uncivilised, educated/non-educated, developed/undeveloped, coloniser/colonised, modern/primitive.

Language purism acted then to privilege both the actual language - English - and **one** form of that language over others while 'giving differential access to that privileged form and to denying forms of social difference (by regulating the forms of expression available in the languages)' - Pennycook, 1994:110.

Aspects of this language purism seem reflected in the students strong rejection of any variety of English - Standard Southern African English, Standard Zimbabwean English (the variety spoken by middle-class white settlers), Zimbabwean Black English - other than 'Oxford English'. I will expand on this point later.

9.5.3 Consolidation of key notions

The construction of this national norm within language, a 'sociolinguistic myth' (Harris 1987; Crowley 1989), laid the foundations for thinking about English as a neutral language, with an attendant egalitarian promise and has been repeatedly consolidated from this Victorian era onwards.

It was consolidated by the establishment of a particularly European brand of linguistics at the turn of the century (posited around either a representationalist[1] or Saussurean structuralist[2]

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1 Representationalism- meaning is dependent on a relationship to an objective world, a direct world-object relationship.

2 Structuralism - meaning residing in the linguistic system itself - langue - at the expense of parole (everyday utterances) so that language is a fixed and agreed-upon code or meanings shared by a homogenous speech community to express their ideas.

view of meaning and language), the publication of the Oxford English Dictionary and the establishment of a hegemony of English within the Science and Technology fields during and after the World Wars (Kaplan 1993).

On a cumulative basis, these interwoven discourses have contributed to underpinning key notions around language (and by extension within language teaching practices):

1. The assumption of monolingualism[1] (rather than bilingualism or multilingualism) as the norm.

2. The view that meaning resides in the internal, fixed linguistic system itself and that language is structural system amenable to scientific analysis and description (evident in claims by modern linguists for both a descriptive neutrality of their work and a Western scientific legitimacy despite its largely normative and prescriptive basis (standardised English, monolinguistic and logocentric).

3. A particular emphasis being placed on linguistic competence within the 'pure' form of the language (on learning what are assumed to be universalisable language laws).

These assumptions are accompanied by a tendency, on the part of teachers and learners, to draw a clear distinction between 'native' speakers and 'non-native speakers' and to reify the describers of language and native-speaking English as the best representatives and teachers of both the 'undiluted' language and education in that language. Language as a vehicle for communication has been conflated with language as a symbol of social identification and results in stressing the primacy of those born into a particular language; the biological becomes emphasised at the expense of the social. Proud claims such as 'I've been using English from day one of primary school' stress the inherited rather than learned relationship to English.

There is also the assumption that language can be dealt with in terms of its internal structure

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[1] a reflection of a European political psychology of nationalism

184

and without reference to its cultural, social, political or historical contexts[1]. Stripped of context, the structuralist view of language suggests that English is a neutral medium for communication and a language in which speakers can have equal rights. It contributes to a widely held notion that status and power derives from the language itself rather than from those who use it and hides questions about power, social dynamics and change.

Divorcing language from culture and viewing languages as closed systems of shared meaningful ideas suggests that knowing a language and knowing a culture - is 'a matter of anthropological discovery rather than of contested discourses within a particular region' - Street, 1993:27.

> An understanding of culture, then, is not simply a knowledge of differences, but rather an understanding of how and why differences in language, thought, use of materials and behaviours have come about. There are certainly cultural differences .. but these differences have meanings, function and histories. Contemporary cultural studies look at these meanings, functions and histories in order to understand differences; they do not use the apparent 'fact' of differences to explain history, politics and belief.
>
> *Thornton (1988:25)*

This is a view of culture and the relationship between language and culture which rejects the notion of trying to say what culture **is** - as a static, fixed inheritance of ideas - to thinking of culture in terms of what it **does**.

> Defining words, ideas, things and groups .. We all live our lives in terms of definitions, names and categories that culture creates. The job of studying culture is not of finding and then accepting its definition but of discovering how and what definitions are made, under what circumstances and for what reasons. These definitions are used, change and sometimes fall into disuse. Indeed the very term culture itself like these other ideas and definitions, changes its meanings and serve different often competing purposes at different times. Culture is an active process of meaning making and contest over definition, including its own definition.
>
> *Street, 1993:25*

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[1] The language teaching profession, for example, typically concentrates on linguistics, psychology and education and largely distances itself from international relations, development studies, theories of culture or intercultural communication.

9.5.4 Global discourses

From the post-war period onwards, nationalist discourses became interwoven with other global discourses - modernisation, development, and capitalism - and gave rise to the view that proficiency in English was also beneficial as it could help countries to 'develop' and to 'participate'.

A key question for us to face, and one for which there is no easy answer, is whether, at an international level, we 'nurture illusion' - Judd, 1983:271. Do, for example, people from different countries participate in international arenas as equals anyway or are we simply facilitating unequal dialogues between nations? Is English simply an integral part of the global structure of capitalistic dependency, by which the First World is continually making the Third World economically dependent?

9.5.5 Reflection in African Nationalist language education policies

Anglicist language policies have largely been maintained by African Nationalists. In the struggle for independence, the Zimbabweans elites deliberately fought in the colonisers' own language. As discussed in Chapter 5, this was one of the most effective weapons in their armoury. However, in the very process, those elites justified 'both their position as the new leaders .. and the use of English in their new political system and economy' - Deneire (1993:171). English-medium education therefore continued to be an established foundation for achieving elitist status while the vernacular educated remained divided and disenfranchised.

Even though post-colonial African elites widened the general access to English-medium education (at all levels) via universal education policies, social inequities (class and ethnic divisions) still exist and are reflected along English language lines (as well in Shona and Ndebele).

This can be seen in, one, the strict division between fully English-medium schools (and universities) and those which integrate English alongside African languages. In Zimbabwe, this is most evident in the urban/rural divide but also within private and public urban African

schools (Zimbabwe's A and B schools).

Two, the standards of English-medium teaching varies enormously. Tollefson (1991), for example, illustrates that post-independence, the English taught to lower-class students in class B schools is quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate for those who want to apply for high status jobs. Clegg (1995), for example, highlights that success in both English and English-medium education is dependent on a whole range of conditions[1] which make the difference between access to higher education or not.

Perhaps those inequalities in school types and teaching quality are simply the result of a temporary stage in these early days of Zimbabwe's evolution. Perhaps they are the result of inadequate or partial understanding of how to achieve effective language teaching by non-specialists. Perhaps they are the result of social planning. For example, it has been argued (Deneire 1993, Tollefson 1991, Judd 1983) that African rulers have knowingly used the English language to create an illusion of meritocracy; that by chasing the upward mobility, egalitarian promise of English, African parents only participate in entrenching the power of an English-speaking elite and their own domination. In other words, it is an illusion that disguises social inequity and the fact that social mobility in Zimbabwe depends on far more than language but other conditions such as nepotism, ethnicity, social class, gender, capital ownership.

My own view is that some of the aspirations and ambiguities that are reflected in the students' comments can only be understood if we take all these 'perhaps' into account. Nevertheless, as McGinley (1987:160) notes, the absence of public comment about the less savoury role of English in Zimbabwe is conspicuous. A recent newspaper article in the national Sunday Mail drew attention to it:

> At a time when many countries all over the world are proclaiming and affirming their national languages in education, science, media, etc, Zimbabwe seems to have been left out by this trend as many among us continue steadfastly to worship and to use English as the official language

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[1] e.g. home educational background, exposure to English, high standard teaching, teacher education, management of the switch to English, co-ordinated system-wide language policies, pedagogies appropriate to bilingual settings, strong foundations in cognitive and literacy skills, etc.

One reason is that the relationship between English and discriminatory policies of colonialism seems, in Zimbabwe, to have been partly eclipsed by its role in articulating the struggle for Independence and as a lingua franca within a Southern African economic and political bloc (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Namibia, Tanzania, Mozambique). Kachru (1992:211) identifies the importance of the former role:

> In ethnically diverse and linguistically pluralistic societies, English brought together the politically conscious local leaders who articulated local aspirations in a language which had international currency.

English also seems to have escaped the fate of Afrikaans in the neighbouring South Africa:

> \>\> with changes taking place in the South African region it will not be surprising if Afrikaans is made extinct as it is viewed as the language of oppression. Mozambique a former Portuguese colony, has opted to join the Commonwealth and has been admitted. English is progressively being taught in that country replacing Portuguese.

> \>\>Due to its popularity in the world, it now commands some form of power.

> *Extracts from Zimbabwean Wye students' written questionnaires*

Perhaps the very fact that this rarely mentioned subject appeared in this recent national newspaper is an indication that Zimbabwe **is** beginning (to be allowed) to engage in this trend, probably prompted by neighbouring South Africa's new multilingual language policy[1].

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[1] which has raised 11 indigenous languages to official status and is 'intended to offset the past discrimination in favour of English and Afrikaans' - Chick, 1997:272.

9.6   Foregrounding the less familiar

9.6.1 Missing cues

So far, I have been attempting to show how the traces of past and present discourses help us to make sense of some of the complexities and ambiguities surrounding the English language within the students' comments. I want now, however, to suggest that, important though they are, there are dangers in placing too much emphasis on these discourses.

These dominant discourses, like underdevelopment theory (discussed in chapter 5), tend to set up simplistic groups (colonised/colonisers, exploiter/victim) and without a balance in the debates, tend to obscure the part played by African contexts and roles.

It is our belated post-colonial guilt, coupled with our innate earnestness as teachers that predisposes us towards foregrounding these discourses and it is surely right that we engage in these reflexive discussions. However, without the African dimension, we stand in danger of perpetuating mistakes if we fail to see that these interpretations are telling us mainly about ourselves and our dominant practices; the danger is that we can convince ourselves, on the basis of limited understanding, that we know what it is that Africans 'really need', that we have the overview.

9.6.2 Resistance to 'diluted' English

One particular danger is that these discourses can lead us to make over-simplistic conclusions about an 'obvious' need to redress past mistakes by preferring and promoting the 'indigenous' in the form of local languages, varieties of English, locally-appropriate course content and course production. It therefore comes as quite a shock to find that these ideas were met with strong resistance by the Zimbabwean students and this resistance was a recurrent theme of my research. For example:

```
INT:    what I keep hearing is a certain modesty about Zimbabwe .. that everything outside
        Zimbabwe is better
INF6:   not exactly==
INF3:           ==no==
INF4:            ==no==
INF6:   you see Charlotte .. some of us have seen the systems of education changing in the
        country .. there are people who did the English .. the English system .. with Latin
        .. it included Latin .. they were using the books that your parents were using in
        primary education==
INF2:              ==Oxford==
INF1:               ==Oxford==
INF6:                    ==Oxford English .. undiluted .. and some of
        us started with Oxford and three years into primary education er .. somebody said no
        no .. lets make it a bit lighter for these guys .. a bit of water was poured in .. and it
        become lighter .. and we moved from Oxford into the new thing which was .. dubbed
        day by day .. the standard was lowered .. so when they say abridged series .. they
        mean the language itself.. has been simplified to be understood by a person who is
        using English as a second language==
INF7:                        ==we went to English as a second language==
INF6:   == and further into independence .. some of us believe .. there was another step that
        was done .. to make it English for .. the third world .. not just second language but
        for the third world .. you'll find that our system of education .. and what is
        occurring at the moment .. is very different .. somebody who did only primary
        education using the Oxford .. if he writes a letter in London .. you would think the
        letter is written by someone who has a first degree .. and this one from the one
        with the O level of last year .. is in primary school//
INT:    you're saying it is patronising?
INF's: (group of 10):    yuh .. yuh .. yuh .. yuh .. yuh
INF6:   we want Oxford English undiluted .. we don't want the simplified==
INF2:                                   ==no==
INF6:                                    ==we don't
        want English for the Third World==
INF3:                 ==no==
INF2:                   ==we want the real stuff==
```

Here, reflected in the fate of the English language, we see some of the strains and disappointments that have accompanied the transition towards post-independent Zimbabwe: the enormous burden of mass education policies leading to a perceived decline of general educational and English language standards (specifically in the B schools); the growing two-tierism in education and within standards of English language and English-medium teaching; the perpetual battles over resource allocation and the increase in political interference within the educational sphere.

These last two themes are particularly potent for these professionals, as revealed in their descriptions about difficulties at work:

the main problem which I think is insurmountable is political interference .. because it affects everything from the budget to salary .. everything .. the allocation of resources .. I say its getting worse instead of improving .. and Wye College has helped my understanding of this

not being given my proper and deserved authority in decision making and .. at present my boss is interrupting a lot in this

you make a decision and then you are issued with a change .. and then you have to change that decision .. that has an affect on your subordinates .. because the next time you take a decision .. they smile at you .. and then they wait for confirmation from elsewhere .. that kind of thing at management level is very destructive

Wall mural, Agricultural College, Harare

All these factors eat away at the dream of Independence and hopes invested in mass education. Social inequities still exist in education and are still reflected along language lines. But where once the fight was most clearly sited between vernacular or English-medium education, the contemporary fight is clearly apparent within English-medium education.

It is no wonder, therefore, that 'undiluted' English, so symbolic as a gateway to a new meritocratic society, is clung to in the face of this two-tierism within Zimbabwe; even more so when that perceived loosening of standards finds support from ever-present outside language specialists with their anthropological interest in indigenous varieties of English.

Against this background, an international English-medium course, produced outside Zimbabwe, becomes attractive not through lack of pride in things Zimbabwean and not because the course itself is above criticism. The fact that it is ready-made and operates largely outside the highly selective, tertiary-level educational system in Zimbabwe, gives the course participants an in-built protection and respite from political and work interference; it offers the student a privileged, non-traditional access route to 'undiluted' resources and a perceived level playing field in a professional and international domain; it provides a degree of independence from political and social pressures and a degree of autonomy to make decisions.

These are valued qualities that course producers can easily overlook in the current emphasis on post-colonial guilt. We need to appreciate that revising or 'Zimbabweanising' the course, though acknowledged as important, could, as in this case, be of secondary importance and may very well be met with suspicion and resistance. The overriding fear among the case-study group, is that independence and quality will be lost if course production is located at the local level.

INF2: we don't want it to be a national course/

INF7: no it would be like going back to primary education==

INF2: ==we do not have the people at
the moment==

INF7: ==maybe as a long term thing

INF6: but the chaps at Wye .. should be watching and monitoring .. otherwise the thing
can be diluted and we end up with something completely different

The local tutors feel the same:

> we enjoy them .. we get a full packet .. you don't know what would happen if it becomes
> localised
>
> *Black Zimbabwean local tutor*

Also, to professionals tuned to the stark choices that limited resources force, there is also the

real fear that diverting precious funds into something as relatively luxurious as course

revision might actually cost the place of subsequent students.

> we need to take care of the others coming behind us ..

Zimbabwean English[1] or even Black Southern African English (BSAE)[2] is not, as yet

perhaps, perceived as a confident Zimbabwean appropriation of English but associated with

Orientalist discourses of marginalisation or the making of allowances:

INT: some people say there's a difference between Zimbabwean English or
Nigerian English .. and .. er .. English English .. that there are Englishes ..
do you recognise that?

INF12: the way I look at it .. my examiner is a person who should not be too
biased .. he or she is looking at really .. er .. did my student manage to
really grasp the concept in terms of whatever .. irrespective of whether this
is a Third World student .. First World student or Second World student

INT: do you think they do that?

---

[1] Louw (1995)

[2] Chick and Wade (1997), Magura (1985)

INF12:   we don't know yet but I want to believe they don't look at us in those terms

In answer to this student, this response, typical of the tutors questionnaire replies as a whole, is reassuring:

>>I pay no attention to the quality of English, so long as the ideas being expressed are · clear. I see little difference in the ability to express ideas clearly between native English speakers and those with English as a second, third or forth language. Incorrect grammar and spelling are inconsequential (if we paid attention to this, then we would also have to deduct marks from many of our home students!)

Nevertheless, the resistance raise difficult questions for English-medium course producers. Do we use standardised academic English in the academic course materials but accept (and legitimise) varieties of English from the students in the TMA's or exams? Or should we adopt a more prescriptive route for political reasons? For instance, one argument could be that students need (and seemingly) want a common academic language in order to advance themselves within recognised professional and academic circles. This might imply a far more overt language teaching agenda interwoven throughout the course and perhaps more detailed TMA feedback than the general impression marking that is currently on offer.

Have we become so guilt-ridden about the whole notion of standardised English that we fudge the issue and avoid correcting English for fear of being judgmental? Does this lead us to accept poorly expressed English? Can we distinguish between varieties of English and poorly expressed English? Could we, reflect, to lesser or greater degrees, different varieties of English within all the academic materials (print, audio, video)?

9.6.3 Type of English promoted within the course

What type of English is used in the actual academic writing? What assumptions do the writers make about comprehensible writing and do they adopt any special writing strategies to help students for whom English is a second language? Four writing orientations emerge:

1.   No strategy

>>I don't adopt any specific strategies although I am very aware that this is a great problem for some students.

2.   Structural changes to the text

>>Keep sentences short and avoid long words.

3.   Supplementing the writing to enhance comprehension

>>Introduce boxes or descriptions giving synonyms and explanations of key concepts and cases to reinforce certain points.

4.   Focusing on the quality of the writing

>>I tend to use the full range of the language, and try to write well, on the ground that this sets a good example to follow. This is what I expect of Spanish speaking authors when I work in a second language. I want to see good Spanish that I can aspire to.

The first, third and fourth approaches correspond most closely with the students expressed wishes for 'undiluted' language. The second approach, where the text is structurally altered by means of short sentences and controlled vocabulary stems from the same tradition as the abridged 'English for the Third World' rejected by the students. (Some would argue this is also the approach used by magazines and tabloid newspapers to reach a wide audience but I would argue that it is the heavy use of colloquial language in tabloid newspapers, rather than its structural features, that make it more accessible).

The 'structural' approach to changing text draws on readability research and this has had a long and tenacious influence on both DE instructional design and second language reading. In the DE world, this was confirmed by a small survey of advice provided to DE writers and drawn from three sources - standard 'how to write DE' handbooks, courses about DE, internal good practice guidelines in a range of DE producing institutions.

Very similar to another smaller survey conducted by Richards (1993), the following represented a summary of main areas of advice presented in those 3 sources (for individual authors and institutions see Appendix 7):

Plain writing   Avoid 'elitist' long words and sentences
                       Use short, strong familiar words
                       Keep sentences short
                       Use positive words rather than negatives
                       Use active rather than passive
                       Take care with jargon and technical words

<u>Informal style</u>   User-friendly tone
             Use personal pronouns (you, let's) and contractions
             Use rhetorical questions

These notions of carefully controlled and graded input stem mainly from readability research (e.g. Dale-Chall 1948, Flesch 1948, Spache 1953, Fry 1968, Raygor 1977, Hull 1979, Klare 1984) and reflect a structuralist view of language which takes for granted the primacy of words and syntax, regarding them as having a specific meaning, independent from the reader. In this bottom-up, physical view of language, texts are seen as being made up of smaller building bricks in a 'continuum of gradually complexifying syntactic systems' (Schmidt R, 1983:141) which are linearly processed.

Readability research, particularly readability measures, has generated extensive criticism (e.g. Moore 1935, Fitzgerald 1953, Davison & Kantor 1982, Kintsch 1984, Chambers 1983) and heated debate about their effectiveness. The key criticisms, which I subscribe to, centre on the textual features which are ignored by readability measures and writing advice (such as that commonly given to DE writers). These would include syntactic complexity, textual cohesion, propositional density, rhetorical structure; they also ignore reader factors such as cultural and educational background, interest level, purpose, etc.

9.7 Emerging implications

In this chapter, I have attempted to show that the complexities and ambiguities that are reflected in the students comments about English are related to dominant discourses around English as an International language and also the aspirations and disappointments that have accompanied the transition towards a post-colonial Zimbabwe. These complexities raise difficult questions for both English language teachers and English-medium academics alike.

However, I would argue that these questions underline the need to adopt a critical language awareness approach (as discussed in chapter three and five) because it has the ability to accommodate the different, seemingly contradictory strands. To use or to challenge the 'normative authority of the dominant language or literary tradition', one needs to know how a dominant language is characteristically used in established and dominant institutions (such as Western universities) at the same time as developing a potential to resist it. This expands on the traditional remedial language development approach which only concerns itself with the reproduction of linguistic norms. Of course, learners may not actually wish to resist reproducing standardised academic English. On the other hand, L2 learners, such as the case-study group, may also have a natural 'outsider' reading of texts and resistance to a text's positioning because they are 'not part of the text's intended or model readership' - Wallace 1992:341).

Translated into the Wye context, the implication is that of a pedagogy in which two seemingly competing elements co-exist; first, an 'acculturation' element which aims to raise the learner's awareness of and success in the characteristic linguistic conventions, rhetoric and literacy practices appropriate to an academic discourse community; secondly, a 'counterdiscourse' element which aims to encourage learners to adopt a critical stance towards the dominant discourses they are being exposed to within the content and pedagogies of a course; in terms of language, this counterdiscourse strand might include:

- the valuing of a bilingual or multilingual repertoire (e.g. by cultivating, where feasible, an ethos of multilingualism within and around the course and including English language

varieties within the academic texts)

- the explicit identifying why some varieties are more prestigious than others in, for example, the academic domain

- a strand which encourages students to examine both aspirations and ambiguities they have towards English language and to consider their own previous experiences with English

- a focus on raising awareness of the academic writer's choices in linguistic expression, and the 'effects' of that choice

- a focus on questioning and understanding academic conventions rather than drilling them for reproduction

- emphasising language and rules of appropriacy as dynamic rather fixed and open to change according to social pressures and personal choice, e.g. whether to flout the rule of avoiding the use of personal pronouns - I, you, we - in academic prose.

- the deliberate drawing attention to language which is for example, excluding, disrespectful or marginalising

In terms of the type of English used by the Wye course writers, the view adopted in this research is that there is no brief prescription to accessible writing and that existing advice to DE writers needs to be both extended and offered as guidelines rather than a formulaic straitjacket. Structurally simplified text creates problems for both acculturation and counterdiscourse pedagogical strands; it assumes an inability (on the part of often multilingual learners such as these highly articulate Zimbabweans) to learn the complexities of a language and at the same time circumscribes the ability of learners to use the language; an overly formulaic, straitjacket approach to writing - short sentences, avoidance of passives and negatives, etc - will not facilitate the learners participation in the particular academic discourse community because it is likely to produce discourse which is atypical of an academic discourse community. To achieve this implies a pedagogy which focuses

on strategies which assist the Zimbabwean learners to make connections between their discourses, their particular backgrounds and textual histories and the discourses found in the subject area.

> I think you can help the students make that transition .. without saying lets put it in Noddy and Big Ears language
> *Local Zimbabwean DE tutor*

The simplified English approach also works against a counterdiscourse strand because the emphasis placed on the production of simple, unambiguous language in texts promotes the view of language as unproblematic and a neutral conveyor of ideas and precludes the examination of text in terms of its characteristic or preferred discourses. My research, therefore, is about extending the notion of accessibility beyond a sentence level.

9.8 Close

The next chapter examines the role of languages other than English around the course and also builds on some of the issues raised here about Zimbabwean English varieties.

Chapter 10 - Language Planning issues 2: the roles of different languages around the course

10.1 Introduction

This chapter illuminates the range and function of languages (vernacular and varieties of English) that exist around the course and which form part of the resources that students draw upon to actually mediate the (English-medium) course. The underlying research questions within this chapter are:

What roles do or could vernacular languages and varieties of English (local, national and international) play in and around the English-medium course? Can an ethos of multilingualism be maintained in the face of globalising forces (of which the spread of English is an integral part)?

At the end of the chapter, I will summarise some of the pedagogical implications that emerge from the data.

10.2 The roles of different languages around the course

10.2.1 Examples of the functional allocation of languages

For these professionals, as the following tables 12 and 13 show, complex linguistic accomplishments in English and Shona/Ndebele are an everyday reality. The first table maps out some of the different functions that English and Zimbabwean languages serve in the course of ordinary day for these professionals.

	ENGLISH	SHONA or NDEBELE (also other local languages and dialects, e.g. Kalanga, Shangani, Chewa)	MIX ENGLISH AND AFRICAN MOTHER TONGUE
WRITING & READING	**Work** All official administrative paperwork Some farmer literature & correspondence Staff correspondence Report writing Paper presentations Unit of measurement (height, depth, amount of money) **Other** Reading Bible, newspaper, novels, library books. >>When I want to express myself best in writing' Writing diary	**Work** Some farmer literature Some farmer correspondence **Other** >> novels, poetry, Bible >>letters to relatives in rural areas	
SPEAKING & LISTENING	**Work** Staff training, meetings and interviews >>when I address my immediate subordinates and my superiors >>meetings with other departments >>addressing a white (or coloured) person **Other** >>addressing a white (or coloured) person >>addressing the school of my children >>when I want to be best understood (emphatic) and I have that audience >>when I talk to peers, seniors, line managers	**Work** Field work discussions and demonstrations Farmer training workshops Films, videos at gatherings like field days and shows when I want to emphasise a point to staff **Other** >>communication with family >>communication with general public, e.g. buses, praying, >>in discussing difficult concepts and advancing arguments >>to preach in church >>to greet and thank people >>when I talk to my parents elders, local leaders' >>praying and poetry - best done in Shona. It is more natural, smooth flowing and more expressive of feelings and attitudes.	>>Domestic Affairs with family >>When I am communicating with my family (wife, kids) I use English and Ndebele' >>When I address my children (family) I use both English and Shona' >>when I am angry/upset - English - and when I am happy or sympathetic (condolensces) - Ndebele'

Table 13 : Functional allocation of languages in work/domestic domains

Table 13: Situational allocation of languages during typical day's work

This table provides more details about which languages the respondents employ with different farmers during their work time.

FARM TYPE	DESCRIPTION	LANGUAGES
Communal	Family units on communally shared local authority land for grazing + small 2-3 hectare plot for cultivation	Mainly Shona or Ndebele but also other local languages and dialects, e.g. Kalanga, Shangani
Resettlement	Resettled farming families given free tenancy on larger 5 hectare local authority plots + communal grazing	Mainly Shona or Ndebele but also other local languages and dialects, e.g. Kalanga, Shangani
Small scale commercial	Privately owned small farms (20-70 hectares). Usually black farmers.	Mainly Shona or Ndebele but also other local languages and dialects, e.g. Kalanga, Shangani
Large-scale commercial	Privately owned large farms (300-4,000 hectares). Majority are white farmers but rising numbers of black farmers.	English for the white farmers and Shona or Ndebele for black farmers. Local languages for farmworkers.

Communal Farm, MashonalandEast, Zimbabwe

The choice of using indigenous and colonial languages is influenced by different characteristics of interlocutors, e.g. status, sex, age, ethnicity and history.

> .. normally when you approach the African .. you try to address by their **totems** .. or if there is a group .. you try and address them ... addressing men **first** .. then you address the women second/.. er I would also be slightly humble .. address the community nicely .. clap your hands .. ask them how they are/ ... you also talk in Shona or Ndebele depending on which area you are .. sometimes not just them because we know there are some local languages and dialects you want to put across/... there is a vast difference when we .. er .. it comes to the other extreme end which is the large scale commercial farming sector where .. the majority of them are .. white farmers .. my approach would be ... a lot of them appreciate when .. when we meet .. they will prefer me .. calling them by their first name .. and likewise ..< > I think it augers well .. that's their culture//

It is also determined by a range of different situational determinants such as situational norms, sociocultural status of languages, in-group favouritism and interpersonal accommodation. For example, in their public service role, the norm of 'the customer is always right' suggests they converge with their customers' languages. Similarly, although Ndebele speakers make up only 15% of the population, they wield significant political power and would not view favourably any efforts to promote Shona as a Zimbabwean lingua franca (Bernstein, 1994:412).

> >>I use Shona only when I am forced by my audience (i.e. if they can't understand Ndebele or English)

> the Shona .. are different from the Ndebele .. you see the Shona .. even if you are amongst yourselves .. you want to speak English/ .. the **Ndebele** .. once they identify each other .. usually .. they speak in Ndebele ..

It is also influenced by situations in which indigenous languages are richer and better, in the Sapir-Whorf sense, than English:

> any form of training in Zimbabwe .. is assumed .. **wrongly** .. to be something that will take place in English .. and you will find for example in management .. I do quite a lot of work with MBA's .. in all of those spheres English is very prominent .. but in the case of agriculture you are dealing with something that is so traditional and so close to the land .. that regardless of the level of educational attainment .. it could be the same .. for example .. you will find .. that those working in agriculture will have educationally the same qualification as those working on he MBA .. the preference may be to speak in Shona ..
>
> *University of Zimbabwe lecturer*

In one workshop activity, students identified six areas where local languages have, compared to English, a special edge in respect of particular agricultural phenomena. See Table 14 below.

AREA	ENGLISH	SHONA/NDEBELE examples
1. Surveys (Salutations and introductions)	Mr. Can we come in household?	Va, Sa Totem - Sinyoro, Gushungo, Mhuri
2. Agricultural legislation	Soil conservation	Jengetavhu
3. Farming systems	Farming methods	Kurima/Marimiro
4. Land Ownership	Land owner	Muridzi Womunda
5. Cattle Ownership	Cattle owner	Muridziwe Mombe e.g. Dzoumai (mother) Yava Sekuru Dzedanga (father)
6. Horticulture	Gardening and Fruit production	Kurima miriwo nemichero

Table 14: Reproduced student flipchart/areas where local languages excel English

The students then fleshed out **one** of these areas - cattle - to illustrate the degree to which complex and highly differentiated vocabulary reflect the social values placed upon cattle in rural Zimbabwean contexts - see next illustration. Listed on the left of the reproduced flipchart (below) are particular contexts or occasions in which cattle are required to be given or killed. On the right is the Shona classification of cattle according to the social role they play.

210

Figure 10: Reproduced student flipchart/language about cattle

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SOCIAL VALUES OF CATTLE: Zimbabwean case

USES

1. Bride Prices → To father (danga) Kraal
→ To mother (youmai) Heifer
→ To mother (chimanda) for a virgin bride

2. Housing ancestral spirits   Bull (ye gono)

3. Payment by the murderer to the family of the murder victim   (Kuripangozi)

4. Appeasing the spirit of the deadman or woman
- year later after death -Traditional activities to bring the spirit back home for guidance   (Kurova Guva)

5.Traditional Ceremonies
e.g. installing the chief
- rain making ceremony   (Chikaranga)

6. Payment to the Chief for violation of cultural norms
e.g. father-daugher sexual relationship
or working on a (chisi day) resting day   (Mukunakuna)

7. Social status: symbol of wealth (more wives)

Extracts of accompanying flipchart presentation by student chair

.. a heifer is actually given as a bride price to the mother .. that's very important .. you even may have misfortunes if you don't have that type of animal .. children getting sick and so on//
... chimanda .. for a virgin bride .. it's just one that will be slaughtered .. and then given .. the whole family will eat that .. but ownership is to the mother .. because she managed to do the job to maintain the daughter as a virgin .. its an acknowledgement of very hard work [laughs]

.. number four .. appeasing the spirits of the dead man or woman .. one year later the relatives will come together at the place where he was buried .. they will carry out this ceremony .. to bring the spirit back into the family .. to give blessings to the family ..

Not only do different languages mark different situations and contexts, they are also interwoven:

> we sort of mix them .. probably when the point is not understood .. they may want to explain in Shona//

> some English terms people understand .. so if you try and change .. you struggle to change them into a local language

10.2.2   Codeswitching in the Wye course

Codeswitching (the use of more than one linguistic variety within the same conversation) was a common characteristic during stage 1 student-only discussions[1]. A timed playback of three of the seven (usually 30-40 minute) discussions which were carried out, revealed that about 60-70% of their discussions were conducted in Shona (the sole Ndebele speaking student was outnumbered and therefore obliged to speak in Shona). This percentage was higher (75-85%) in the two observed study-groups (i.e. when working amongst themselves on the course itself and not on constructed activities from an English researcher). Although the workshops were discussions **about** the course rather than from the course, I am making the assumption that examples of codeswitching within student-only discussions indicate how students behave, linguistically, in natural setting study-group conditions and other course-related discussions. That is to say, the fact that the course is English-medium seems to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

The following extract (with Shona translations) captures something of both the codeswitching and interweaving of different languages that appears within discussions. Four male students, discussing the importance of including women in agricultural projects, are instructing the fifth (the notetaker) in how to record their discussion on the flipchart for later presentation in a plenary. The code-switchings and their translations appear in italics.

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[1] when the students were working amongst themselves on a discussion topic or task and independently from myself

Workshops: Students working on flipcharts

Figure 11: Reproduced flipchart/gender issues

Student flipchart (session 6)   Accompanying discussion (with Shona translation in italics)

TAKING ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL ISSUES

ITEM III: NEEDS OF WOMEN
AND CHILDREN

WHY:

1. MOST DISADVANTAGED
AND MOST ACTIVE
LEAST CONSULTED ON
ISSUES, EVEN THOSE
AFFECTING THEM.

2. MOST PERMANENTLY
ATTACHED TO THE PROJECT

3. LEAST MOBILE AND
MOST COMMITTED

INF4: say least consulted on issues .. even those affecting them
INF9: OK [writing]
INF1: *(don't use the red pen use the green)*
INF4: yuh
INF9: [as he writes] those .. affecting .. them
INF1: *(add on between consulted and issues)*
INF5: *(you can see you're just learning English)*
INF4: *(you can see what sort of English you learned at school day by day)* [laughing]
INF8: ==there's this issue of the fact that when things go bad==
INF5:   ==uhuh==
INF8:   ==the women who stayed there has nowhere to go
[general laughter]
INF4: what he wants to say is that they are ==
INF8:   ==attached==
INF4:   ==committed .. its the women manage .. the .. the .. they are the most dependable .. er .. clients and users of the project/
INF8: *(the father would just go into town and)* just jump around .. the women and the child==
INF4: ==they are not consulted ..why .. this is the person who you are always going to find there==
INF8: ==you can make three or four visits and the bugger is not there
[laughs]
INF1: *(now it looks like we've got it)*
INF9: *(OK so what do I write?)*
INF5: it says here [indicating worksheet] compendium *(now what's she on about?)*
INF4: no .. no .. not yet .. we have to do women roles next .. like food collection ..what is it they collect?
INF8: the sort of food they collect? .. *makohwha .. matumbwa*

Significantly, this codeswitching is not, as the metalinguistic commentary shows, to do with being more proficient in one language than the other or the need to translate but rather the way that these bi- and multi-lingual students draw on and interweave their rich, linguistic repertoire to negotiate and express meanings.

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INF9:  but normally in discussions we stick with Shona==
INF8:                                      ==yuh all the discussions==
INF9:                                                   ==but
       writing  no/
INF3:  what we are saying .. if I was given the choice .. to either write in Shona==
INF4:                                              ==an essay==
INF3:                                                       ==or
       write in English .. I would definitely write in English .. I mean  .. I find it easier
INF9:  but in discussions .. no==
INF8:                 ==because it means you are reinforcing the same thing but from
       different angles .. actually we shouldn't agree because sometimes the
       conceptualisation is English .. and we find it difficult if it comes in Shona==
INF9:                                              ==can't
       understand what they are saying==
INF8:                   ==then we pick again English
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10.2.3 Linguistic Diversity - vernacular languages and English varieties

This interweaving points to a greater linguistic diversity, hybridity and dynamism than the term diglossia suggests and than is revealed by surveys of the functional allocation of languages like table 13 at the beginning of the chapter. Depending exclusively on these surveys leads to the false perception that languages are discrete entities in which English is the high variety used in prestigious public domains while Shona and Ndebele, the low varieties, are used in the less prestigious local community and domestic domains.

By contrast, we find codeswitching (the use of more than one linguistic variety within the same conversation) but also code-mixing (the use of morphemes from more than one language within the same word). There is also the sense of dynamic, evolving languages:

Example of the modernisation of Shona:

> it may take long to have a .. local name for it .. because as we are saying languages are also dynamic .. they keep on changing .. but they only change if there is a need to .. isn't it .. what we call the (*codeswitch*) it is kind of coming into the norm now .. like its now acceptable in Shona but ten .. twenty years ago .. it wasn't normal .. it is accepted into the vocabulary

English accepted into Shona:

> .. if you go anywhere and you talk of drought .. even the illiterate will understand .. the language is a dynamic media of communication .. it changes according to times and there are some certain terms that have come to be accepted by our people .. whether literate or illiterate

Shona accepted into English:

> take the groundnut varieties .. we will find it difficult to find an English name .. like tumbe .. it difficult to classify in English .. so you probably use it in local languages even though you are mainly speaking English

You also begin to get a sense of specifically Zimbabwean English varieties:

> I've just marked about something like a thousand examination scripts of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries .. and every one of them .. and I'm not saying this as .. er.. a form of condemnation .. every one of them reads like a conversation between friends
>
> yes but there's a mixture .. a Zimbabwean English .. that they've obviously **read** mostly in English .. or gone to formal meetings .. you know .. and their spoken English can sound very formal
>
> yes .. you can get very formal .. yes .. < > there's a lot of that in Zimbabwe .. a lot of ritualised formulae that come out
>
> *University of Zimbabwe lecturer and interviewer (respectively)*

Furthermore, this Zimbabwean English is not homogeneous in itself and can be represented as a continuum of 3 varieties: acrolect, mesolect and basilect (with increasing deviation from the target Standard English language), each having distinctive lexical, phonological and syntactic characteristics.

A few examples of this acrolectal[2] spoken 'formality' from the workshop discussions included:

- the use of decontracted forms ("they have", "you will" as opposed to "they've", "you'll")

- Latinate expressions (such as saying "IE" and "EG" instead of "for example" or "what I

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[2] the prestige subvariety of English used by educated speakers in formal situations. Taken from the lectal range - acrolect, mesolect and basilect - used by Platt and Weber (1980).

217

mean is", Aluta continua, etc)

- syntactic characteristics attributable to transfer from local languages (How are you keeping? for How're you doing?)

- occasionally highly formalised turn-taking in their usual group (and without the researcher present) which reflected norms of status (rank and age) within the group.

> good afternoon gentlemen .. this afternoon we are going to discuss .. < > so let me ask Mr (name) to go quickly through .. can you do that Mr (name) please? < > OK thank you very much Mr (name) .. I think you have given us a thorough rundown of the activities which we would want to cover .. now .. who is taking this report for us .. Mr (name)?

- African sayings translated into English

> we don't need to do that .. that's like boiling your cabbages twice

The extent to which the different varieties are used depends on the sociolinguistic background, educational and occupational possibilities of the Zimbabwean interactants. Nevertheless, acrolectal speakers, like these students, might, in informal situations and where they wished to sound 'friendlier', accomplish this by using the syntactic properties of the basilect. Conversely, a mesolectal speaker might wish to sound more educated or less deferential and consciously adopt the syntactic properties of the acrolect. This shifting of styles is a constant in these students' daily lives and very often pivots around striking the right balance between not sounding too acrolectal (putting on airs) or too basilectal (with its associations of being rural, aged, unsophisticated).

The point here is to stress that indigenous languages, Standardised English and different varieties of English together constitute these students communicative resources. The term diglossia can mislead course producers and the Zimbabwean students themselves to assume a stable dichotomy in languages.

10.2.4 The restandardisation process

Taking the students, for example, although they profess not to recognise Zimbabwean English, other than to think of it as poor English, Chick and Wade (1997) would argue that a re-standardisation of English, in the direction of these New English varieties, is currently

218

occurring at national levels as a gradual, unplanned background process. This process, they argue, is being fuelled by the demographic increase in second language speakers of English within Zimbabwe (with first language speakers receding) and in the Southern African context as a whole due to its importance as a lingua franca. As a result, there is a corresponding increase in BZE (Black Zimbabwean English) speakers in the media and influential government and business positions, areas traditionally occupied by StdZE (Standardised Zimbabwean English) speakers.

Chick and Wade (1997:279) argue that a restandardisation process will inevitably impact on black Africans' perceptions about the appropriacy of varieties like BZE in these contexts and the status of BZE. The suggestion is that BZE will, for the majority of incoming generations of English-speaking Zimbabweans:

- be regarded as acceptable in important and formal contexts such as government communication, media, education and business and government communication

- become raised from a marginalised, non-prestige variety

- serve as the target variety for many second language learners and become preferred 'as a compromise target that can simultaneously signal social identity and prestige'.

- accepted also regarded as independent varieties with established indigenous norms.

This restandardisation might have the effect of reducing the 'exclusionary power' of StdZE but it might also have the effect of actually strengthening a hegemony of StdZE with a small black urban elite clinging to their 'elite closure' against the new English-speaking classes. Meanwhile, the gap between the vernacular educated rural dwellers and the English-medium educated urban Zimbabweans is likely to increase further.

Whatever happens, we, as English-medium teachers find ourselves in the middle of this battle over English, particularly since it appears that some aspects of diglossia are stabilising, namely the dominance of English at tertiary level. The negative side of this is that we become implicated in the maintenance of relations of power and the nurturing of illusion among the new

English-speaking classes. On the positive side, we may be contributing to widening the access to English within Zimbabwe and thereby to a process which helps a greater number of Zimbabweans express themselves in powerful arenas within Zimbabwe and beyond.

10.3 Student attitudes towards using African languages in the course

What attitudes did the students hold about introducing vernacular languages into the course in the form of, for example, full or selective translation in the text, audio and video-cassettes or Shona/Ndebele additions?

Despite the fact that the students recognised that, relative to English, Shona and Ndebele had immense lexical richness within the field of agriculture the students, as a whole, felt there was little purpose in deliberately introducing indigenous languages either in the main Wye course writing or course reading.

INF1: we are saying it is not necessary in TMA's or exams because there is not time even for
           footnotes==

INF2:   == but when we are writing a thesis==

INF3:   == yes because a thesis it is fairly long
           and maybe you can add some of the terms

INF4: or maybe a special report .. lets say on a specific project .. you probably put in local
           terms ..saying mpane ..iphane

INF1: ah but these are not accepted in the English language

INF4: no .. but they are accepted in Zimbabwe

However, they felt that one place where mother-tongue languages might naturally appear within the course would be within a Zimbabwean-based compendium of course-related materials. This compendium, to be compiled by local tutors and ex-students, could be a mixture of print, audio and video resource materials, new and existing materials, in probably both vernacular languages and English. Zimbabwe-produced video materials were singled out as particularly useful in case-study evaluations of agricultural projects; this would include video interviews (in vernacular languages) with people affected by major projects displaced through re-settlement or connected with past controversial projects (such as the developments of Kariba, Tokwe Mukosi or Osborne Dam). These materials could be used exclusively by the

220

Zimbabwean students or some, those with English sub-titles, offered for inclusion in the mainstream international course. The idea of a compendium will be discussed further in the following chapter.

10.4 Emerging implications

These findings suggest that the following issues could be explored and addressed at a pedagogical level by the Wye course producers.

10.4.1 Recognising other learning opportunities and resources

First, the different resources - languages and otherwise - used by the students to mediate the course take us back to Edward's (1995:265) point about challenging the assumption that there is one 'caretaker' of knowledge and pedagogy and recognising learning opportunities that exist beyond the control and ambit of the actual producers. In terms of languages, they show us that much of this English-medium course **is,** and **needs** to be, mediated in vernacular languages: that students bring to the course, mediated by different languages and other resources, a conceptual pluralism or richness and negotiate meanings via an interplay between different possible accounts of the world. One white university lecturer thought of this as a dual identity amongst urban, educated black Zimbabweans:

> black Zimbabweans are of two kinds .. they are urban .. you can go downtown .. you can find
> a middle-management civil servant sitting in his office .. but he is as much at home in his
> office as he is wearing traditional garments and doing a traditional dance .. in Masvingo
> communal lands

The complex linguistic interactions of these students challenge deficit-model views of 'English as a second language' learners in need of remedial help. These languages co-exist, have acquired multiple identities and exhibit a greater hybridity (between the vernacular languages and varieties of English) than the term diglossia suggests.

> Zimbabweans are multilingual productively and receptively and draw on this
> competence for a range of interactions. Western notions of discrete languages,
> and a single dominant mother tongue, are unable to capture this reality, and
> contribute to the disabling process that many experience in formal education.
> *Phillipson: 1996:163.*

10.4.2 Defining a role within a course ethos of multilingualism

Second, even a rather superficial analysis of the functional allocation of indigenous and

English varieties helps the English-medium Wye teachers:

- to move away from a monolithic notion of language standards

- to develop a sense of the relative importance of different standards of English (local, national and international)

- to make some recognition of these multiple standards within pedagogy such as cultivating an ethos of multilingualism around the English-medium course and reflecting varieties of English within the academic materials

- to understand the importance of cultivating an ethos of multilingualism within the course

- to define their role and know its limits

The local and national languages (Shona, Ndebele and varieties of Zimbabwean English) occur, given the opportunity, naturally around the course. The Wye course producers' role with them is to legitimise, promote and ensure those opportunities.

It is at the international level that the role of the course producers becomes more direct, defined and discrete. The functional allocation diagram, highlights the relative importance of 'public forum' English. This suggests that, within the short life-span of the course, the language education agenda should 'rise' to the rarity of this educational occasion and in addition to the immediate demands of the course, should extend its remit towards the longer-term aim of contributing towards the learners preparation for an active role in international academic and professional communities. For example, in order to present spoken or written research findings in such a way that their importance can be appreciated by an academic or professional community, the learners need to develop an awareness for the 'specialised literacy' (Berkentotter & Huckin, 1995) of that community.

But does one adopt, as a means to this long term end, a prescriptive approach to correcting TMA writing? The view adopted here is that the Wye subject specialist's attention should be focused on clarity of expression rather than a prescriptive expectation of standard English.

Nevertheless, in addition to the subject specialist's advice on content, TMA feedback could include comments (rather than corrections) about the students writing from the point of view of an academic literacy 'editor' who makes explicit some of implicit linguistic expectations within each essay type; the agenda of this editor is to helping the learner develop an awareness of academic literacy demands of the course and beyond, in more public forums. The editor should build up a picture, by research, of the sort of periodicals, conference types, presentation types common in the field to inform their editorial comments.

In some ways, this is an argument for the duplication, within the DE world, of the common teaching situation found in mainstream universities - the English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) teacher working alongside and supplementing the work of the subject lecturer (to differing degrees of co-operation and, it has to be said, success). The difference is that the language specialist is working exclusively, in this case, within a print-centred distance context and must develop a print-centred pedagogy.

10.4.3 Oral interaction as an integral part of literacy

Third, these findings underline the disabling dangers of working from 'great-divide' theories of literacy such as Ong's *Orality and Literacy (1982)* , which assume clear-cut distinctions between oracy[3] and literacy. One danger is that the distinction becomes conflated with simplistic dichotomies - non-literate/literate, primitive/civilised, backwardness/progress - which have their origins in, among others, Victorian imperialist discourses of history and anthropology and the writing-dominated intellectual traditions of western culture.

> The status of oracy as a key to literacy has until fairly recently been regarded in an ambivalent way in some western 'developed' nations. This has been a source of puzzlement and justified annoyance to peoples whose cultures and literary traditions are largely oral.
> *Louw:1996:1*

Furthermore, the oracy/literacy divide is a 'slippery distinction' (Finnegan, 1992:6). For example, from western perspectives, traditions of storytelling and play on language tend to be

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[3] Finnegan (1996:16) - 'an alternative to 'orality', but usually with less generalising connotations; often used of the complex of spoken skills in an educational context'.

all mental skills attributed to literacy. But 'literacy' abilities were clearly present in the oral discourse - metalinguistic awareness, awareness of the nature of the language one is using, a propensity to play on words and to elaborate rich and ambiguous meaning and the ability to use language actively rather than being a passive recipient of meaning handed down from above.

However, at the same time, one has to guard against oversimplistic notions of 'oral tradition', as the (re-used) quote here implies:

> they've obviously **read** mostly in English .. or gone to formal meetings .. you know .. their spoken English can sound very formal
>
> yes .. you can get very formal .. yes .. < > there's a lot of that in Zimbabwe .. a lot of ritualised formulae that come out
> *University of Zimbabwe lecturer and interviewer (respectively)*

These findings fit in with the broader concept and definitions of literacy which have gained acceptance in the past fifteen years (Pattison 1982, Street 1984, Wallace 1986, Gee 1990, Finnegan 1992, Barton 1994, Baynham 1995). Literacy (or literacy practices) is increasingly seen as inseparable from the cultural and social contexts in which it is embedded. 'Literacy is a combination of variables - individual and cultural awareness of language and the interplay of this awareness with the means of expression' - Pattison (1982:7).

These views have led to a move away from monolithic views of separate skills - reading, writing, listening, speaking - towards a far more integrated model, with 'verbal communication abilities' viewed as a constitutive part of literacy (Chisman, 1990:2). These concepts stress the pedagogical importance of interaction.

> Literacy without interaction is likely, if it can still be termed literacy, to be a stunted and dysfunctional artefact, sundered from real life and a ready vehicle for whatever cultural colonisation the text before the reader brings. Even then, understanding without interaction would be partial and a product of a painful process of mechanical decoding.
> *Louw:1996:2*

Cummins (1986) endorses this by suggesting that an interactive approach, compared with transmission-based teaching, assumes particular significance in multi- or inter-cultural educational contexts where life experiences are not necessarily shared between teachers and students (or different groups of students) and that discussion allows for a genuine, intercultural

understanding and orientation in educational contexts.

These approaches to literacy underline the importance (to course producers, tutors and course managers) of recognising that learners are endowed with a wealth of language abilities and potential which they could effectively harness towards the overall aims of literacy development; it also suggests treating writing as a process of direct communication with features similar to those traditionally associated with oral interaction.

> you want to tap the orature[4] < > we want teachers to allow for more talk .. um .. the four skills .. reading writing listening speaking .. are all part of one thing and so we want speaking to feed into reading and writing and vice versa
>
> *University of Zimbabwe lecturer*

> we were using proverbs and sayings in the tutorial .. using Shona songs and .. I think as soon as you can get a person to relate the course back to their own culture .. then the course is much better understood
>
> *Local tutor*

In terms of this print-centred DE course, the clear implication is that discussion should never be considered as an optional extra; on the contrary, it assumes a particular significance in both intercultural education and print-based DE (the combination making it doubly significant) and that underestimating the importance of discussion, and discussion in a range of languages, could seriously compromise the learning process.

This suggests that if the Wye course writers, Agritex managers and funders have a shared vision, they could, by co-ordinated pressure, legitimise and positively promote the opportunities for both linguistic choice and interaction around and within the course; that intervention is required to promote opportunities for incorporating first, more of the known and familiar forms of (oral/mother tongue) communication and secondly, also using them to create a bridge (or scaffolding) into the less well-known and unfamiliar (academic writing in English).

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[4] a term which emphasises the relationship with literature while avoiding the "etymological problems of 'oral literature'" - Finnegan, 1992:16.

226

10.4.4 Interaction around the course

An obvious solution to promoting more interaction around the course is to ensure adequate and dedicated study group and tutorial time. This, however, cannot be taken for granted.

Wye, the course producer, has to cater for all educational contexts and, understandably, takes the unsupported, lone student as their starting point. As they cannot necessarily assume any local tutorial infrastructure, they and their materials are not geared towards group work.

> Zimbabwe must be the only one where they actually **have** local tutors .. I don't think Wye is set up for that really .. they are not used to dealing with local level tutors .. the assignments are for their tutors ..its not much to do with us
>
> *Local tutor co-ordinator*

At the recipients' end, in most developing countries, cost constraints (and often lack of local subject experts) lead to no or fragile tutorial systems of inconsistent quality.

For example, where educational opportunities are rare, course managers with limited budgets face stark choices between cutting student numbers or tutorials and, understandably, tutorial time or tutorial frequency is cut and meetings between the tutors rare. This case-study was typical in that respect as the cost of providing tutorials was equivalent to 2 or 3 students full fees per year. This had led the course director to adopt the view that DE materials should ideally be self-standing and require minimal or no tutorial support.

Cost restraints had led to fairly drastic measures; subject specialist tutors, recruited from officers within the Ministry, were expected to work without payment additional to their salary (although a compromise 'honorarium' had to be negotiated when tutors refused to work); tutorial frequency (rather than time) had been changed from a half-day, once a month to 1 day every two months basis. Costs were therefore reduced by cutting down on travel and accommodation expenses and also were being passed on to the students (since the students are mostly driving in for their Harare-based tutorials from considerable distances (120-500 km) these amounted to considerable expenses); local level study groups, led by unpaid ex- or completing student facilitators, were increasingly promoted almost as an alternative to tutorials but these too were fragile.

that only way to get facilitators is to say .. someone has spent six or seven thousand pounds on you .. which you've had .. now you've got your MSc .. you've got to put something back .. its not easy to find tutors because a lot of the course .. say .. like environmental economics .. its a new enough field as it is .. and if you actually know a lot about it then you're probably doing well here in consultancy and not wanting to be paid a hundred Zim dollars an hour to tutor

Local tutor co-ordinator

For some students, these voluntary study groups were either unsuccessful or were impractical due to geographical distances and workload. Some therefore were working in isolation and only met up with their peers for discussion and tutorials when they travelled, often over long distances, into Harare once in two months.

The point here is that cost constraints are real but the pedagogic costs need to be continually argued for in different ways:

- in political terms such as donor pressure or dedicated funding

- in course structure (e.g. increased local level tutoring and study group time)

- in pedagogical terms (e.g. group activities)

In addition, tutorial time also needs to be backed with the promotion of a tutoring style that incorporates discussion to a large degree. This suggests training of local tutors since many Zimbabwean teachers are likely to be pre-disposed to lecture style delivery (this was certainly true of the 2 tutorials I observed which were largely lecture with comprehension check questions).

we've got a sediment of silence of non-educational ritual that's been going on for a hundred years .. teacher does all the talking .. not only that the teacher skives out of work .. by saying today we're going to have a comprehension lesson .... who's responsible for putting it in place? .. you'll hear various stories .. the politically motivated will say ah .. it was the colonial **regime** .. others will say **no** its the **missionaries** that demanded that each child remain quiet

University of Zimbabwe lecturer

There also seems to be a role here for Wye producers to provide good practice guides on ways to promote discussion in the form of advice in tutorial guidelines as well as deliberately building in activities into the course at regular intervals (e.g. summary questions, provocative

questions).

> if the materials have got a lot of interactive things in them .. you know like boxes to put
> examples .. case studies .. readings and interactive questions .. if that's being done well .. then
> it works well and you have all the discussion points that you can pick up on in the tutorial
>
> *Zimbabwean tutor*

Clearly, however, there is a tension between giving advice and trespassing on the local tutors territory.

10.4.5 Interaction within the course

So far, I have looked at increasing discussion around the course. In-course, the strong implication is to introduce the notion of a continuum as a basic **organising principle** which moves from the known/familiar towards the less known/unfamiliar and reflects the process of formal education itself. For example, to move from the familiar cultural and orally transmitted practices of everyday towards the less familiar written discourses of specific disciplines and to make explicit the differences in literacy practices. This is a new take on the 'friendly tutor in print' traditional DE style who engages the student in an 'avuncular chat' - Jeffcoate (1981:76) and suggests the deliberate co-existence of different discourses to point up their differences.

The suggestion is that the pedagogy could incorporate strategies which:

- assist the Zimbabwean learners to make connections between their discourses, their particular backgrounds and textual histories and the discourses found in the subject area

- use informal contexts and language as a bridge into the more formal contexts and language in an academic domain

- use speaking (on cassettes and in tutorials) as a bridge into writing and reading

- grade the task rather than the text

- make use of texts which exhibit a range of registers (formality/informality) and varieties of English (indigenous and standardised academic English)

229

10.5 Close

This chapter concludes the focus on 'language planning' issues. The next three chapters continue with data analysis but concentrate on pedagogical areas related to this print-centred context. The first of these chapters, chapter 11, will highlight general areas of significance while chapters 12 and 13 will, respectively, explore two areas - genre and gender - in more depth.

Chapter 11 - A print-based learning context: general areas of significance

11.1 Introduction

The remaining three chapters of this data analysis section centre on illuminating some social practices which occur around the DE texts and which give the texts specific kinds of cultural meaning in a Zimbabwean community. These practices challenge the prevailing pedagogy within the Wye print-centred context and demand some pedagogical response.

Chapters 12 and 13 explore, as did 9 and 10, two discrete areas in depth - the writing demands of the course and gender issues. In contrast, this chapter has a more general range and picks up on disparate areas that have emerged around a print-centred context which do not naturally 'fit in' with these more discrete chapters. It is placed here, rather than at the end, because it serves as an orientation to the succeeding chapters by introducing areas which are then pursued within them in greater depth. This chapter attempts to weave a cohesive discussion out of disparate comments made by the students and tutors and relate them to practical design issues. It also considers the following research question:

In what ways could the Wye DE producers contribute to 'the overall academic development' of the country in which their course is situated?

One research problem in this chapter is that the data draws mainly from one source - either the students or the tutors; comparative analysis with other sources of data is limited. This has implications for the status of the research findings. I can provide only basic taxonomies of attitudes and concepts and tentative interpretations. I have, nevertheless, taken the choice to retain them despite those limitations; there is value in reading their comments because we do not generally have the opportunity to do so and because they could provide the Wye course producers with starting points for further more in-depth research which might then draw on a fuller range of data sources.

I will start with a brief discussion about the broad value of imported courses to the

Zimbabwean educational system. I will then move onto my central focus which an attempt to get some measure of the perceived academic value of the course in Zimbabwe from the students/local tutors' perspective, although it must be stressed that my access to the tutors was limited (four tutors, 2 for 8 mins, 1 by letter, 1 for 2 hours). I will start this by presenting the evaluative comments of the students and tutors about the course and highlight some of the Zimbabwean resources they use to supplement a course which is non-African in origin. Where I have comparative data, I will pick up on particular underlying themes in their recommendations about improvements to the print-centred course, drawn from other sessions, participants, experts or literature. On a cumulative level, the data here suggests that there could be a far more significant role for Zimbabwean academic resources within the structure of the course.

11.2 The value of the course in a broader Zimbabwean context

11.2.1 Affirming the broad liberal rationale of DE

At a broad level, the use of the Wye course in Zimbabwe appears to affirm a broad, liberal rationale so naturalised in discourses that surround distance education - that DE has the potential as both a democratising and emancipatory force in education.

The Wye course, by means of its international reach, its accessible progression routes and accreditation of prior learning, has successfully extended formal learning opportunities, to groups of professional people, male and female, who, for various reasons[1], might otherwise have missed out on or been excluded from mainstream provision. The case-study group of adult professionals, for example, have a lot of work experience and mainly post-O level vocational diplomas from an Agricultural College (with a few graduates among the group) but limited opportunities for in-service professional development.

---

[1] For example, scarcity of educational options, geographical isolation, work and family commitments, age, cost and gender

so for many of these students .. this is their one chance for getting some postgraduate training .. because otherwise they wouldn't have be able to do it even full time here

Zimbabwean course director

the Wye College programme is in fact the only opportunity for academic advancement for the majority of diploma level field officers

Local tutor

I have never done anything like this before...they (*the male extension officers*) are watching us too .. I do not want to give them the satisfaction of tripping up .. I have to work a bit harder to make sure I can keep up to them

Female Wye student

But beyond this individual opportunity, what is the significance of the Wye course in a broader Zimbabwean context? This was an area I originally brought up earlier (4.4.3) when I suggested that western DE course producers may have a significant pro-active role to play in encouraging the development of models and practices sensitive to different sociocultural contexts both within globalised and locally-produced courses. The following section explores that notion within a specifically Zimbabwean setting.

11.2.2   The place and role of an imported course

Since Independence in 1980, ZANU(PF), Zimbabwe's ruling party have rigorously pursued their election manifesto (ZANU (PF) 1980 Election Manifesto, Harare:1980:12) to establish 'free compulsory primary and secondary education for all children'. In this, it has achieved remarkable increases in school enrolments, notably at secondary level and for O level examinations. Paradoxically, this success has created a 'crisis of expectation' (Mackenzie, 1988:348) among Zimbabweans; the well-intentioned emphasis on academic qualifications has led to a **fetish of credentialism** and a massive **bottleneck** of people (at post O level exit points/levels or with basic O level qualifications). The paucity of job and tertiary level opportunities means that the expectations of the majority of these post-O level educated Zimbabweans cannot and will not, for the foreseeable future, be satisfied by existing provision.

This situation has contributed to the more general, politically-dangerous climate of disenchantment and increasing social division, with an ever-widening gap between haves and

have-nots, a situation which ESAP policies have exacerbated. The widespread nature of the recent strikes and demonstrations in Zimbabwe are a manifestation of the resulting hardships:

> The root of the discontent is not only incompetence and corruption, but an uncaring fat-cat elitism that is breathtaking in its audacity .. the general strike (*was*) fuelled as much by a sense of betrayal as by the nose-diving economy (the standard of living is lower that at independence) .. The other disenchanted group are the whites, but, as a conservationist drily pointed out, they are now outnumbered by Zimbabwe's 75,000 elephants.
> *Taylor, 1998:20*

Ironically, as I argued earlier, these difficulties have had the effect of increasing the dependence on 'overseas' education, in the form of imported courses and models and the sending of students abroad for training and education. Nevertheless, access to those few postgraduate courses that do exist, remains available to mainly graduates in a highly selective and competitive system.

Looking at this wider perspective helps us to see the significance of the postgraduate, DE Wye course and the opportunity it offers (whether on a temporary or permanent basis).

11.2.3 The long term impact of the course

What emerged most strongly from the meetings and data was these students' committed sense of their own future role in post-independent Zimbabwe and the political aspiration to shape its future:

INF10:	this course has opened us and we hope we are going to .. probably make an impact on our .. on our economy and the government as a whole=
INF8:	=and our
	profession=
INF's	=yes=yes=yes=yes=yes

This commitment appears to provide the Wye course producers with a clear sense of purpose and the long term value of the course. These students play an important role in a much larger

developmental 'fan' as potential mediators and advocates in a range of contexts. We must be careful not to over-romanticise this multiplier-effect too much; as the comments in 9.4 reveal, the officers attitudes towards their farmers is not always respectful. Nevertheless, their potential for acting as key intermediaries coupled with the fact that the course is a rare opportunity suggests that the Wye course producers carry a rather charged responsibility towards ensuring the quality of the course and a responsibility which extends beyond the immediate demands of the course.

> this is the beauty of the Wye Programme .. to be able to relate your reading .. the cassettes .. to your day to day work .... I am not saying its a hundred per cent but.. it helps you in your studies
>
> *Wye student*

I will now attempt to throw some light on those missing percentages.

11.3 Evaluative comments about the course

11.3.1 Student descriptions of the course

The students' descriptions of the course provide an illuminating starting point because they indirectly highlight their perceptions about the strengths and shortcomings of the course. At the very beginning of our meeting, Group A and B (2 x 5 informants) were each asked to describe the course diagramatically (in black and or blue pens). How they chose to describe it was deliberately left open to (their) interpretation.

The red additions to these drawings indicate additional local resources they used in relation to the course. These help us to consider some of the learning and teaching opportunities that might exist **beyond** the control and ambit of the Wye course producers.

Group A chose to describe the course in terms of what they consider to be the relative value of different course components - see Figure 12. Significantly, aspects of the course which are amenable to discussion and group work - tutorials, planning TMA's, study-group - appear more valued than individualised work. In particular, and despite their slightly inaccurate percentages, the students, like students from other years, place a high

value on the group tutorials despite their infrequency (once per two months) and inconsistent quality.

INT:	OK .. you are pleased with the quality of the tutorials?
INFs	[laughs]
INT:	oh .. I am not sure how to interpret that
INFs	[laughs]
INF10:	the answer to that question is mixed because we are looking at different tutors .. and sometimes it is difficult .. some are very good and some are not .. the quality of our exams .. of our TMA's .. is dependent on the quality of the input of the tutors.

The inconsistent quality of the tutorials were corroborated by others:

we've got a sediment of silence of non-educational ritual that's been going on for a hundred years .. teacher does all the talking .. not only that the teacher skives out of work .. by saying today we're going to have a comprehension lesson

University of Zimbabwe lecturer

sometimes we get really good tutors ..we've got one now who puts a lot in .. he takes them out on field trips all the time... but others .. they just sort bone up at the last moment

Local tutor coordinator

236

Figure 12: Reproduced student flipchart/Group A

Workshops

Tutorials 25%

TMA's 20%

Peer/outsiders discussion

Study Group 10%

Video 5% TV

Radio

Cassettes 5%

Course File & Books 30%

Individual Study 15%

Newspapers & periodicals, specialist magazines

Time Chart

Field Application
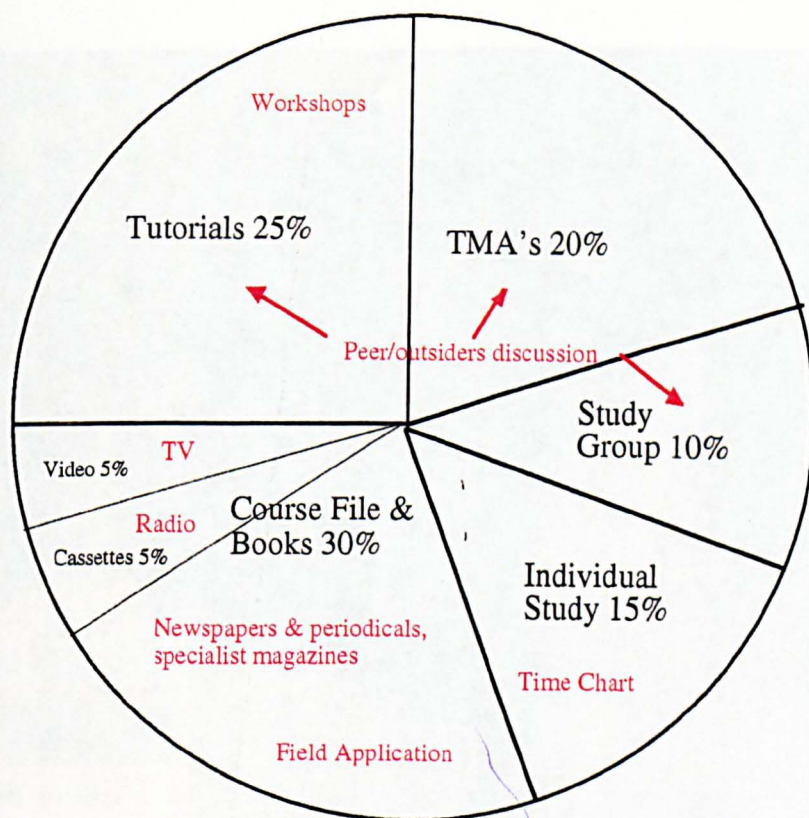
INF7:	the percentages are not time .. its importance of particular course content .. so when we say tutorials .. we are saying they are twenty five per cent important==
INF8	==but we do not have many tutorials .. they do not actually represent that in time
INT:	and if you took away the tutorials and the study groups .. if it was just them [*indicating course materials*]?=
INF7:	=it would be impotent==
INF2:	== yuh
INF7:	the tutors pick all the things which the feel the majority of students have problems with and they give .. he gives me a Zimbabwean example which pertain to my area

The red additions give us a window on how the course is supplemented by additional Zimbabwean media resources and discussions - with peers, spouses and work colleagues but not very much about the degree.

Group A students working on Flipchart

Group B chose to depict the more organisational side of the course, emphasising the hierarchical management of the course with arrows showing the liaison channels (the broken arrow lines indicating a weak point) - see figure 13 overleaf.

```
INT:    you see it as a hierarchy?
INF2:   yes==
INF6:     ==mm=
INF7:         =yes==
INF2:              ==its administered on us .. it goes like that [gesturing top to bottom ]
        .. maybe in terms of communicating difficulties .. its better .. give our problem and
        up it goes to be answered .. but in terms of the way it should be done .. nobody
        consulted us .. that is typical
```

Although their comments about the course are generally very positive, the fact that it was introduced and administered by the Ministry of Agriculture brings out a pronounced them-and-us resentment towards their Ministry managers who had apparently announced the start of the course (and nominated certain officers) without any consultation. This last exchange is another example of their aversion to what they see as 'interference' and bureaucracy. What the students want is more direct contact between Wye and the local tutors without the layer of local level bureaucracy. They want what they originally had - a responsive tutor who acts as a central co-ordinator with and for Wye, who is familiar with both the academic and practical demands on the course, who consults them and is responsive to their suggestions for improvement.

> one problem we have in Zimbabwe .. is the stage number two <> you are discussing
> economic problems .. with someone who is an administrator .. they don't know what you
> are doing ..<> in other words there should be somebody who understands what Wye is all
> about .. someone who has gone through the course .. themselves or close to Wye
> not maybe picked because the director likes you
>
> *Group B student*

This is perhaps an area over which course producers have little ultimate control although recommendations could be included in a good-practice guidelines to local managers/course recipients. The link between the local tutor and group facilitator is also felt to be inadequate and needing far more support where students set up voluntary study groups. Again, the red box summarises the typical additional Zimbabwean literature resources used to supplement the course.

241

Figure 13: Reproduced student flipchart/Group B

College

TMA's
Exams

Co-ordinator

Tutor

Group facilitator

Student

Fingaz
Bus Herald
Independent Paper
Informal discussion
Business News (TV)
U.N. in Action (TV)
SAPEM
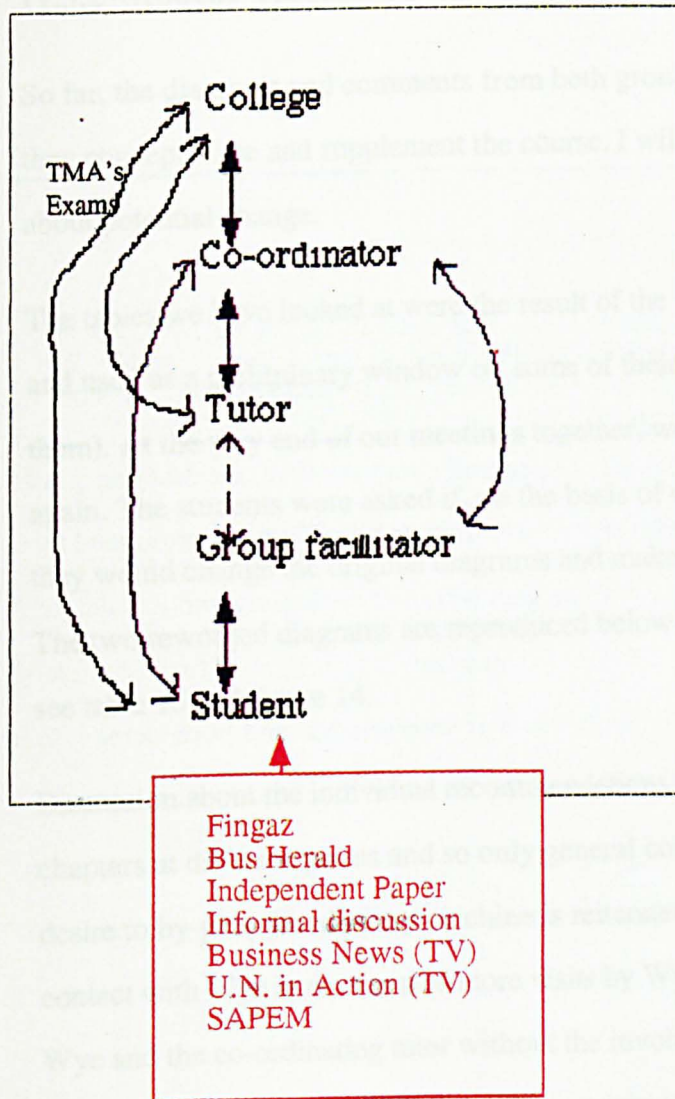
11.3.2 Student recommendations for change

So far, the diagrams and comments from both groups have given us a small insight on how they conceptualise and supplement the course. I will now turn to their more direct comments about potential change.

The tables we have looked at were the result of the very first activity given to the students and used as a preliminary window on some of their concerns (without my directly asking them). At the very end of our meetings together, we returned to consider these diagrams again. The students were asked if, on the basis of discussions in the intervening workshops, they would change the original diagrams and make any improvements to the present course. The two reworked diagrams are reproduced below with their recommendations in red ink - see table 15 and figure 14.

Discussion about the individual recommendations are woven into the three print-context chapters at different points and so only general comments will be made here. The students' desire to by-pass the Ministry machine is reiterated in several ways. They want more direct contact with Wye in the form of more visits by Wye tutors and more direct contact between Wye and the co-ordinating tutor without the involvement of a Ministry bureaucrat. The importance of presenting the course in a variety of media formats - computers, videos and audio-cassettes - emerged unprompted. One research issue here is whether the workshops led them to make particular kinds of recommendations. This is difficult to assess without undertaking further less obtrusive research. The notions of the Zimbabwean compendium and the TMA support were the two areas directly related to particular sessions. Despite the limitations, what gives me confidence here is the degree of autonomy they had within all the sessions to follow or not follow certain ideas. Their enthusiasm (or not) about certain subject areas were very apparent and I therefore take the appearance of these two areas, among many other possible recommendations, to reflect the value they placed on them.

Table 15: Reproduced student flipchart/Group A recommendations

CURRENT	ADDITIONAL
Course File & Books	Zimbabwean compendium , e.g. 1. Gender issues in Zim 2. Environment (campfire) News cuttings/articles.
Tutorials	1. Computer Literacy 2. 2 visits per year from Wye tutors
TMA's	Tips to question answering, e.g evaluate, discuss & model plan and answer
Videos	1. Zim case-studies: vernacular with English subtitles. 2. Former Wye Student highlights with Wye
Audiocassettes	Outline each unit & summary, Discussions about projects

Figure 14: Reproduced student flipchart/Group B recommendations

College

TMA's
Exams

Co-ordinator

Tutor

Group facilitator

Student

ZIMBAWEAN
COMPENDIUM
MATERIALS

Local authors
Local films
Financial Gazette
Bus Herald
Independent Paper
Informal discussion
Business News (TV)
U.N. in Action (TV)
SAPEM

Sponsorship of the
course to continue
Audio-cassettes (for
summaries and intros)
More videos for case-
studies
Meet Wye lecturers 2
x per week May/Aug
Model essays to
specific questions
Computers/computer-
based analysis
Graduation at Wye
college

Group B students working on flipchart

11.3.3 Tutors recommendations for change

Of the four local tutors on the course, three were interviewed separately and one completed a postal questionnaire. These interviews preceded those of the workshops and were fairly brief. Nevertheless, their recommendations for change centred on improving the local level support given to the tutors themselves and to the students. Like the students, the top-down management style of the Ministry was seen as oppressive, affecting the morale and undermining the quality of the tutoring they could offer.

Support to the tutorial system:

> its worse this year because they are now down to tutorials once every two months whereas it was a monthly tutorial before .. because of financial difficulties .. to cut down on subsistence and travelling expense and so what they do is provide people with the equivalent of a bus fare .. but I think it is naughty .. if people put someone on a course .. then they should be prepared to provide some sort of back up

> also they expect specialists in the department to do tutoring as part of their jobs anyway during their working hours .. and they just refused to do it

> it cost [*figures in sterling*] to run the whole local set up .. that was paying all the tutors .. paying all the travelling and subsistence .. all the catering .. OK now that is probably the equivalent of a couple of students or two or three extra student but what would have happened .. **yes** some of them would have got through the course .. but **would** they get through to transfer to the **master** level?

Support to the students:

> no one is allowed to use the phone so no student can actually get hold of me on the phone unless they phone from their personal telephone .. some of them will have a phone at home but they are all out of Harare .. once they start doing trunk calls .. that's quite expensive and you can't have those sort of conversations on the radio from head office

> only students who can afford travelling or are near where I stay have contacted me for individual advice

One problem that emerged with the tutorial system was that local tutors do not see the students' marked assignments and were not therefore involved in dealing with individual difficulties of the students. The next section will discuss further the tutors' and students' comments and recommendations where they overlap in two areas - the value of resource-based learning and an internationalist approach. These are qualities which already exist in the course but which both the students and tutors implicitly suggest could be further enhanced.

251

11.4 Resource-based learning

11.4.1 Merits of resource-based learning

Both the students and tutors appreciated the way the course was composed of a range of resources - main course file, case-studies, readers, audio and video-cassettes, reference books - and felt this contributed to a wider understanding of the subject and choice.

> you've got choice .. you've got more to draw on

> what you've got is self-directed learning and you have got all those materials and they guide you .. but you .. you've got room to say .. this book is more useful.. and that one you don't like .. you can leave it to one side

> the multidisciplinary approach to planning .. is credit worthy

> *Zimbabwean students*

> you get a much broader understanding of the subject by looking at it from different perspectives

> *Zimbabwean tutor*

Nevertheless, despite its merits, resource-based learning appears to have created some problems that are reflected in the students' comments and recommendations.

11.4.2 Complex reading mechanics

For example, there is the danger that some of the advantages of resource-based learning could be inadvertently lost in the complex mechanics of multi-source reading. Typically, as figure 15 below illustrates, the Wye student reader is asked to shift constantly between the main course-book, two readers, key textbooks, a study guide, their own notebooks and often a dictionary (for economics and/or English).

Main course file

Readers

Key textbooks

Study guide

Notebooks

Dictionary

Supplementary
Cassettes
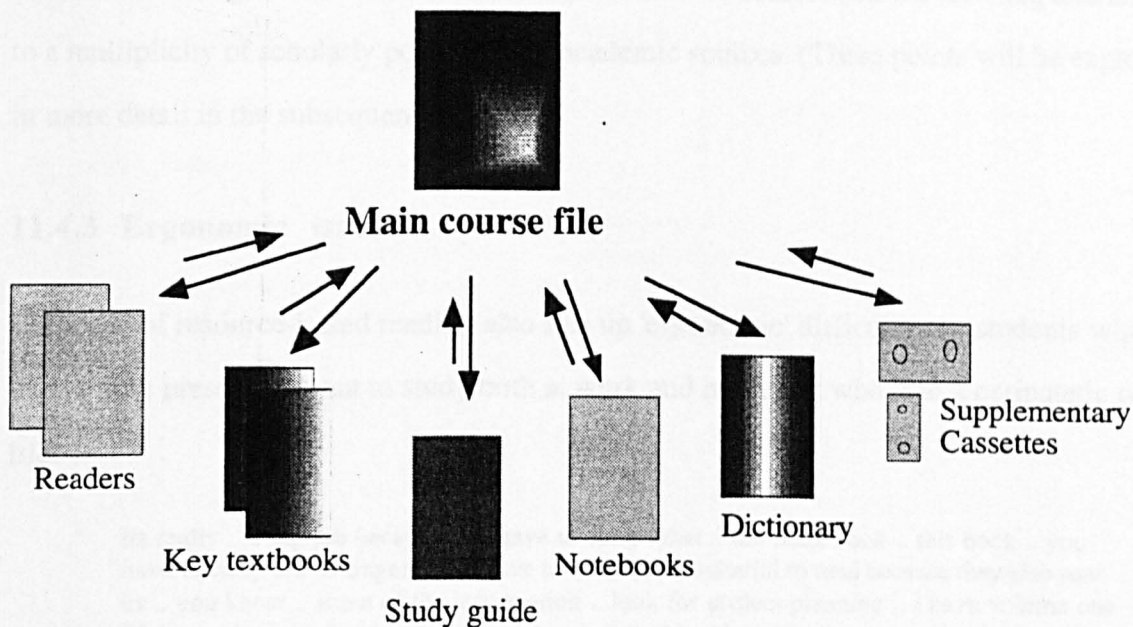
Figure 15: The reading dynamics of the course

Resource-based reading is desirable for various educational reasons - those stated by the students themselves but also because it points up, physically, the constructed nature of knowledge and gives greater potential for highlighting differences and the socially-embedded nature of different accounts.

However, this type of reading is also challenging and appears to set up problems where learners are pressed for time and studying in short snatches, typical, for example of the women students (this will be further explored in Chapter 13 on Gender).

> the language is simple .. you can understand it .. but .. what can I say .. you really .. its like you go back .. you go forward .. you go back .. you don't have a clear cut idea that this chapter .. you have done away with this chapter .. so I get confused//

> to make some notes it becomes very difficult so .. the way he refers to 37 and then goes back .. and [sighs] at the end of the day I'm lost [laughs]//

> for me it is sometimes disruptive .. because you refer to one resource up to one paragraph only .. so you open up this book to read this one paragraph .. and suddenly you stop and you go back there to continue your trend of thinking .. yet sometimes when you went to that place .. it was so interesting that you mind didn't suddenly stop at the end of that paragraph .. you wanted a bit more .. and then you read more than is required .. and when you go back .. to the part you wanted .. you've read so much you need to go back .. it's a bit of a problem but overall its an advantage

> *Various students*

This type of reading is also challenging for these learners, who have, from their past

educational background, been accustomed to teacher- or coursebook-led teaching and unused to a multiplicity of scholarly positions and academic sources. (These points will be explored in more detail in the subsequent chapter).

11.4.3 Ergonomic issues

This type of resource-based reading also sets up 'ergonomic' difficulties to students who, due to time pressures, want to study both at work and home but who lead a peripatetic work life.

> its really .. a big job because you have to carry what .. the main book .. this book .. you have to carry the Gittinger .. you have to carry extra material to read because they also sent us .. you know .. some of the information .. look for project planning .. I have volume one of the readers .. volume one is in my bag .. then the volume two
>
> *Woman Wye student*

The fact that the course file is a ring binder with detachable papers alleviates this problem to some extent but perhaps other aspects of the course could be designed to be 'detachable', self-standing or a smaller format and more amenable to carrying.

11.4.4 Recommended solutions

Both the complex reading mechanics and ergonomic problems of the course led the students to recommend an increased use of audio-cassettes. They suggested that audio-cassettes could be used in the following different ways:

- to orientate them to unit(s) in a more informal and fuller way that the usual brief, bullet style 'in-this-unit-you-will-learn' beginnings

  > we thought audiotapes of main points would assist .. certainly this course is a multidisciplinary approach with various sources of information so you have to be more analytical to select which are the key points

- to summarise unit(s) for comprehension, revision and exam purposes

  > when we are working in the field .. there are cases .. where after taking your morning study .. and I want to refresh .. it would be good to play a cassette so I am going through a day's work

  > after going through every unit .. you get a cassette that summarises that unit .. in economics it would cover supply and demand ..

- mini-listening tasks which consolidate unit input, e.g. **which** out of the following four interviewees has the best research approach from this problem or listen to this project proposal and identify weak areas

  > what we want is people criticising projects and saying this project failed because of one two and three .. and then we can discuss round it

- Ex-students and local tutors providing advice about the course in general and difficulties experiences on particular units

An increased use of audio-cassettes would certainly suit their peripatetic life and overcome some of the 'ergonomic' difficulties of carrying around the various (heavy) components of the course.

> I am often driving from here to home .. that's three hours doing nothing .. I want to make use of that time

> you can always play it back .. when you want .. when you are driving .. because you are doing two things at once .. you are learning as you are listening and driving

Zimbabwean Wye students

255

11.5 An internationalist outlook

11.5.1 The merits of an internationalist outlook

In an earlier chapter, I showed how the students valued the perceived 'independence' of an imported course such as Wye; that is, an independence relative to social and political pressures within the Zimbabwean educational system.

Another aspect of this 'outward looking' view can be seen in the enthusiasm shown for a course which, while making no reference to Zimbabwe at all, is nevertheless international in content and perspective **and** offers an internationally recognised qualification. For example, case-study 'boxes' are interwoven throughout the course and accompany the main 'input' file. The input is focused on establishing general principles behind project planning, monitoring and evaluation which are then explored in particular case-studies.

> >>The course is designed as far as possible to relate to the contexts in which students live and work. This is done with the extensive use of case-studies - drawn from African Asia and Latin America - and questions and exercises encouraging students to reflect on their own situation, and experiences, the similarities and differences with the case studies they are reading.
>
> *Wye tutor (questionnaire response)*

The importance of an international perspective (and qualification) is reiterated by students, tutors and course writers in contrast to an implicitly discredited state system:

INF14:	there is a danger in the third world .. that you end up fishing in your own tank==
INF11	== we don't want to be trained only for Zimbabwe==
INF's	== no .. no ==
INF14:	==if you are limited to Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe alone .. we are looking then at a state qualification .. now we are looking at an international qualification

Zimbabwean Wye students

personally I feel if you have an international course you have got a broad outlook .. you've got a better understanding of issues .. you would be very narrow if you look at it as a national course but at the same time one should be able to.. to understand his local economics situation

Zimbabwean tutor

>>I think it is helpful and interesting to incorporate different perspectives into the course, and students can learn from experiences in other countries. I would not therefore feel it was useful to localise a course to the extent of making all the materials 'local'.

>>Localisation is fine to put a slant on general issues. May mean that locals may not be able to see the wood (principles) for their own trees (i.e. the detail in the local situation)

UK Course writers

there should not be so much weight on experience and local examples .. because you see you may not have the experience or the examples

Student

11.5.2 Particularity understood against the general

Crucially, this general v specific approach, **does** appear to have helped the students to develop an analytical perspective about their own particular context:

we are in a position to analyse .. **why** Baroness Linda Chalker is in the country right now .. and **why** she has been made to visit this particular province in the country .. this course really opens you up in terms of what happened in the developed world .. what happened to the developing countries in terms of the economy

it helps you to manage life .. and when I say life I mean in totality .. at work .. analysing issues .. even reading newspapers or following events in the country<> this Sunday .. for example .. at the cold storage site .. we have to meet President Mugabe to present a bull to a particular province .. but then head office said we must go to Matabeleland .. you can quickly see that cold storage were not so much interested in the farmers .. they had their own manipulating to do .. something has happened and so he made a decision in favour of them

it gives you the concepts for analysis and you can use that to analyse your own whole situation .. like in this case .. I have learned from this course material that you have actors in development .. they come up with something wonderful .. but it is not so much in the interests of the farmers .. they want to manipulate ... so it is really provocative .. you can analyse your local situation ..

As proposed by the project sponsor.   As specified in the project request.   As designed by the senior analyst.

As produced by the programmers.   As installed at the user's site.   What the user wanted.
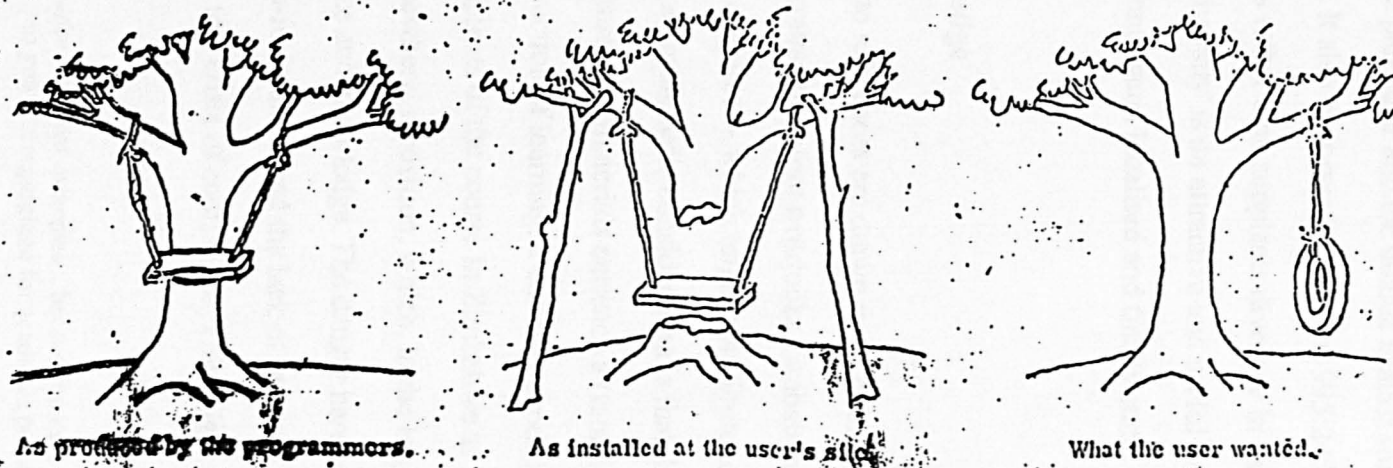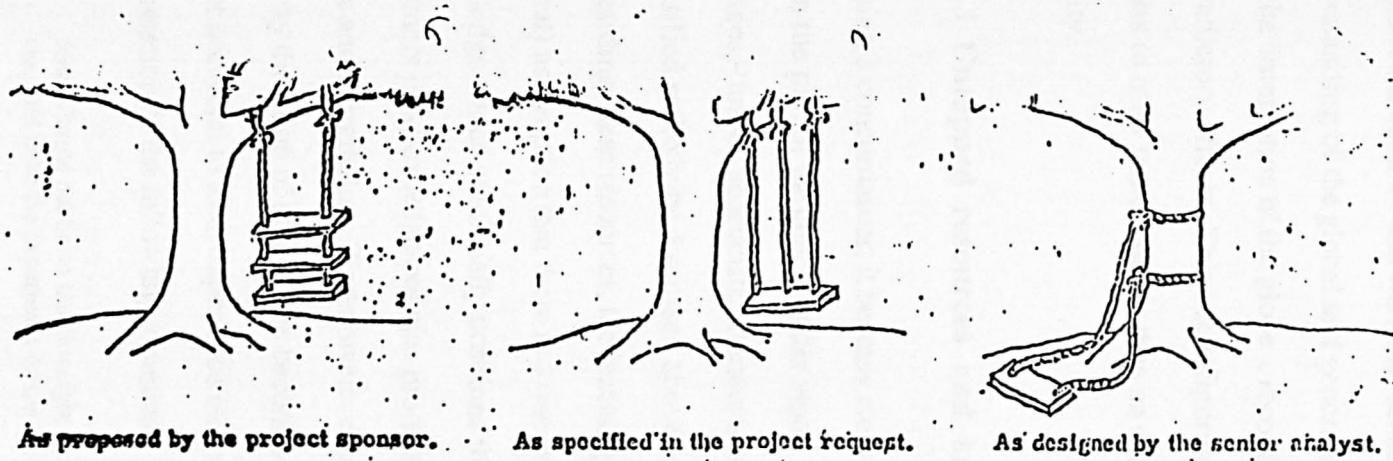
PROJEKTPLANUNG

Figure 16: Cartoon on tutorial room wall

Interestingly, the success of this basic approach seems to endorse Gidden's (1990:7) notion of 'intensified reflexivity' as an effective outcome of international and internationalised courses; that is, that particularity is understood within some notion of a global or international context; that we make sense of the particular and the unique against some understanding of the global and generalisable. It also endorses Edward's (1995:245) notion that the 'integration of the globe .. reconfigures rather than supplants diversity in its contradictory effects'. This 'reconfiguring of diversity' is an attractive and useful notion and appears to offer more mileage than an overly contingent, localised and finally static view of identity.

11.5.3 Untapped resources and knowledge

By using a concordancer, it became clear that **no** references are drawn from Zimbabwe at all within the part of the course under study. The course therefore overlooks Zimbabwean resources - tutors, specialists, literature, media resources - which might contribute to the 'intensified reflexivity' discussed above. A more problematic consideration is that, by disregarding these resources, the teaching structures and materials entrench a (familiar colonial) assumption that there is a one-way direction of learning, a one-way production of knowledge which continually positions the recipients of the course in Zimbabwe as passive consumers of knowledge/policies produced elsewhere, a position, which, in the long term, erodes and marginalises Zimbabwean experience and knowledge. The danger here is that the one-way direction of knowledge becomes taken-for-granted and the lack of practice and respect accorded to local experience might lead to a crisis of confidence. This might be one interpretation of the following comment:

> there should not be so much weight on experience and local examples .. because you see you may not have the experience or the examples .. so you just regurgitate for academic purposes
>
> *Student*

11.5.4 The role of the local tutors

Clearly, the local tutors play a vital role in exploiting the multidisciplinary, internationalist approach of the course by exploring the general principles/concepts in the course within the

local context:

> the most important thing of a tutor .. is to bring that concept and see how it is working in Zimbabwe
>
> *Student*

> the guy who does the [*name*] course .. spent a lot of time photocopying Zimbabwe materials .. to link in with that .. so ideally the tutor .. if they are doing a good job .. are looking out for Zimbabwean case studies

> the students must see it as a whole .. but they must be able to relate the whole course to agricultural development as a whole in Zimbabwe
>
> *Local tutor*

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, tutorial systems in developing countries are fragile; they are continually undermined by economic pressures and the common perception at the ministry level that DE materials should be ready-made and self-standing without the need for an 'additional' tutorial system. Wye, too, unintentionally entrenches the tacked-on, afterthought nature of the local tutorial system and the lack of contact between local and UK tutors because it takes, understandably, the lone unsupported student as their starting point.

> Zimbabwe must be the only one where they actually have local tutors .. I don't think Wye is set up for that really .. they are not used to dealing with local level tutors .. the assignments are for their tutors .. its not much to do with us
>
> *Local tutor coordinator*

Nevertheless, where, as in this case, there exists the potential for a long-term commitment between producers and recipients and where there exists some form of local tutorial system, it would not be difficult to mobilise those tutorial and other local resources in a less ad-hoc, more formal way than at present.

In the brief time available, these 2 local tutors (from one interview and a letter) showed a wealth of ideas at a detailed level about areas of difficulty in the existing course and new content areas:

TUT2:	for example livestock systems .. all the case studies are from other countries .. we don't have anything from Zimbabwe .. possibly somebody in Nigeria would benefit from those case-studies .. and from Kenya and Tanzania would benefit from these case-studies .. but I think something could be written even if it is not there ..
INT:	so you would be prepared to write case-studies?
TUT2:	oh if given the chance .. surely .. a case-study can be produced .. I can write a case study .. yes

1. The course covers very useful concepts in projects, but there is very little utilisation of Unit 7 concepts in practice
2. The ADB manual has not been used by students very much
3. There is need to give a summarised version of Carsely and Kumar on Monitoring and Evaluation as there is not enough time for the students to read throughout the book
4. There is a need to expand sections on:

The tree analysis
The logical framework to 4 matrix
The critical Path Analysis
as I found that students always appreciate extra notes on these subjects (I have been using the CARD Zimbabwe publications).

11.5.5 Challenging classical models

One workshop was devoted to discussing the validity of Wye's and Gittinger's[1] (1982) taxonomy for project development. The aim was to consider whether, for example, models assumed to be classical **are** applicable everywhere; are they necessarily transferable to a Zimbabwean context? For example, all of the following factors were likely to cause the phases of project development identified by Wye/Gittinger to either fail or need substantial modification in Zimbabwe:

1. political
2. socio-economic including ESAP (Economic Structural Adjustment Programme)
3. climatic
4. soil
5. logistics, communication and delivery
6. gender roles (either traditional or modern)

INF5:	there would need to be serious modification to some concepts of gender==
INF6:	==yuh==
INF5:	==in order to be relevant to our Zimbabwean situation==
INF10:	==yuh==
INF7:	==our situation is very unique and you need to approach in a more .. sort of diplomatic manner

INF2:	the advice from IMF and World Bank and so on is to liberalise the market .. OK you do not have to get spare parts only from TMA motors anymore .. but what we have noticed .. prices are very high .. lots of things have been imported .. the subsidies have gone .. everything has got to be market driven not a centrally planned economy .. OK .. but a market driven economy is a very competitive one .. and Zimbabwe .. it is a very young country in terms of participating in the economy of the country .. and for indigenous people .. its like you practice one day .. and the next you have to compete with first class established competition .. this makes indigenisation very very difficult .. I think .. there is more disadvantages .. of ESAP to the common man than advantages .. so I think to be fair .. one could list the advantages .. if there are any .. to the macroeconomy but this should be matched with a list of the disadvantages .. this would be very interesting ..

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[1] an key course textbook

Clearly, an internationally available course cannot cover all these factors in specific detail:

> I think it is enough for the book to say watch out for these aspects .. you be aware that
> these are important .. but as for **when** and **how** to deal with them .. well that is application
> .. I think you leave this up to us .. and we fill it in accordingly
>
> *Student in workshop discussion*

This appears to illustrate the importance of tutorials and local mediation. In DE situations where there is little commitment or value accorded to local aspects of the course - tutorials, discussions, local reading resources - then students are likely to be locked into the position of regurgitating principles and facts which have little bearing on their own situation.

The one-way production of knowledge also precludes the question of whether new models can be learned from different contexts, like Zimbabwe. A new model may have aspects which are transferable to other third world countries or to first world ones depending on whether certain economic and socio-political conditions obtain which are similar to these areas.

> if you take the view that education is moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar .. then
> Africa hasn't been given a fair go .. in the area of agriculture for example .. the world is
> learning from Zimbabwe because we have things like zero tillage .. we don't use .. well
> now we use because of whites imposing it .. nitrogenous fertilisers .. but crops have
> always been successful in Mashonaland long before the arrival of the whites .. in fact the
> citrus estates at Mazoi used to make sure no one had scurvy on the discovery ships of the
> Portuguese .. they grew oranges and got them to the coast at Beira .. its been going on for
> longer than the whites have been around
>
> *University of Zimbabwe lecturer*

11.6 Zimbabwean Academic Resources

I want now to briefly explore some aspects of Zimbabwean academic resources which could be mobilised within the course. The Zimbabwean team of tutors and students (ex- and current) would seem, given the invitation, ideally poised to provide, compile and author country-tailored resources either for inclusion within the main course or for use exclusively within Zimbabwe. Both students and tutors have a wealth of ideas at a detailed level about, as we have seen above, areas of difficulty in the existing course and new content areas but also about different media and the broader level of course design.

11.6.1 Media

The suggestions from tutors and students about content changes come in different media forms. Printed materials, unsurprisingly, emerged prominently and in the form of newspapers, national and regional specialist periodicals, government directives, NGO literature, Ministry factsheets but with certain caveats.

INF10:	we would like to see an additional compendium of readings .. like gender issues .. these need to handled carefully and differently .. and environmental issues .. and there are the controversial ones .. like CAMPFIRE[1] but others like Kariba and some news cuttings .. if it slips the editor
INF6:	nothing slips the editor
INF7:	yes but its one thing looking back and picking on what was once a controversial issue .. OK you are merely looking back .. its another thing .. dealing with a current issue .. then it really gets sensitive .. you would better play safe or you may end up burning your fingers

'Safe' past controversial issues included topics such as the involuntary resettlement and displacement of people due to expansion of towns, cities, dam-building, pipelines (e.g. Kariba, Noah, Osborne Dam, Manuchi dam, Tokwe Mukosi dam) or 'lost' funds for community development (e.g. CAMPFIRE).

Many of these topics areas were also covered in films and radio discussions and had the

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[1] Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources

potential to become part of course audio-visual material.

> right .. more videos of case-studies .. examples would be the Ndimada valley and the participatory rural appraisal .. the history of Kariba .. the dam in Manicaland .. there are already films on this
>
> *Student chair reporting to plenary*

Both tutors and students urged Wye to adopt a proactive role towards the use of computers within the course and the development of computer literacy in general:

> we have put computer literacy .. which we think is quite paramount .. no emphasis needed here
>
> *Student chair reporting to plenary*

> there's very little computer and you can't possibly come out of a masters without having touched a computer .. [the department] is getting computer resources now .. so it's easier to do that .. we had two computer you know in the projects office .. so they were able to do some spreadsheets and things on there .. but I think Wye have got to write in .. even if it's not an examinable part .. they must write an optional computer section for each course .. so if you are doing project appraisal you're taught how to use a spreadsheet ... you can't do project appraisal on a back of an envelope .. or even on a calculator .. you would never do a survey unless you could sort of stick your material into a computer
>
> *Local tutor*

Put together on a formal and continuing basis, these different media resources could amount to a substantial and growing resource bank (or small library) of specialist materials which could be exploited in different ways depending on the course design.

11.6.2 Models for Wye's internationalist course design

So far we have touched on various tensions in a print-centred context - course-based v resource-based, international content v locally focused content. The students' and tutors' comments so far suggest that they think that the course should reflect a balance of all of these elements. I explored this further area in one session in an effort to identify what weight they would attribute, in an ideal Wye course, to the different elements. The students were asked to comment on four models of international design in a flipchart drawing (see figure 17). The models varied from first, a course-based design to the second, which included both a coursebook and additional resources (model 2 was what Wye is at the moment). Model 3 expanded on this by incorporating country-specific materials into the resources which have

been compiled and produced from within that country; in other words, an attempt to 'Zimbabweanise' some of the content while maintaining an international perspective. For example, the Wye course producers could invite local level tutors and students to compile some country-specific/tailored resources to be used within that country as a supplement to the main course. There was also the potential of incorporating some country specific content into the core coursebook which would reach an international audience. Both options could involve local level tutors and students in the compilation, selection, editing of resources for the Zimbabwe-tailored pack. The resources might take the form of a compendium of literature, videos and audiocassettes and the students. Contribution to the main course might take the form of some Zimbabwean case-studies or examples or parts of the course written by a Zimbabwean. The **fourth** model retains all the advantages of the third model (resource-based, international and country-tailored component) but has shifted the site of production to Zimbabwe. The course remains international in content but contains, in both the resources and coursebook, more content related to Zimbabwe and possibly a Southern African region.

Models for International DE course design

One main textbook

**Model 1:
Course-based**

Main book or pedagogical wrap-around

Resources (print and cassettes)

**Model 2:
Resource-based
& international
in content**

**Model 3:
Resource-based
international
content & country
specific resources**

Main book possibly incorporating country-specific materials

Resources including country/region-specific materials

**Model 4:
Local/regional
level
production with
an international
perspective**

Main coursebook produced in Zimbabwe/Southern African region but incuding international perspective

Resources mixing country/region specific content with international

Figure 17: Models for international DE course design - workshop flipchart

The students were very clear in their rejection of both Model 1 and 4. Model 1 was rejected for its narrow course-based approach. Students wanted, as they had commented on earlier, a course which embraced a variety of international expereince and they felt that resource-based learning could achieve this better than a course-based one. The rejection of model 4 appeared to reveal both their lack of confidence in producing a home-grown version but also the fear of loss of quality and 'interference'. This emerged in the discussion of model 3 which, it was decided, could imply two different levels of local control. It could take the form of a local level adaptation of the Wye course (or 'versioning') with Zimbabwean management and tutoring. Alternatively, it might take the form of a more collaborative relationship with Wye which retains Wye as the central course producer but involves more input from Zimbabwe to both the core course and locally-used resources. Among the full group of students, the unanimous preference was for the latter route course design.

INF2:	this one [*third model*] is good .. we would appreciate that .. to bring in pieces here and there .. would be acceptable .. but the last one .. the way I look at it .. we do not have people at the moment
INF10:	yuh .. OK this one [*third model*] is manageable .. but this [*fourth*] one is long term perhaps==
INF2:	==it depends on the resources available to produce .. once people have begun to make initial contributions to that one [*third*] .. and talent has been found .. then **that** one [*fourth*] might work==
INF7:	==it could be written for a Southern African region==
INF2:	==yuh that might be a long term objective

11.7 Emerging implications

The findings in this chapter have to be treated with caution. They represent the views of just this small group of students and, to a lesser degree, the even smaller group of local tutors. The students' views were not, due to time constraints, explored with other students in different years or, for example, discussed with other DE experts or the Ministry management. The evidence for addressing the research question can therefore only be

speculative rather than conclusive. If, however, the views were found to be more widely held among a wider body of Zimbabwean participants (e.g. students, tutors, Ministry people, DE experts) they would contribute, in particular, to our understanding about the potential dimensions of a counterdiscourse strand in different ways and at different levels of the course. If developed, a counterdiscourse strand could promote local learning and teaching opportunities that exist both beyond the control and ambit of the UK producers but which might also make a distinctive contribution to the generally available course.

11.7.1 The macrolevel of course production

At the macrolevel of course production, the discussion on different models of international course design alerts us to some of the fears and risks surrounding local level production. If, with further research, these findings become more trustworthy, then the implication is that the Wye course producers have the potential to contribute to a long-term developmental aim of strengthening the academic development of Zimbabwe. Wye is in the process of defining its future role and considering how to develop their links with overseas institutions. They are considering questions such as - Should Wye be

- tailoring their course to specific regions or countries?

- helping others to adapt their course?

- training others to write and produce whole or parts of courses?

- entering into collaborative course development?

If there were further evidence to back the comments provided by the small group of participants here, the implication would be that Wye could shape and supplement the non-African course with local resources quite significantly. This would hold implications for changes in terms of structure, content, authorship and origin. The first obvious step would be the compilation of a Zimbabwean compendium of resources which would contribute to the local learning context (and build up more permanent local academic resources) but could also open up the 'main' internationally available course to other forms of knowledge and

potentially new models.

Interestingly, the Ministry department in Zimbabwe are discussing the future of the course:

> I've chatted a little bit in the department about doing that [*a Zimbabwean adaptation of the course*] and people .. you know .. they always want to recreate the wheel .. there's a lot of we don't want anybody else's course etcetera .. there's a lot of brouhaha at the beginning but when they sit down to write it .. it is a different matter .. its expensive .. its hard to do .. there aren't many trained writers .. you just get some old lecture notes thrown together .. you know it takes time to develop this sort of stuff
>
> *Local tutor*

It would seem that model **three** could provide an experimental framework to help Wye define their future role(s) and at the same time, give Agritex, tutors and students first-hand but protected experience of DE course production and, if desired, a transitional stage towards model four of in-country course production.

11.7.2 Promoting the local tutorial system

As data shows in other chapters, there is further evidence of the key role played by the local tutors in terms of appropriate teaching and the promotion of 'intensified reflexivity'. The implication is that because of the established links between Wye and the Zimbabwean recipients, Wye could further this aim if it adopted a far more proactive role towards legitimising the local tutorial system and towards promoting its quality. The support could take different forms - donor pressure, pressure on the Ministry, more formal, long-term links between the UK and local tutors, co-operative and/or delegated course design and authoring, training, etc. Support along these lines would undoubtedly contribute towards putting the, often fragile, local tutorial systems on a more permanent footing and with a higher status.

11.7.3 The microlevel of instructional design

At the pedagogical level, the mismatch between the 'classical models' advanced in the course and the Zimbabwean social context suggest that Wye need to employ pedagogic strategies which make the socially-constructed nature of knowledge more transparent to the learners and encourage a more distanced, critical appraisal of social practices. This could take the

form of, for example:

1. highlighting the resource-based rather than course-based nature of learning (while adding support to those who find this type of learning difficult)

> the course should really only be a collection of readings .. sort of resources .. with a separate study guide telling you how to use them and setting TMA's .. and then you could make it more relevant by adding a separate collection of readings for African contexts and the Zimbabwean context .. that way we can bring in our own experience .. that way we can say this is **our** tradition .. this is **our** culture .. and we are conscious .. that it has value in the programme .. that way our culture is not being endangered or swamped by other cultures .. we can then hold our heads up high and look at the rest of the world of which we are a full adult member .. not a little kid lagging behind our mother

University of Zimbabwe lecturer with experience in UK-Zimbabwe DE course production

2. highlighting the differences between authors and their own orientations, e.g. by introducing a deliberate plurality of scholarly positions, juxtaposition of competing accounts and using provocative or contentious texts

3. avoiding the assumption that learners inhabit a text-rich domain (and have easy access to libraries and journals) and clearly articulating the intertextuality of materials (such as the relationship between the current study to other texts in the field)

4. introducing of a critical reading awareness agenda (Wallace, 1992, 1990) which aims to encourage learners to adopt a critical stance towards the dominant discourses they are being exposed to in the content; the notion of critique is extended here beyond the traditional view of challenging the propositional content of texts to include an awareness of the ideological assumptions or discourses that underpin a course.

Other more general areas that have emerged in this chapter and which deserve further exploration is the potential for the course producers to adopt a far more proactive role towards the development of computer literacy skills in Zimbabwe and for considering ways of overcoming the ergonomic and complex reading mechanics involved in resource-based learning. These will be further explored in chapter 13.

11.8 Close

The following chapter is focused on the literacy demands of print-centred DE course and asks the students and tutors and data whether these created any mismatches with African literacy practices.

Chapter 12 - A print-centred learning context: Genre

12.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to shed light on the following research questions:

What assumptions (expectations and demands) about academic literacy practices do the Wye course producers make?

What responsibility do they assume for the literacy demands of their course?

How transparent are the assumptions to the Zimbabwean students within the materials and feedback?

Do the Zimbabwean learners experience any difficulties around taken-for granted literacy practices embedded in print materials which originate from a non-African context?

In this chapter, I attempt to explore some of the largely inexplicit, assumptions about academic writing which are embedded within the Wye course and which are revealed by means of a triangulated evaluation of different data sources (such as TMA's, TMA feedback, student & tutor interviews, analyses of exam and TMA essay questions, exam question frequencies, etc); as I do so, I will match them with contributions from the students; my aim is to examine whether it can be taken-for-granted that these assumptions are understood and transparent to the students or whether they give rise to difficulty.

12.2 TMA academic writing: implicit assumptions

12.2.1 Range of writing demands

Each core course for this postgraduate diploma usually contains 3 TMA's and, as they take 2 core courses a year, the students are normally expected to submit at least 6 essays in total per year. These are voluntary essays which are not formally assessed with marks but since they provide the main feedback they will get during the course (from the UK-based tutors to the students in the form of comments and advice) these students complete them all; the TMA's

also provide practice and preparation for the formal examinations taken at the end of each course.

In the Project Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation course (PP forthwith), we find the following three TMA's. The types of writing in the TMA's mirror the demands in the final exam - mainly essays with some involving mathematical calculations and short definitive descriptions of key economic terms.

TMA 1:	Project proposal
TMA 2:	Mathematical exercises plus short explanatory notes
TMA 3:	Mock exam: Four Essays

Table 16: TMA types in Project Proposal course

No doubt mindful that many of their professional students have been away from formal education for some time - an average of 13 years (range 5-22 years) for the case-study students - the course includes a short section of advice about **general** study skills in the separate student study guide (e.g. time organisation, note-taking). The essay writing advice offered to the students covers short definitions of common imperative words in essay questions (compare, contrast, discuss) and brief advice about structuring an essay.

> Your essay should be well structured. There should be a clear introduction, which should state briefly the materials you going to cover and act as a lead into the subject of the essay ; a middle section which then forms the discussion or main body of your essay; a conclusion which neatly rounds off your writing. ..Your writing should be composed of paragraphs, which together clearly convey the reader the content, structure and thread of your argument.
>
> *External Programme Study Guide, 1996*

In addition, the Zimbabwean students have also had, atypically for most Wye students, the benefit of a 4-hour **study skills induction course** within Zimbabwe at the start of the programme, organised by a local tutor and conducted by a University of Zimbabwe teacher in Communication Skills. In an interview with this tutor, it emerged that in addition to general reading and time management advice, the pre-sessional includes short lessons on

essay planning, key words in questions, writing concise paragraphs and precision in writing. This tutor (an unrecorded interview) felt that in the short time available, the study skills component, though useful, was limited and precluded a focus on more subject- and question-specific writing skills.

In contrast to the **general** study skills advice about simple essay structuring (beginning-middle-conclusion) an analysis of the essay questions in both the mock and real exams (of this core course) reveals that students are expected to have the potential to produce a range of at least **8** broad essay genres.

1. explanation
2. description
3. information
4. compare
5. contrast
6. evaluation
7. argument
8. analysis

QUESTION NO	MOCK EXAM	EXAM
1	description analysis	analysis
2	analysis	description explanation analysis
3	description explanation	analysis
4	description explanation	explanation argument
5	explanation analysis	explanation evaluation
6	description argument analysis	analysis
7	compare contrast	argument
8	argument explanation	analysis
9	analysis	explanation analysis
1 0	analysis	information explanation

Also, because some individual essays can involve a range of tasks and purposes, a hybrid of genres **within** essays. Rather than being uni-structural, these genre types have very different implications in terms of their internal focus, purpose and organisation.

Table 17: Genre types in real/mock examinations

275

The students quite clearly identify their need for help in this area.

INF10:	what I think is important is the style .. the **way** you argue .. I think that one .. if .. if .. we could find a way to present ourselves in the way we are .. so that .. they say .. OK there's a person who understand what he's trying to put across .. if we could get **that** sort of style .. I think that's what we want
INT:	what styles can you identify?
INF10:	well discussing==
INF7:	==assessing==
INF2:	== criticising==
INF10:	==evaluating .. maybe there is an acceptable standard of laying out an evaluation .. maybe there is a narrative form for commenting .. I am sure we don't know this .. neither do we have a definite source in our models

The pre-course, **direct** writing support offered to the students by the Wye producers and the pre-sessional tutor does not appear to reflect the writing demands of the course. This could signal that course producers:

- underestimate the writing demands of their course

- assume that students have had wide exposure to different sources of academic writing types

- assume that students are familiar and comfortable with a range of different academic writing types

- underestimate the writing experience of their students

- assume that both a **pre-course** and **general** study skills advice is applicable to the **discipline specific** writing demands of the course

Taking up this last point, the students appear to want study skills support at different points in the course and with different purposes.

<u>Pre-course:</u>

> no this was very helpful .. we had this study skills induction .. you know essay writing etcetera and *(name)* even brought in some back students to talk about the course and they are saying .. even if you find it hard .. you keep going .. we find this very encouraging

<u>Beginning of course:</u>

> at the initial stage .. we also feel discouraged .. we felt we are crowded .. there are too many new terms .. like the last one *(responding to a student quote about difficulties returning to essay writing)* .. we get such experiences particularly when the question is not clear or when the_model answers are not supplied

<u>Interwoven throughout the course:</u>

> maybe some groups are home and dry after two years .. they no longer need TMA assistance .. but we .. as a group .. think we need .. some form of guidance .. right through up to the end .. because .. one beauty about the Wye programme .. is its dynamic situation .. it is continuously changing

Here, we find a mixture of pre-course, general study orientation, a concentration of support at the beginning of the course to help the students make the transition back into an academic 'mode' and continuous, point-of-need support as the course and demands change.

12.2.2 Discipline-specific writing resources

Also, as the following piece of TMA feedback reveals, these apprentice economists are expected to have writing resources specific to the construction of **economic** knowledge.

> You are now expected to be an economist. You have to write as an economist, using the language and methods of economists. Practice on some of the remaining questions on the TMA 3.
>
> *TMA feedback*

And the two groups response to this:

> Group 1:   we don't think practice will make him perfect .. we thought as it was pointed earlier on .. that you need a model answer .. which has got those economic languages and so on .. we said that a model answer should not just be a model answer .. it should also have a plan .. also with given examples .. of their own countries .. of Britain .. so **that** was the way we looked at .. probably how to redress some of these comments

277

Group 2:   practice won't help this student .. it will not improve this student .. he
             needs to be guided on how he needs to improve .. that's why we are saying
             a model answer I think to have different model answers for different types of
             essay like critically assess .. evaluate .. discuss

12.2.3 Students writing as a responsibility of the subject specialist

Several lines of enquiry emerge from the quotes above. The tutor offers little direct advice

about **how** the student is to develop these subject-specific skills. Furthermore, the tutor's

responsibility towards this development is unclear. Nevertheless, at the word and sentence

level of specialist vocabulary, we **do** find direct advice (in the accompanying study guide)

about the need to compile individual glossaries. The emphasis on **precision** within this

disciplinary area was also stressed by tutors talking about the course and an emphasis in

TMA's essays comprising 3-4 definitions of specific economic terms.

> the topic of economics is not quite the same as if you were doing a social science subject ..
> because economics is so precise on how they define terms

> even if they use the term .. lets say significantly .. if they use significantly wrongly .. then
> you get penalised an awful lot if you don't understand this .. well in economics and statistics
> you've got to use those terms correctly ..

The students acknowledged that the specialist vocabulary was rather overwhelming,

particularly at the beginning of the course and their comments are ideal textbook answers

which could have been lifted straight from good practice guidelines on contextualised

vocabulary learning. The comments also give further weight to the idea of developing

subject-specific support in-course and at point of need.

INT:	in the project manual there was a bit at the beginning about compiling a glossary .. did you use it?
INF4:	we ignored it .. we can get it in the textbook .. its well defined in the context of a textbook .. **do** it where you **get** it when you **read** it .. why waste time?
INF3:	the coursebooks actually explain it to you .. I normally underline it and that's enough with all the texts that we use .. you could go to the dictionary
INF1:	it should be a matter of seeing it in the context

At the more overall, rhetorical level of economics analyses, direct support is less apparent, despite its acknowledged importance:

> I did once ask Wye .. do they have model answers and they wrote back no ..we don't do that .. but sometimes I think there is a need for model answers
>
> *Zimbabwean Wye student*

> there are still some questions in exams .. which are more essay topics than just defining .. where they need to support things in paragraphs and ideas or linking thing .. or presenting your principles first and then relating it to a case .. but what we get is .. you know .. a very informal conversational type of responses to the TMA's .. they are sort of rather long rambling conversational things
>
> *Zimbabwean Wye tutor*

> >>What is at stake is the particular focus and approach adopted by academic disciplines as a whole, and within those disciplines - for example, the balance between abstract theory and practical skills, between rigorous formal (and often mathematical modelling and a respect for empirical reality, etc). It is these things which divide academics rather than their nationality and any cultural trappings.
>
> *UK Wye DE writer*

For example, to the question - **do you see yourself as responsible for broadening the..learner's ability to write discursive essays?** - the responses from the subject-specialist tutors are not homogeneous and do not signal any consistent policy, practice or framework - see table .

Table 18: Tutor perceptions of responsibility towards study skills

CATEGORIES OF RESPONSE	TUTOR FEEDBACK
1. No responsibility at all	No, I don't feel I have any responsibility
2. Responsibility of someone else in separate component	Should be dealt with separately
3. Some (indirect) responsibility within the course	Not directly. I tend to use the full range of the language, and try to write well, on the grounds that this sets a good examples to follow. This is what I expect of Spanish-speaking authors when I work in a second language. I want to see good Spanish that I can aspire to.
4. Shared responsibility between subject specialist and study skills component	1. In marking the TMA's, I try to give students guidelines on writing essays; I find many students have a fairly limited understanding of what is expected of them and I do feel that it would be helpful to deal with this separately and more comprehensively. If this does not happen, one of the revisions I would like to make to the course at the end of this year is to incorporate some basic guidelines on writing essays. 2. Study skills should be taught but a function of the course should be to developed these in the context of the course

As a brief diversion here, this range of responses reflects a broad shift in writing pedagogy

in the UK in general which began in the 1970's towards more discipline-specific

development and away from the remedial general study skills approach.

> a curriculum subject is a distinctive mode of analysis. While many teachers recognise that their aim is to initiate a student in a particular modes of analysis, they rarely recognise the linguistic implications of doing so.

Bullock Report (1975:21)

> As you move across from one subject to another, language is likely to be functioning in rather different ways .. language varies, and it varies, not randomly, but systematically according to what we are doing - what we are using the language to achieve .. do we need to understand the nature of the functional variation in language, both in principles and as it is realised in specific instances.

Halliday (1986:18)

These shifts have given rise to questions, reflected in these responses and in this course, about **who** should be teaching discipline-specific writing (academics, subject specific study skills teachers or both) and **where** (before the course, in-course as a separate component or more integrated into the course/materials themselves).

Returning now to the initial 'language of economics' quote, it appears that the tutor's assumption, so characteristic of the UK 'sink or swim' tradition towards writing support in higher education (Tomic & Davidson, 1997), is that students will, if they do not already possess them, 'pick up' language and the analytical mode (specific to economists) as they proceed throughout the course without explicit explanation or instruction from either a study skills or subject specialist. The assumption is that they will learn them from a combination of three indirect sources:

1. the actual process of TMA writing

2. getting TMA feedback from subject tutors

3. reading course texts

Evidence so far from the students suggests that these assumptions are misplaced. I now wish to examine in more depth whether these three specific assumptions are borne out in the data and I deal with each under three separate headings.

12.3 TMA's as a source for developing writing

Tutors assume that students 'pick up' how to write academic essays by the practice of actually doing TMA's but the available data suggests several difficulties emerge:

12.3.1 Analysis of practices around essay & exam questions

> Critically assess the project cycle as a process for the planning and implementation of public sector investment in developing countries? Do you think that a participatory approach to the design and implementation of public sector investment can be compatible with the conventional project cycle?
>
> *Wye TMA question*

> Your essay should be composed of paragraphs, which together clearly convey to the reader the content, structure and thread of your argument.
>
> *From the study guide to Wye students*

Implicit in these two examples, taken from the Wye course, are various assumptions the writer has made about the learner. These include:

- The learner is comfortable criticising and evaluating widely-used and accepted practices.

- The learner is comfortable dealing with issues involving more than one point of view.

- The learner is willing to develop an individual viewpoint and defend it.

- The student is familiar with the 'logically progressive' essay structure (or even, familiar with the idea of an essay).

- The student finds the meaning of typical exam or TMA questions - such as critically assess, evaluate, discuss, describe - self-evident and translucent.

The mismatches between these assumptions and the following available data suggest the assumptions are misplaced.

```
INF4:  she has given us the most difficult words to approach .. look .. critically assess and
       discuss==
INF2:        ==yuh==
INF1:              ==yuh
INF3:  but again .. I think they are .. yuh .. it is the easiest to abuse .. you can play around
       with them .. pick out your argument and win it
INF4:  yes but discuss .. that could be anything
INF2:  OK but the moment you see critical .. you think what?
INF3:  I think they are asking me the level of knowledge I know .. er .. I have about
       something .. it means they are asking me to .. expose .. or give out all the
       knowledge I have about that==
INF1:                        ==and my experiences==
INF3:                                      ==yuh .. my experiences
INF4:  agree?
INF2:  not quite .. not quite .. I feel that critical .. it means something .. it means .. that
       .. really you are both sided .. it has to be weighted .. on the pros and cons=
INF4:                                                  =you
       should  be saying .. you have a model of the right thing
INF2:  but what if you have two or three models?
INF4:  then you throw them all on .. discuss them .. and then in your conclusions that's
       when you would probably put in your value judgements
```

The propensity towards mainly descriptive writing (with a few evaluative comments in a brief conclusion) is instantly recognisable to many tutors, irrespective of whether they are dealing with L1, L2 or FL students. If one thinks in terms of a cline, however, it appears that this is a particularly entrenched approach in Zimbabwe. The student who touches on the 'both-sidedness' of argument is a lone voice.

> they do not structure exam answers .. and any question .. regardless of complexity .. will
> be deemed to read .. write all you know about such and such

University of Zimbabwe lecturer 1 talking about his (non-Wye) students

> if you give them references for an essay .. what will come back will be .. a sort of
> summarised notes of your lecture

Locally-based Wye tutor

Asked to plan a typical essay - **Briefly describe an agricultural project with which you are familiar. Plan the feasibility study for such a project identifying both the range of data and the sequence of analyses that will be needed.** - it was clear that the 'brief' description would, in the writing (rather than in the intention), consume most of their time.

> to begin with we have an introduction .. we introduce the origin of the scheme.. whether it was originated from the peoples need or from development programmes .. then we give the background information about the people of the area .. the origin .. the culture .. the tradition .. the agricultural background of the people and the educational level .. the general .. the resources and **then** we get onto the range of data ..

Student chair reporting the discussion

The reasons for this propensity are no doubt varied but a **combination** of the two following areas identified in the data are likely to make a contribution.

12.3.2 Aspects of Zimbabwean approaches to education

> traditional teaching in Zimbabwe is very teacher led .. factually based .. lots of memorisation.. .. in fact not much going away and reading for yourself and then writing something at all .. it is just very very circumscribed .. there's not much freedom of choice .. you know deciding or selecting something yourself as a student .. it isn't so much like teaching a subject .. its much more textbook and fact based

Zimbabwean Wye tutor

The heavy emphasis on presenting facts and describing situation was evident in different forms and appeared to be related to both past educational experience and present work practices:

> I don't know about other people but in me .. I've got this kind of memory .. a photographic memory .. I know exactly which part of the course .. this thing is from

Wye student

> at work .. my paperwork is things like land use planning .. I am planning this one .. you know how big is the land .. how many people are there .. gardens .. arable .. everything .. these go to the village chairperson or even the council .. then we have to write longer reports for them .. then we have early warning reports .. its a seasonal report .. so we are advising the government that we have got .. so many hectares planted to maize .. so many to tobacco

Wye student

Figure 18: Chart in Ministry office

```
Facts you know                          Areas of
you can use                             ignorance
                                        you can do
                                        something about

        ┌──────────────────┬──────────────────┐
        │                  │                  │
        │        A         │        B         │
        │                  │                  │
        │   Facts you know │   Facts you know │
        │   you know       │   you don't know │
        │                  │                  │
        ├──────────────────┼──────────────────┤
        │                  │                  │
        │        D         │        C         │
        │                  │                  │
        │   Facts you know │   Facts you      │
        │   but don't      │   don't know     │
        │   know you       │   you don't      │
        │   know           │   know           │
        │                  │                  │
        └──────────────────┴──────────────────┘

Facts you have but                      Areas of
could use more                          ignorance
                                        you need
                                        to develop
```
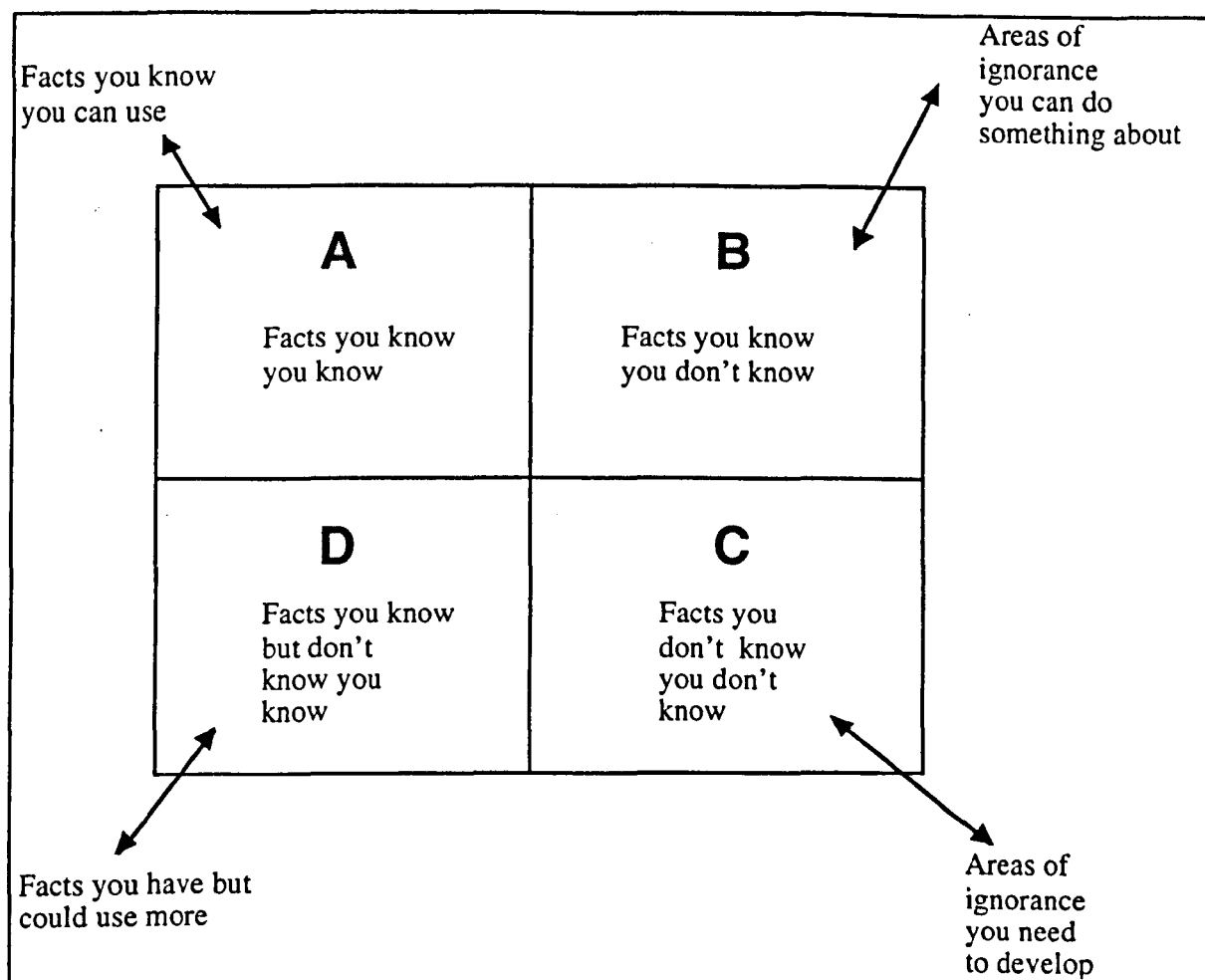
An analysis of the most frequently chosen questions among this group revealed an overall preference for questions which ask for definitions, mathematical calculations and analysis of given information.

This approach appears to create a clash between different **constructs of knowledge**, a hot topic in current literature (e.g. Scollon 1994; Pennycook 1996b). Where, for example, essays are perceived as a collection of faithfully reproduced and inherently correct facts, Western notions, of essays as an expressions of individual endeavour, of facts as inseparable from who has originally presented them and of plagiarism, appear pedantic.

what they are really saying .. you have memorised this .. stop copying .. but this is in the coursebook

but we are a group .. a study group .. at times they *(TMA's)* are not done individually ..
they could have been done through team work and so on

This appears to be a conflict between different discourses of the authorial self. Scollon
(1994:33) argues the original, creative, rational and individualistic authorial self expected in
UK academic writing represents a construct of a long dominant, Utilitarian ideology. This
unique, individual author who is the 'owner' of the text is at odds with both the
contemporary postmodernist stress on intertextuality (a greater appreciation of a 'more
diffused form of referencing') and the more collective notions of authorship and
responsibility typical of oral traditions, such as in Zimbabwe.

Within the oral tradition culture of Zimbabwe, **knowledge** exists within known limits rather
than being extensive and open to constant challenge and change. It possesses inherent
correctness and is something to be conserved and transmitted in tact from generation to
generation; **learning**, viewed as the ability to reproduce exactly what is taught in identical
form, manifests itself in the form of memorisation of facts and rules. The emphasis on detail
may very well lead to the more unifying principles being overlooked.

This tradition contrasts with, for example, UK traditions of presenting knowledge as
something that is not fixed or absolute but open to evaluation, criticism and contention. It
also clashes with contemporary, more critically orientated views of reading which promote
the view that 'good readers come to know the instability of meaning, by knowing what
bears upon the process by which meanings are made' - Jones, 1990:167. Graddol (1996:1),
extending on Myers (1989, 1990a, 1990b) also explores aspects of this but in an Indian
context by looking at hedging devices in English, shows how different notions about
knowledge can be revealed in a comparison of Open University and IGNOU[1] academic
learning texts.

The IGNOU texts showed a preference, for example, for factive verbs (implying the truth of
the statement which follows) such as **found** and **revealed** and the past tense ('which
contributes to facticity'). By contrast, the OUUK text showed a preference for non factive

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[1] Indira Ghandi National Open University, New Delhi, India.

verbs (suggesting that the truth of the following statement could be or is in question), such as **argues** and **suggests** and other parts of the modality system within English grammar such as modal auxiliaries (can, might, should, etc) or adverbial expressions (e.g. possibly, supposedly) which all modify or hedge the nature of a factual claim.

To the Zimbabwean students, where the goal of learning is the acquisition of the correct and authoritative point of view, could it be that 'developing discussion and argument - speculation, comparisons, evaluation, evidence - and developing an independent point of view' are 'seen as frivolous diversions which distract from the authoritative words of the teacher or tutor', (Dunbar, 1994:11)?

> .. in university if you stop lecturing and discuss something .. they think you are being a lousy lecturer .. you are not giving them the facts
>
> they don't want to be critical of other people .. that would be a traditional thing .. <> .. I think they'd be afraid to criticise someone <> .. you know like if you bring a exam question .. you make a statement and you ask them to discuss it .. probably the whole of the time they would write the essay to support it .. rather than actually have the guts to say at the beginning of the essay .. that's a really stupid statement
>
> *Zimbabwean Wye tutor*

And, in response to a the (postal) question **What do you consider to be your rights and responsibilities in terms of TMA writing?**

> >>My responsibilities as a student re TMA's is undoubtedly to express my understanding of the studies I will have gone through to my markers. I really do not feel I have any rights at this stage because ethically, I am a student and quite naturally I should have a teacher and it is only my adherence to the agreed relationship of tuition with respect that I should stick to.
>
> *Wye student*

Certainly a most striking feature was how little of the spirited articulateness of the students (as I think the quotes show) is reflected in their TMA writing. Perhaps this is natural - it takes practice and confidence to develop a distinctive writing voice which secedes from the conventional. Perhaps it suggests a competence in aural/verbal genres which might be tapped through different forms of assessment.

Another way this approach to learning appears to manifest itself is with difficulties in accepting a multiplicity of scholarly positions. In response to the (mock) tutor comment - **There is no one correct answer to this question. Try to be more experimental**

and bring in your own experiences and opinions - the student is genuinely

perplexed:

INF3:	this comment .. there is no one correct answer to this question .. this is discouraging..what do you think about this comment?
INF10:	its fair .. because what the examiner is saying=
INF3:	=its fair? how can you say its fair?
INF10:	he is saying you should argue .. you should be able to defend your line=
INF3:	=but he says there is no one correct answer to this question .. after you have put in such effort .. somebody is telling you there is no one correct answer?

It is this right/wrong propensity from the students which contributes to their repeated

requests for model answers. Wye's refusal to do so is bound up with wanting to signal that

in discursive essays no one answer is correct (and at the same time guard against plagiarism,

spoon-feeding, memorised answers). They explicitly state in their study guide (1996: 17),

'Note, however, that there is never only one way to write to produce a sound and relevant

answer'.

The right/wrong propensity also seems to account for the fact that essays on local projects

present difficulties (this quote also appears in chapter 11):

> there should not be so much weight on experience and local examples .. because you see
> you may not have the experience or the examples .. so you just regurgitate for academic
> purposes ..
> *Student*

12.3.3 A Zimbabwean fetish of credentialism

Another apparent factor (which underpins the traditional educational learning) is the

Zimbabwean **fetish of credentialism** (mentioned in the previous chapter) and which

leads to a cautiousness in terms of the way you write and what questions you choose. For

example, a 'popularity' analysis of exam and TMA questions revealed that students avoided

questions which one might think would be the **most** attractive on the grounds that they

deliberately give the student an opportunity to draw on their 'local' situation and experience

288

(e.g. You are the leader of a team designing a feasibility study for a project to improve village grain storage. What issues...?/ Describe a project with which you are familiar and..).

> if you are in the exam .. and you pick on a question like that .. if one particular figure refuses to come back into your memory .. you are completely off balance for the whole exam.. so better avoid it

> if I am correct in understanding .. in an exam situation .. that is a how long is a piece of string question

> in my case .. I would find it easy to avoid it .. it would be safer to work on a hypothetical situation and then draw all the data from Wye .. this would be more of trying to reproduce the text .. than trying to be imaginative .. because drawing on you own experience .. I don't have yet the confidence to put that imagination down

> everybody reverts to a traditional mode when it gets to the exams

There is also a distinct, wait-for-power game being played out which centres around the notion that the place for individual expression is not **during** the course but **after** and until then, it pays to adopt a pragmatic, play-by-the-rules route. Here, for example, are various responses from the students to contentious (mock) student quotes which explicitly criticise aspects of the Wye course:

> we feel he wasn't very cooperative because we have to comply with the standards being set by the college .. those are the rules of the game .. OK they are difficult .. but you just have to do it

> if I want to pass.. I will be a **very** obedient .. get my paper .. then I have got the principles .. then after **that** I can come back and .. can rewrite all of the books .. I am now a recognised scientist .. I can get into organisations .. trace people .. write papers .. you know all presentations .. and say to the world respect me

> there's a lot of politics in there .. if I am going to be a Wye student it does not help me at all to discuss my politics in a different manner .. in which Wye is giving me guidelines ..you see .. and I expect to pass from Wye .. it just won't make sense .. so it is good to be some discipline
> I think for academic purposes .. we will be very obedient and then when you've passed you can [v-sign gesture] [everyone laughs] .. you tow the line until a certain point.. and after that we do our own thing

> >>there just should be a clear dividing line between students (learning) and the cultural and political 'safedom' of practising professionals (after qualifications)

This last point suggests that in Zimbabwe it is not until you have reached a certain status that you have the right or power to criticise and that professional status bestows upon you a certain right and unassailability.

Another point that emerged was that credentialism was not synonymous with western

notions of individualism and competitiveness. The collective nature of the group, bordering sometimes on solidarity, was a dominant and striking feature of my visit (this has also been discussed in the research methodology chapter). This manifested itself in a variety of ways, for example, in terms of the way they operated in group discussions with constantly finishing off each others sentences, background affirming of the speakers' points, the continuous use of the subjective 'we'. The importance of solidarity seemed so overriding that the, admittedly few, disagreements within the group were presented in the plenary as collective decisions or reformulated at the time:

> you are right .. I think I had been overstating that point

Also, to re-use an earlier quote, the feeling of solidarity in the middle of scarcity was a recurrent theme:

> we need to take care of the others coming behind us ..

This also manifested itself in old students returning to help out on the course as voluntary study groups leaders. Perhaps it was the importance of this solidarity combined with the high value placed on 'elders' and work status that, at times, created a discernible tension between the older and younger students. The younger students achieved the highest exam marks in first year exams (announced shortly before my visit) and one in particular was outstanding. However, his age, rather than his exam prowess, meant that he often found it difficult to hold the floor; he was very often cut across, corrected and undermined when he assumed the (rotating) chairman role.

The general propensity for solidarity was a striking and emergent feature of the workshop sessions but might have had the effect of hiding individual dissent. By way of acknowledging this, I issued a personalised letter to all the group participants at the outset of the workshop sessions, inviting them to write down individual comments about the course or individual problems (this is also covered in the research methodology chapter). I also put aside time between and after the sessions for individual talks. This was not taken up - one student did appear but had been sent by the group to ask me to join them for coffee instead.

290

Given more time, I would have built in more time for individual talk, particularly after group sessions but this was not feasible in the time. I doubt, however, that this would have yielded much return. As I discussed earlier in the research methodology chapter, the students appeared to feel freer to discuss their worries in a group rather than on an individual basis. This propensity opened up to me the contingency of taken-for-granted research methods such as 'individual interviewing'. We seem to take for granted a confessional-mode familiarity in our dealings with many people and assume that a bit of sleight-of-hand buttering up will set free our informants' innermost thoughts.

So far, it appears that the implicit expectations and assumptions tutors make about academic writing are misplaced and at odds with dominant Zimbabwean social practices around texts and writing. I shall now continue this line of enquiry with a more in-depth analysis of one of the Wye essays.

12.3.4 Analysis of argumentative writing: SAIL framework

Using the SAIL framework for **argument**, I analysed nine essays of one question from the end of year exam[1]. I stress here that I have not adopted this framework because I believe it shows the only 'right' way of writing argument. However, since it is an unusually comprehensive, criterion-referenced marking scheme which has also been used on a large-scale, public level (e.g. for UK national examination purposes), it appears to go some way towards articulating explicitly what are common but often implicit UK general expectations about academic literacy. I felt the comprehensive series of 'indicators' at different levels of the text - rhetorical, local and formal - might give me a window on some of the inexplicit expectations which lay behind the general impression marking of UK TMA tutors and particularly where high marks on both the TMA and SAIL framework corresponded in the detail.

The essay was chosen on the basis of a 'popularity' analysis of exam questions. This essay was popular, attracting 90% (n9) of the students (as opposed to an average of 40% per question) and gave me the largest accessible sample. An exam question was selected over a TMA because it became apparent that TMA's were sometimes group written, copied wholesale or adapted from similar TMA's from earlier years and had therefore had the benefit of several year's worth of tutor feedback.

The essay, a recurrent question type in past TMA's and exams (but applied to different content areas), asks the students to argue why some particular economic policy or factor is important. The following 3 tables chart the SAIL analysis at three different levels - the global, local and formal (chapter 8 for fuller discussion of the SAIL framework and Appendix 6 for marking scheme).

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[1] A confidentiality contract with Wye precludes me from giving the exact exam question, the paper or year.

12.3.5 Analysis of argument essay: global level

The global (or rhetorical) level of text describes the overall communicative effect of the entire text and the indicators centre on whether the writer has achieved a focus, use and organisation of information appropriate to an argumentative piece of writing.

Table 19: Global level of text: SAIL scoring of students on each of the eight argument indicators

Candidate	FG1	UG2	OG3	FG4	UG5	UG6	OG7	OG8
A	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	4
B	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	4
C	3	2	2	2	2	1	3	2
D	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	2
E	3	4	4	2	3	1	4	4
F	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
G	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	3
H	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
I	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3
J	3	3	2	3	2	1	4	2
OVERALL SCORING								
Code 1 (n)	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0
Code 2 (n)	0	3	8	5	4	5	2	4
Code 3 (n)	9	4	0	4	5	0	5	2
Code 4 (n)	0	11	1	-	-	-	2	3
Median code	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3

For ease of reading, the following provides a short explanation of the table coding:

FG = Focus at Global level of text
UG = Use at Global level of text
OG = Organisation at Global level of text

The candidates have been assigned letters to ensure anonymity. 9 of 10 students completed the essay. Each essay was marked using the SAIL coding. Numbers rather than percentages are used due to the small sample. The precise indicators of coding appear in appendix 6 but for immediate use here the differences between the codes could be generally described as:

Code 1 - student uses successful strategies to achieve this particular aspect of writing
Code 2 - employs some strategies to achieve this aspect
Code 3 - employs very few strategies
Code 4/5 (where they exist) - employs no strategies at all

293

Focus (FG1 & FG4) - An argumentative essay usually requires the writer to focus on the **reader** in such a way that they are engaged in a debate around the subject and/or convinced of the integrity of the argument. Characteristic linguistic devices might include phrases which covertly implicate the readers in the argument (obviously, it is clear that, we can see) and show that the focus of the writer is on the reader and anticipating likely arguments and counterarguments.

As the table shows, none of the students employed strategies which successfully attempted to engage the reader in an overall argument but instead focused entirely on the subject matter. FG4, focusing specifically on strategies to elicit reader agreement, revealed that attempts to address the reader (either explicitly or by implication) were either thin on the ground or non-existent.

Use (UG2, UG5, UG6) - In written argument, writing is usually used to contribute to the overall building of a case (UG2). This is achieved by making claims, examining or evaluating them and showing the connection between the claims and relevant data. Writers have to adopt the role of both writer and reader, establishing their own claims and anticipating any counter-claims (UG5). They must draw on various sources or evidence to establish the grounds for their claims (UG6). In general, only one writer mounted 'a case' at all in which information is used for the purpose of examining the strength of claims. The majority of writing here was either descriptive or explanatory where claims were made but their worthiness as claims left largely unexplored. What is particularly clear is that these students have wide experience in their field; they identify different sources for evidence but instead of grouping the information to correspond to various stages of an argument, they tend to **describe** the evidence (in loosely connected groups of information) only rather than invoke it to assist in an argument.

Organisation (OG3, OG7, OG8) - This category centres on the overall way information is ordered and grouped in the text so that together it combines to support the development of an argument; this might, for example, include 'causation' or 'classification' language (OG3, OG7). Topic statements tend to mark the dividing points between stages of

an argument. In the majority of essays, information was organised by associating ideas to one common theme rather than combining to provide overall support for central claims. The organisational logic behind the essays tended to be groups of information, the connection between which was unclear and rarely signalled by orientating topic sentences.

12.3.6 Analysis of argument essay: local level

The local level is concerned with how information is related across sentences.

Table 20: Local level of text: SAIL scoring of students on each of the six argument indicators

	FL1	*OL2*	*UL3*	*OL4*	*OL5*	*0L6*
A	1	2	2	2	1	2
B	1	2	2	2	2	2
C	1	2	1	2	2	2
D	1	2	2	2	2	2
E	1	2	2	2	2	2
F	1	1	1	2	1	2
G	1	2	2	2	2	2
H	-	-	-	-	-	-
I	1	2	2	2	2	2
J	1	2	1	2	2	2
OVERALL SCORING						
Code 1	9	1	3	0	2	1
Code 2	0	8	6	9	7	8
Code 3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Code 4	-	-	-	-	-	0
Median code	1	2	2	2	2	2

FL = Focus at the local level of text
UL = Use at the local level of text
OL = Organisation at the local level of text

Focus (FL1): the usual expectation, when focusing on the reader, is that a writer of argument is addressing a wide audience rather than a particular individual and is attempting to present a case by collating a formal, distanced overview from disparate pieces of information. For this the expectation is that of a distanced formal style and one avoids using the first person pronoun. All of the students avoided this but nevertheless the general style of the writing was informal and conversational.

Use (UL3): UL3: this relates to the way information is used across sentences and in an argument information is brought in for examination. As a result, characteristic sentence relations, such as condition-consequence, reason-result, concession-contra expectation, come into play. Condition-consequence would involve the setting up of a hypothetical

296

situation in one sentence and then stating its outcome in the subsequent one. In reason-result, a statement given in one sentence is deducible from the evidence given in a earlier sentence. In the case-study group of essays relations of condition-consequence, reason-result and concession-contra expectation are apparent in parts of the essay but not throughout.

Organisation (OL2, OL4, OL5, OL6):

Characteristically in argument, writers link sentences in an hierarchical way by signalling their function as, for example, grounds, conditions, conclusion or consequences (OL2/OL4). Writers often signal these relations between sentences to their readers by means of markers of causality (e.g. 'it follows that', 'for this reason') and causal ('therefore', 'consequently') or adversative ('by contrast', 'nevertheless') conjunctions. Only occasional markers of causality are apparent in the majority of scripts and where conjunctions are used there is a heavy reliance on one or two simple types. OL5 relates to the way that texts - written or spoken - are naturally abbreviative and assumptive and have an internal cohesion. For example, the writer will assume that it is unnecessary to reiterate references or information introduced earlier in a text and will assume an abbreviated reference to them will suffice. This is achieved largely by cohesive links such as substitution (e.g. an initial long description of something is subsequently referred to as 'it') and ellipsis (or the elimination of redundant words). Well-handled, cohesive links create an advanced form of organisation; without them, the connective logic within a text - particularly important for an argument - becomes difficult to follow. In the majority of the essays, there is an occasional use of substitution or ellipsis. Generally, it could be said that the brevity and clarity with which good writers establish points and then link with earlier or later references is absent. OL6 refers to the way that writers of argument establish and produce writing with a recognisable group structure with information ordered in such a way - often by abstract associations - to provide a thematic backbone to the writing. In these essays, the information is grouped but the association between the grouping is often unclear. The overall impression is that of disparate groups of information clumped together but with no overall articulated cohesion.

12.3.7 Analysis of argument essay: formal level

The formal level is concerned with syntactic choices at sentence level and precision and accuracy at word level.

Table 21: Formal accuracy level of text: SAIL scoring of students on each of the six argument indicators

	FA1	*OA2*	*OA3*	*OA4*	*UA4*	*OA6*	*OA7*	*FA8*
A	1	3	2	3	2	1	3	3
B	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
C	1	3	2	3	2	2	2	5
D	1	3	2	3	3	2	2	3
E	2(long)	3	3	3	3	2	3	5
F	1	3	2	3	1	1	2	3
G	2(long)	3	3	3	3	2	4	5
H	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
I	1	3	2	3	2	2	4	5
J	1	3	2	3	2	1	2	3
OVERALL SCORING								
Code 1	7	0	0	0	1	3	0	0
Code 2	2	0	6	0	4	6	4	0
Code 3	-	9	3	9	4	0	3	5
Code 4	-	0	-	0	-	0	2	0
Code 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Median code	1	3	2	3	2	2	3	3

FA = Focus at the accuracy level of text
UA = Use at the accuracy level of text
OA = Organisation at the accuracy level of text

Focus (FA1, FA8): Most of the writing was long enough and all were legible. Minor drafting of essays was apparent in some (usually brief notes on pockets of information but not referring to the line of argument); otherwise there was no drafting at all.

Use (UA4): This refers to the use of abstract vocabulary (or summarising or extrapolating a general concept from particular instances). Nominalisations (where simple verbs and adjectives are transformed into nouns carrying abstract meanings) convey some of the 'impersonality' of academic language because verbs, in the process of becoming nominalised concepts, have become freed of their agents. Here only one student used abstract vocabulary throughout the script with the rest generally using it only minimally or in sections of the

298

script.

Organisation (OA2, OA3, OA4, OA6, OA7): In general, advanced forms of sentences were used but without much use of embedded subordination (OA2). Often in argument, linguistic strategies such as rhetorical questions and hypothetical sentences ('if it were the case that') are employed to involve the reader in the argument and anticipate a readers query. Generally, the essay showed that these devices were evident though not used widely. All the essays showed an overall control of punctuation but within-sentence punctuation (semi-colons, colons, dashes) were not used at all (OA4). There was minimal inaccuracy with spelling (OA6). Most of the essays used common words rather than complex words with prefixes and suffixes. None of the essays were divided in such a way that the paragraphs had clear communicative functions other than providing factual descriptions. Divisions were generally made within the texts although a few of the essays had no divisions at all.

12.3.8 Summarising comments from SAIL analysis

The SAIL analysis suggests that student difficulties emerge at all three levels but most noticeably at the global (rhetorical level) of text which is concerned with the communicative effect of the entire text. Students fall into telling us all they know about a topic in a linear, uni-structural manner and appear to be generating ideas as they go along rather than following a reader-orientated, logical 'building a case' structure, the organisation and order of which is grouped around unifying, overall abstract concepts. In particular, this sells short the students' own evident experience of the field. This clearly gives further weight to the earlier observations about social predispositions in writing.

The local level reveals that although students have picked up the idea of the 'objective' writer stance (in the avoidance of first person pronoun), other aspects of this type of writing (such as passivity, nominalisation and modality) which commonly contribute to the impression of 'objectivity' are rarely used by the students. These local level differences appear to be related to the sociocultural notions about knowledge rather than language deficits. Of course, it can be argued that such assumptions about writing (avoiding the 1st person, use of passives, nominalise, etc) are questionable. I adopt the view that it is important to know what mainstream assumptions about writing are, if only to reject them. You may wish to flout them, but if you are to be taken seriously within a profession, then you need to be able to flout them *knowingly*. Wye does touch on them but only in a cursory manner and without explanation:

> The convention with essay writing is that it is written in the third person, that is, not personalised. Your should **not** say, for example:
>
> 'I think that the standards of organic agriculture form a good basis for sustainable agricultural systems', but 'There is sound argument for the view that the standard of organic agriculture form a good basis for sustainable agricultural systems'.
>
> *Wye College External Programme Study Guide, pg. 17*

The formal level illustrates few major difficulties but points to a lack of experience and maturity in writing particularly in terms of lack of control over advanced forms of sentence structure and in-sentence punctuation. The lack of diverse and abstract vocabulary might

indicate that students did not read a variety of more specialised texts.

It is worth here briefly tackling questions about the validity of the framework. Its main drawback is that it is a **general** framework for examining essays in a **range** of subjects rather than for the examination of written genres characteristic to certain **disciplines**; neither does it account for mixed genres within an essay. For example, in the Wye essays the distinction between argument and analysis becomes blurred. The danger of frameworks, reflected in some pedagogical applications of genre analyses (Derewianka 1990, Martin 1985), is to think in terms of fixed text types. For these reasons, I acknowledge it is limited. What is required is further discipline specific research - such as an in-depth analysis of a range of essays, course objectives, analysis of course materials - to develop an in-depth awareness for discipline-specific generic types of writing with, say, characteristic combinations of focus, use and organisation at the three different levels of text.

However, I would argue that the comprehensiveness of the SAIL framework with its different levels (global, local, formal) and three dominant features (focus, use and organisation) provides, in the detail of the indicators, not only a systematic diagnostic tool for analysing writing but more importantly helps us to see explicitly some of the inexplicit criteria UK essay markers use. In a larger research project, I would have followed this up by exploring this area more with the Wye tutors and mapping out some of the marking criteria they use.

Other sources contribute to a confidence in the framework: for example, my findings (under each indicator) also correspond closely with those of Johnson's (1994) who undertook earlier research with SAIL in Zimbabwe at a Teacher Training College; similarly, the SAIL indicators corresponded, overall, with the marking of the Wye tutors. That is to say, the three candidates who, under SAIL, consistently attained high levels of achievement on the different indicators were also the same three candidates who achieved high marking exam results (from impressionist marking).

While on this subject of exam results, it is interesting that these show no direct relationship between educational background and exam results; that is to say, the candidates with

graduate backgrounds have scored lower than the non-graduate candidates. It is obviously too small a sample to show statistical significance but one could speculate that that the non-graduate candidates might be more open to new educational approaches and are less set in their study practices that the graduate candidates. The older candidates have, on the whole, scored significantly lower than the younger candidates. This may reflect difficulties of returning to study after a long gap, more family commitments and pressure on time, particularly since they tend to occupy more senior positions at work. On the whole, those candidates with lower professional status have scored more highly than the higher status candidates.

12.4 TMA feedback as a source for developing writing

In addition to the practice of writing TMA's, tutors appear to assume that learners will pick up how to write from TMA feedback and I shall now turn to whether or not this is confirmed in the data. In general, the students valued the detailed and exacting TMA feedback from the Wye tutors very highly.

> I have had pretty positive feedback from the students particularly on research comments ..
> how well they do get marked .. they might get two or three pages of comments ..
>
> *Local level tutor*

> >>I would not wish for more. The markers are very encouraging. Without their support
> some of us would have been a Wye College drop out statistic!! With their encouragement
> some of us will battle till the end. Aluta Continua.

> what we noticed here .. what comes out very clear was that the tutors want to encourage ..
> the student and they want to test your understanding .. what we noticed again .. they criticise
> without discouraging .. they state very good satisfactory or whatever and they don't give an
> actual mark like ten percent or fifty percent .. that want to criticise but at the same time
> encourage

> >>Feedback quality is to my feeling polite without being misleading (humanly) and very
> tactifully *(sic)* expressed towards additions and omitions *(sic)* I will have made, clearly
> showing me the right things I should have expressed without it (the feedback) loosing its
> personality respect for me, my effort and indeed very encouraging in summary which enables
> me to feel a physical relationship with my tutor and the programme.
>
> *Various Wye students*

Inevitably, some problematic areas emerge. For example, we find, again, the same difficulties about expectations from the students of right/wrong, fixed meaning answers and of detailed correction come up against a more general, overall commenting approach by the UK tutors. Certain polarities repeatedly present themselves - detail v overall principles, correct v appropriate, fixed meanings v argued meanings. There are also differences around the nature of clarity and directness. This perhaps is more to do with the social practices of DE tutors, who, because DE is so enmeshed with open access discourses, have a tendency towards encouraging, diplomatic commenting. Although clearly valued by the students, it can create confusion, as the following two extracts from students' discussions exemplify:

Pedagogy aside, there are also the occasional content mismatches in TMA feedback:

>>Although generally I go along with the marker comments I feel that the marker is not aware of the third world/developing countries' situations. What is the norm in developed countries is not in the developing countries E.G. it is the norm for couples in Developed Countries to discuss their salaries it may be taboo to discuss the husband's income in some African families - the wife may not know how much her husband earns!

From student written questionnaire

Nevertheless, to summarise this section, the impression is that the students' overriding appreciation of the UK feedback confirms its importance and existing quality. Wye's refusal

to supply a model answer is understandable but at the same time the students appear to want and need a less ad-hoc approach to writing development than the current feedback system supplies. The students and local tutors view of 'ideal' feedback points the way:

> you know when they say critically assess .. one would say OK you have go into it .. but how do I make myself very critical? .. so something .. it does not need to be only a model answer .. but something . .that gives you guidance to say OK that is how one tackles such a type of question .. that would be ideal

> immediately where it was spotted .. refer to where .. the language was not properly use .. instead of commenting at the end and saying you are not scientific ..
>
> *Wye students*

> you need to have some questions in there .. discuss critically and then make sure the tutor who is marking it really does teach them how to discuss something critically
>
> *Zimbabwe Wye tutor*

What emerges from this section is the impression of a need for a more coherent policy about feedback and by this I am not suggesting a fixed format (since I believe difference between tutors, in terms of approach and focus, should be valued and protected). Generally, the present ad-hoc, individualised nature of the feedback seems to be successful but there also appears to be the need for a more overall, systematic approach and one that takes on board language and academic literacy issues. To English language teachers working within mainstream universities and providing a support service for overseas students, this is perhaps taken-for-granted and seen purely as a question of resources. In distance education institutions and departments, however, no comparable support system exists. The need has to be established and fought for. The convergence between mainstream and distance education teaching is helping this process but a lot of DE courses in dual-mode institutions are ad-hoc growth areas in different subject areas and without a institution-wide policy. Open University, generally considered at the cutting edge of DE research and student support, have only recently begun to think about textual support strategies to help students develop an appreciation of academic literacy.

This suggests the need for **both** content **and** writing focused feedback and that even though the two roles are interrelated (in terms of language and modes of analysis), the present system, with its focus mainly on content, obscures the importance of writing development and its contribution to the conceptualisation of content. This would appear to point to

the need for a subject specialist, 'pedagogical adviser'/instructional designer who, working closely with and alongside the subject specialist, tacks on additional individual TMA feedback to the students but also, by taking an overview of students TMA's as a whole, can construct a more systematic academic literacy syllabus which can be interwoven into the course itself and, where identifiable, on a just-in-time, point-of-need basis. For example, leading up the TMA and/or around the TMA itself.

At the moment, tutors are concentrated on individual feedback on specific content areas and there seems to be the need for an overall pedagogical coordinator, working in close liaison with the tutors, and focused on the overview.

> they do have some person that they send all the units for editing ..<> when they talk about editing .. they're correcting grammar .. they are not actually saying ..you know .. in the research course .. I think you should put the ideas this way round .. and do you realise you are confusing them if you put them this way round and not the other way round .. there has never been that sort of editing
>
> *Wye tutor in Zimbabwe*

As a last point, in terms of helping course producers clarify their role and syllabus objectives, the students' desire for additional support is clearly not just a short-term measure.

> sometimes we are called upon to write a paper .. so if you stand .. if your presentation isn't very good .. its very difficult .. they say this guy has completed the Wye College but he cannot express .. he cannot put things down correctly and argue his case ..

An additional academic literacy component to the course would contribute to the students' long-term professional development and towards helping and preparing them for more public forum exposure.

12.5 Course materials as a source for developing writing

Tutors also assume that the actual course materials will provide examples of typical academic writing which might feed into the development of the students' own academic writing.

12.5.1 Characteristics of Wye instructional design

One of the striking characteristics about the printed course materials from Wye is that they, in themselves, exhibit a very limited range of both text-genres and graphic illustrations. Although this limited range is probably partly attributable to a cost-cutting rationale (i.e. mainly simple word processing), it is also part of a deliberate 'straightforward and simple' instructional design (or housestyle) - Smith & Morris (1995), A writers' guide to distance learning, Wye College External Programme.

For example, each unit follows a 'relatively simple format' throughout and is made up of different components - a statement of objectives at the start of each unit, summaries, headings, varied text (short blocks of text, broken up by headings, bold type, a variety of tasks and questions, boxed examples, bullet points, visual aids and summaries).

12.5.2 Traditional DE instructional design

The rationale behind this standardised layout is apparently to provide a reassuringly familiar (and therefore 'accessible'), format to the students. This approach to DE instructional design has a long and enduring tradition. For example, an earlier research project (mentioned in chapter 1) found that this format was characteristic, to the point of uniformity, in a large range DE materials from eleven (developing or highly industrial) countries and also in my mini-survey of good practice guidelines. In other words, this format is widely 'naturalised' in DE design to such an extent that there is a tendency for writers to adopt it as if comes with the territory of distance education. West (1996:62-72), for example, analyses and categorises this format into 7 different characteristic DE text types (see Appendix 9).

I stress this is a **tendency**, but one that Open University, Milton Keynes, for example, seems to have largely abandoned. I would counterargue, however, that OU writers

are not typical of DE writers in general because they are at the cutting edge of DE (including instructional design), have a well-oiled, dedicated institutional machinery to serve those purposes, an accumulated body of experience, and a tradition and expectation of renewal (professional development of staff and continuous revision of materials). In this, I would argue, they, are atypical. They have defined the DE territory and are therefore in the (privileged) position to flout the conventions that they have established. Institutions new to DE, however, do not have this confidence, the lead production time, the technology or the experience and, as a result, I believe, can slavishly follow models to such an extent that they become enshrined as fossilised techniques.

12.5.3 DE instructional design as a source of difficulty

This characteristic formatting raises the question about whether DE course materials, intentionally authored and edited to serve pedagogic ends, become, in that process, such unique and over-structured texts that they inadvertently become a source of difficulty in themselves. Two aspects emerge as particularly relevant to the Zimbabwe context.

Jeffcoate (1981:76) drew attention to one aspect in his interesting article - 'Why can't a unit be more like a book?', when he identified how the pressures towards academic and stylistic conformity in DE institutions and their typical writing-by-committee process can produce an over-edited, seamless, almost authorless text. 'The net result is that, in the interests of excluding anything which might be construed as polemical, tendentious or flamboyant, academic nervousness and stylistic anonymity prevail'. One strand of his argument here is that the DE format owes more to production values than to pedagogical values. Another is that the very seamlessness of the texts, written by a **team** of different writers but communicating with the students as if **one** tutor-in-print, shifts the reader's attention away from the multi-authored, socially constructed nature of texts, away from a 'critical' reading of text. It could be argued that this 'colludes' in encouraging an overly reverential attitude to text, a propensity which is already well-developed in these students. An alternative approach would involve the more **overt** identification of authors (examples of which will appear in the final recommendation chapter).

308

Another aspect is that the format imposes a textual and stylistic straitjacket on the materials that severely limits their potential as a rich pedagogic resource; if the style and format of DE writing is too much of a specialist text type, it does not provide students with exposure to a range of text types, genres, layout, registers, graphics, whether they 'authentic'[1] or not. In other words, textual variety is a particular casualty of traditional DE instructional design.

An instructional design which incorporates a textual range as a characteristic of the input simultaneously becomes a rich resource which could potentially contribute to the general development of academic literacy. If, for example, the producers used different types of argumentative writing in parts of the input, this might contribute to a broader, indirect raising of awareness of how written argument works in their discipline. By adopting a pedagogy which deliberately plays on the close relationship between reading and writing, a natural scaffolding, students could learn about genres of writing on the basis of examples set before them.

Such varied text could simultaneously be exploited to serve other more specific and direct pedagogic purposes. For example, comments about the input text in the margins (what West calls co-text) might provide in-context glosses and definitions or draw attention to particular linguistic points, that have emerged as repeated difficulties in TMA's and student feedback. Boxed text (or 'hypertext') after the input could expand in depth on a margin point.

Bearing in mind the students articulated need for models, the potential of this resource appears to be too significant to be obscured by traditional DE instructional design. To reiterate an earlier point, it seems that print-centred DE materials carry a special burden of responsibility if they are destined for use in countries where it is likely that (often rurally-based) students will have a limited access and exposure to varieties of text at work and home and probably will have done so for most of their educational background.

That responsibility becomes even clearer when, in fact, the course actually **demands** of those same students the ability to write in a wide variety of genres. One responsibility might

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[1] such as newspaper articles

be to compensate for a local lack of sources by ensuring that the print environment of the DE materials themselves are varied in themselves and offer exposure to different varieties, genres, registers and types of reading materials; that this could contribute to a broad aim of general development of academic reading and writing, the latter by means of providing examples of different types of writing from which the student-writers can learn.

12.6 Emerging implications

The analysis in this chapter has only touched on the research questions in a speculative manner. Since genre analysis is worthy of a PhD itself, it was inevitable that I could not research extensively or rigorously enough to present a balanced and widely-informed overview of the area. The genre analysis here is at a crude level. What is required is further larger-scale and more in-depth research of the students' essays, over a period of time and with further exploration of writing practices within tertiary level Zimbabwean institutions. This needs to be matched by a greater understanding of the tutors' views and marking criteria as well as in-depth discipline-specific genre analysis.

The analysis must therefore be treated with caution and seen as a simple look at a complex area and hopefully a first step to more systematic and in-depth research. Nevertheless, just this simple look provides food for thought and suggests that, for these busy working students, some of the difficulties created around writing practices are far more than lack of time or recent experience but owe more to fundamentally different social practices to those implicit in UK produced pedagogies.

Course producers appear to make a variety of assumptions about their learners and learning but in particular that their apprentice economists will 'pick up' the language, modes of analysis and writing expectations of the discipline during the course from three, **indirect** sources - the process of writing TMA's, TMA feedback and the actual course materials. The small amount of data produced here reveals that each of these three can be a source of difficulty. The course also appears to make very heavy writing demands on unpractised writers and the taken-for granted social practices in UK academic literacy create difficulties in

310

a Zimbabwean context. These difficulties appear to be related to differences in constructs of knowledge, of learning, of authorship but seem to be obscured and therefore unacknowledged. The UK producers, for example, appear to underestimate or be unaware of both those demands and difficulties. This seems to stem from a UK 'sink or swim' tradition in higher education in which subjects specialists disclaim responsibility for the linguistic and writing implications of their subject areas. For the Zimbabwean students, a marked fetish of credentialism in Zimbabwe and the expectation of a heavily, teacher-led relationship appears to result in difficulties remaining unexplored.

The feedback, though highly valued by these students, appears, from the small set of data here, to be not as transparent or consistent as the tutors assume; it appears to be focused mainly on content while avoiding the writing implications of content. The course materials in this module are so heavy formatted in the traditional DE instructional design that they do not, in themselves, provide a text-rich environment. Their value as a potential resource of textual varieties to the students is limited. Although DE academic texts appear to be the result of team-writing, the course is mediated to the students through one omnipresent, tutor-in-print voice. There is a potential danger that this constructed voice undermines a 'critical' reading by disguising the socially constructed and multi-authored nature of texts.

If, with further research, these findings are found to be trustworthy, then there would be a case for a shift away from an ad-hoc approach to writing development towards a far more coherent framework for supporting the development of discipline-specific academic writing. Support might take the following form:

New **discipline specific** study skill support throughout the course and serving different strategies:

1. Pre-course induction with general introduction to return to study (essay questions types, time organisation).

2. A particular concentration of support at the beginning of the course.

3. Discipline and text specific study skills support interwoven throughout the

course.

Pedagogical strategies could include:

- **direct**, point-of-need support in the form of boxed text, TMA wrap-around materials (e.g. skeleton plans), marginalia drawing attention to different points about the texts at a global, local and formal level of genre type.

- **indirect**, support in the form of a text and graphic-rich instructional design which could help students, on the basis of the examples set before them, to gain more awareness of UK writing conventions

The instructional design could encourage the identification of DE writers rather than subsuming them all under the omni-present tutor-in-print voice: This could be achieved by, for example:

- a shift towards a more explicitly resource-based course composed of a collection of individually authored articles, readings, essays with the friendly tutor located in an accompanying student guidebook which contains all the overt pedagogy, instructions, administration

- an increase in different identifiable 'voices' within the text such as the main tutor-in-print, a more content-distanced study skills voice critically commenting on the input text in the marginalia or boxed texts and with a focus on critical language awareness

- as a prelude to particular reading or units, course authors could introduce themselves and the background influences on their work and provide an overview of the reading itself

The range of the overall framework suggests the need for a co-ordinating pedagogical editor who, on the basis of consultation/research with tutors and students, could sink into the course, a discipline-specific academic literacy development agenda which serves the immediate demands of the course but which also has a broader developmental role of helping to prepare these students for the demands of the public forum presentations. The suggestion

is that before they can do that, the Wye tutors themselves need to develop a greater awareness, while teaching within the British academic tradition, that it is not the only intellectual or pedagogic tradition.

12.7 Close

We now move to the last data analysis chapter which is focused on the way gender issues emerge as a significant factor in the course and challenge the course producer to incorporates it in a principled pedagogy.

Chapter 13 - A print-centred learning context: Gender

13.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the emphases that gender gives rise to in this Zimbabwean learning context and consider whether the social and cultural significance of gender need, in some way, to be taken into account in the pedagogic principles of the print-centred course. The underlying research question - Are the teaching structures and materials of the course 'women friendly' in content and pedagogy? - informs the chapter.

My data analysis is informed by Kirkup's (1990, 1996, 1997) three different conceptual models of equal opportunities - liberal, legal and radical - as discussed in chapter 5. As a prelude to this, I will start with a brief background discussion about gender in Zimbabwe.

13.2 Gender in Zimbabwe

Gender, as an aspect of inequality and difference, was an inescapably prominent factor during the Zimbabwean field study and manifested itself as a recurrent tension between the 'traditional' gender roles and the 'modern' civil service rhetoric on gender.

To reiterate an earlier point, despite the ZANU (PF) government's stated commitment to achieving gender equity, few significant changes have occurred in the years since Independence to redress entrenched gender inequalities in education.

> Pre-independence policies .. (remain) .. a very strong factor in influencing ... post independence policy changes .. More ... (has been) ...achieved enunciating new statements or in perfecting change in rhetoric than in implementing or institutionalising change
>
> *Maravanyika, 1990*

Gordon (1994:131), for example, argues that the 'patriarchal racist settler colonialism impacting upon indigenous pre-industrial patriarchal societies' has informed 'gendered and male-protecting' educational policies and practices in post-colonial Zimbabwe. She argues that although emancipatory postcolonial policies (which emphasised equity and development)

resulted in greater numbers of women having education in lower levels, the social and economic constraints faced by black Zimbabwean women in education have ensured that the majority of Zimbabwean women have remained peasant farmers. At secondary level, Gordon underlines some stark realities:

- fewer girls than boys make the transition from primary school

- female drop-out rates increase the higher up the secondary school

- girls are directed to feminine subjects while mathematics, science, technical and vocational subjects are perceived as 'masculine' ('this includes agricultural science, despite the fact that more women than men in Zimbabwe are involved in agriculture', op cit:135).

- fewer schoolgirls pass O level examinations particularly in mathematics and science and as a consequence fewer make the transition to A level and tertiary level.

This last point is particularly pertinent to the case-study women students. Women agricultural extension officers on the course are thin on the ground in Zimbabwe and have reached their position against considerable odds. Women are still a minority at technical and vocational institutions and in university. At the University of Zimbabwe, the ratio of women to men students (1:3) has remained the same since independence and they tend to be concentrated in arts, law, education and commerce but grossly underrepresented in the science and engineering programmes. In technical colleges, women constitute less than 2% of students and in vocational colleges, women are concentrated in business and secretarial programmes.

The immediate future does not hold out much hope for an improvement. The gender imbalance in education has become increasingly entrenched since 1989, when the Zimbabwean government adopted a programme of economic structural adjustment (ESAP). This programme includes trade liberalisation, cuts in state funding of education and health, removal of price controls and government subsidies on basic commodities. Although these

316

macro-economic policies seem gender neutral, there is growing recognition that the impact of austerity programmes is gender differentiated (World Bank 1992; Zuckerman 1989). For example, a reduction in access to employment and limitations on access to health and education services impact disproportionately on women, place greater burdens on their time and labour and severe constraints in relation to education. ESAP has prompted changes in the education policy such as:

- the re-introduction of school and examination fees

- the dropping of commercial subjects at Junior Certificate Examination

- the expansion of the productive informal sector (in which 64% are women occupied in low-skill, low-capital intensive activities such food and vegetable selling and garment making).

These changes are likely to ensure that women continue to occupy the same cheap labour, low-skill positions in the informal sector in the future.

13.3 The liberal concept of equal opportunities in ODL

The following responses reinforce the emancipatory rhetoric, so naturalised in ODL (about widening access, equalising participation and redressing educational disadvantage) and which contribute to the commonly held view that ODL is a type of education particularly suited to women students and to the advancement of equal opportunities (EO); that 'flexible' learning in a domestic setting is well suited to working women with domestic responsibilities.

> ==oh well this is great for them .. because they've got the flexibility .. I mean it **should** be the people it's helping most because they're the ones who are **least** able to go overseas on a course
>
> *Local Tutor*

> I can still get my salary .. still with my family and I am learning with Wye .. if I had gone to the university either here or at Wye .. that means I would have lost a year or two .. so that is quite an advantage .. I can attend to my family .. my personal problems=
>
> *Female student*

Clearly, the broad **liberal** concept of equal opportunities (EO) and the open-access ethos of DE **are** vitally important in a Zimbabwean context where educational opportunities, for male and female professionals, are thin on the ground and particularly at the postgraduate level.

318

13.4 The legal concept of equal opportunities in ODL

However, the inadequacy of this 'level playing field' (Jewson & Mason 1986)[1] approach to gender issues is revealed as the asymmetry in 'resources, power, privacy in either paid work or the domestic environment' (Kirkup & von Prümmer, 1990:17) becomes apparent in, first, the women farmers and secondly, the women students who serve them.

For example, 74% of Zimbabwean women are involved in agricultural production (Marira, 1991). They are responsible for a larger proportion of agricultural labour on subsistence farms than men and conduct this work alongside other domestic duties such as child-rearing, fetching water, wood, cooking, often in polygamous households. Women farmers often work for very low pay in cash crop plantations and are rarely in control of the income they generate. According to Dorsey (1991) a large proportion of women in the south of Zimbabwe have no formal education at all.

For the (educated) women students on the course, it becomes clear that it has taken a more legal concept of EO, in the form of donor pressure[2], to ensure female selection or recruitment onto the course; that is to say, the course has been funded, separately, by NORAID and the Rockefeller Foundation and it appears that it is only as the result of recent pressure from these donors, that the Zimbabwean managers of the Wye course have begun to take an active interest in recruiting women officers as students.

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[1] For example, by means of open entry policies and universally applied 'fair' codes of conduct in selection and recruitment

[2] In the form of gender audits and compliance with funding conditions

[Group interview of 5 students: 3 female - INF12, INF13, INF14, 2 male - INF11, INF15]

INT: =why did they suddenly start co-opting women .. was it through pressure from women?//

INF12: no .. it was pressure from the donor==

INF13: ==it was mainly from NORAID==

INF12: ==and maybe the local .. but I have always thought it was NORAID .. which has had a lot of impact into our own institution .. in terms of .. you know .. the gender aspect .. of the whole organisation//

INT: so do you think **without** any pressure from the donor .. there wouldn't be any women?==

INF13: ==there wouldn't==

INF12: ==no==

INF14: ==no==

INF13: ==because you have to apply .. it isn't just that you are picked up .. you have to apply==

INF12: ==they won't tolerate women's seniority .. I know that .. *[male students laughing]*

INT: *[addressing the male students]* do you agree?//

INF11: probably .. at the beginning the way our institutions looked at it .. was .. they wanted to try to improve .. you know .. senior levels .. and middle level management .. and in those grades .. you know if you look .. we only have got .. you know .. **men** in that grade .. so automatically they actually excluded a lot .. you know .. these girls in the institutions .. *[name]* was the only one who qualified but I think with pressure from the donor .. I think .. they are now all coming   *[laughs]*

These comments illustrate how effective donor pressure can be in terms of its proactive impact on local-level recruitment for a specific course but also, in a ripple-effect, on the particular Ministry department in other areas. As a result of donor pressure, for example, female representation on the Wye Diploma course has increased - 0% (1992), 8% (1993), 21% (1994), 10% (1995), 42% (1996).

This legal, 'auditing' approach can also be applied to female representation **within** course content. Kanwar & Jagannathan (1995), for example, identify two content areas which they argue impact on women's access to and successful participation in educational courses:

1. the male construction and ownership of knowledge

2. the invisibility of women in the actual course materials (Elisabeth Burge and Helen Lenskyi, 1990).

The first is a very large topic in itself so I will restrict myself to a few aspects of this area that

320

were amenable to quick analysis. For example, Wye's stated objective[1] is to increase, wherever possible, the participation of women in their programme. The main way they have done this is in the introduction of gender-related options within the different EP course which draw on material from around the world. The writer of Wye's "Gender Issues" option has this to say:

> >>The theoretical analysis in the course is by no means exclusively British. The course includes many articles by Asian, Latin American and North American academics. I am British, however, and it may well be that the way I have put the materials together reflects a British view. I am conscious that I have little access to the academic gender debates taking place within Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

This particular omission could be immediately addressed by increasing a Zimbabwean input to the Wye course in the form of, for example, Zimbabwean literature on gender to be included in the main course texts or perhaps within a compendium of Zimbabwean specific readings. The potential for a more collaborative relationship exists between the UK academics and Zimbabwean academics, professional specialists and Wye graduates.

> Byo Muchena .. R Gaidzanwa and B S Madondo .. the group felt that these writers have done actually more to contribute .. than any other writers in Zimbabwe as far as women extension is concerned .. so we felt their writing should be included in a compendium
>
> *Student 'chair' reporting workshop discussion to plenary*

Both types of Zimbabwean contribution would serve the purpose of enriching the course. They would also contribute to a general 'overall academic development' of the country in the form of promoting African academic writing and developing local level expertise in materials production.

The second area - the visibility of women in the course - echoes other work done in Zimbabwe. Marira (1991), for example, undertook a content analysis of male gender bias in two main primary school textbooks and found that the texts do not reflect a single female as a farmer despite the fact that rural women in Zimbabwe are in the forefront in food production. Mulders 1989, suggests that up to 74% of Zimbabwean women are economically active in the agricultural labour force.

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[1] EP prospectus 1997-8

The Wye course, devoid of pictures, avoids tackling the gendered nature of the farming community by the use of a universal 'farmers' (the concordancer revealed 140 references to 'farmers' versus 11 for 'women farmers'). The rare references to women in the course occur in the context of 'household', 'children', 'family, 'roles', 'gender'[1].

13.5 The radical concept of equity

Where liberal and legal concepts of EO emphasise codes of conduct or auditing procedures to ensure equal participation by men and women, the **radical** concept of equal opportunities in education stresses the importance of accounting for broad differences between men and women students **within** the course rather than working from an assimilation model; it challenges the notion of **equal opportunities** (or equal access to an existing system) and substitutes the notion of **equity** (a challenge to the existing system).

Studying an average of 16 hours per week[2] while in full-time employment is demanding for all the Zimbabwean Wye students, men and women alike. However, the different pressures on the women's time suggest that they tend to study under different sets of conditions and, as a consequence, in different ways; that is to say, within **gendered learning contexts**. The following quotes from women students appear to bear this out.

> as a student .. I spend the whole day doing .. the duties I am employed to do .. right .. with a **male** officer .. a male officer when he gets home .. he probably can actually concentrate better than me .. a female officer who is again on the programme .. the children want my attention .. so I give them attention .. it is very rare for children .. you know .. to harass the man .. so you spend more time trying to please your children .. a man at times can actually neglect such duties .. you see if you are not careful .. you will not get time to study .. because it means when you are at home .. you do domestic duties .. the husband wants you to prepare food .. to .. to .. to .. do you know what you are supposed to do as a woman ..

> its especially difficult for women .. because .. well for example I am a widow and so I don't have the extra commitments of attending to a husband .. but .. this girl was telling me that after she has seen to the children .. my husband wants all the attention .. we have to do everything .. we have to run around .. you don't have anyone to share the work with

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[1] by means of a concordancer, I explored which words and contexts co-occurred with women, woman, she, her, girl, female.

[2] Wye calculates the 2 core courses (per year) require an average 14-16 hours study per week (on top of a full week's work), with each unit within the courses representing a multiple of a week's study (ranging from 0.5 to four weeks).

322

13.5.1 Gendered learning contexts

This pressure on time is a familiar theme with which working women in a wide variety of countries, developing or otherwise, will identify. Less familiar, perhaps, is the lexis - 'duties', 'burden' and 'obligations' - which surrounds descriptions of female roles by both men and women. These recurrent references convey the degree to which the roles of the Zimbabwean women students (and more obviously the women farmers they served) are socially constructed in relation to their capacity as caretakers of their husbands' and children's needs in addition to being income generators[1].

For example, the male students, in a variety of discussions, were informed about gender issues within farming contexts and also clear about the importance of their proactive role in addressing them.

> you know in our African customs .. men are respected most .. but currently in the district ..
> we are seeing seventy five percent of our active farmers in the district are women .. but
> when we look at our technical messages .. they are only getting to twenty to forty per cent
> .. so we are saying the greater proportion of our active farmers .. are not getting the correct
> messages .. so there is this question of .. us trying to enhance women .. to come onto our
> meetings .. enhance women to come to our meetings to become master farmers .. so the
> gender issue is being articulated by us .. trying to show the whole farming community .. as
> it were that women are also part and parcel of us and .. they are also good decision makers ..
>
> *Male Wye student*

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[1] Reflected in other gender issues studies in developing and developed countries to varying degrees (Bailey 1996, Kirkup 1990 1996 1997, Kanwar & Jagannathan 1995, Faith 1988).

This flipchart (1 of 3) comes from an all-male discussion about the need to take account of gender issues in project planning.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐ │
│ │                                     │ │
│ │  TAKING ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL ISSUES    │ │
│ │                                     │ │
│ │  ITEM III: NEEDS OF WOMEN           │ │
│ │  AND CHILDREN                       │ │
│ │                                     │ │
│ │  WHY:                               │ │
│ │                                     │ │
│ │  1. MOST DISADVANTAGED              │ │
│ │  AND MOST ACTIVE                    │ │
│ │  LEAST CONSULTED ON                 │ │
│ │  ISSUES, EVEN THOSE                 │ │
│ │  AFFECTING THEM.                    │ │
│ │                                     │ │
│ │  2. MOST PERMANENTLY                │ │
│ │  ATTACHED TO THE PROJECT            │ │
│ │                                     │ │
│ │  3. LEAST MOBILE AND                │ │
│ │  MOST COMMITTED                     │ │
│ │                                     │ │
│ └─────────────────────────────────────┘ │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 19: Reproduced student
flipchart 1/Gender issues
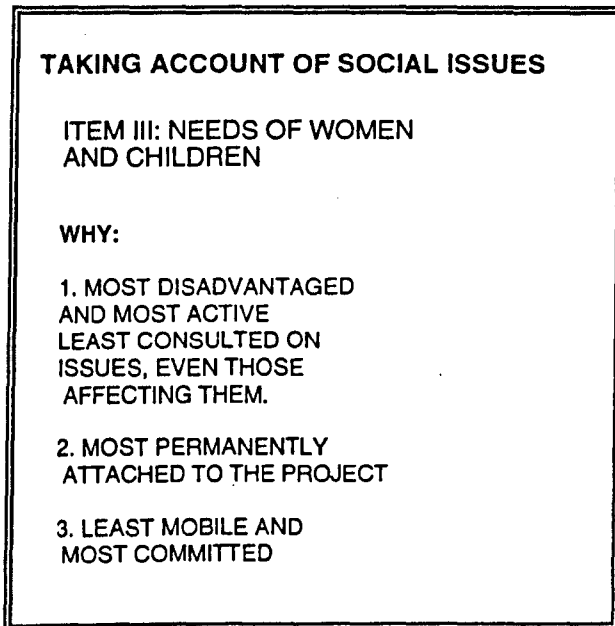
Their solutions to the problems women farmers face, however, are strictly in terms of **adding** new responsibilities to taken-for-granted roles and workload. The one woman officer in the group (INF 3), who joins this discussion in its closing stages, questions this non-negotiable definition of women's duties. Her additions to the subsequent flipcharts, reproduced overleaf, appear in red.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                     │
│      SPECIFIC NEEDS AND ROLES       │
│                                     │
│   PRODUCTION         REPRODUCTION   │
│                                     │
│   APPROPRIATE        ANTENATAL      │
│   TECHNOLOGY         AND POSTNATAL  │
│                                     │
│   FOOD PROCESSING    BABY NURSING   │
│   FOOD COLLECTION                   │
│   FOOD PREPARATION                  │
│   FOOD PRESERVATION                 │
│                                     │
│   INCOME GENERATION  MATRIMONIAL    │
│                      OBLIGATIONS    │
│                                     │
│                                     │
│   REDUCTION OF                      │
│   WORKLOAD                          │
│                                     │
│   SENSETIZATION                     │
│   OF MEN ON                         │
│   GENDER ISSUES                     │
│                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘


┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                     │
│   CONCLUSION:                       │
│                                     │
│   THEREFORE WOMEN                   │
│   SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN             │
│   DEVELOPMENT PLANNING              │
│   AND BE INCLUDED IN THE LEADERSHIP │
│                                     │
│     SENSETIZATION                   │
│     OF THE SOCIETY                  │
│     ON GENDER                       │
│     ISSUES                          │
│                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

INF4: *[explaining the flipcharts for late-coming female officer]*
right we've got production and reproduction *[running through the categories]*
.. then matrimonial obligations .. this is the father's welfare .. you have to
take care of the dad .. so you can add .. if you have something//
[everyone laughs as it's clear she will add something]

INF3: well you have to ask **why** are they the most disadvantaged .. and this is
about the control of resources .. access and control of resources .. decision
making you have covered under number one=

INF4: =then our conclusion .. therefore women should participate in development
planning and be included in leadership .. maybe you want to put in resources
there?

INF3: I think it is about reduction of workload for women ..
assisting the reduction of workload

INF4: in the household?

INF3: in the household

INF4: we didn't look into that

INF9: we didn't look into this

INF3: and sensitisation on gender issues

INF9: you want to sensitise us?

INF3: yes

INF9: *[writing]* sensitisation ... on .. gender ... issues

Figure 20: Reproduced student flipcharts 2 & 3/Gender issues

Main road, Chegutu, MashonalandEast, Zimbabwe

326

Other pressures which are particularly pertinent, though not exclusive, to women **students** included:

- often being judged from a deficit model and therefore under pressure to prove oneself and succeed

- evidence of unequal access to transport for study-related purposes (of both the home car and the work 'pool' car, available at lower management levels)

- gendered office politics

- promotion difficulties

> in fact its just the sort of .. er .. traditional view .. especially the man .. think .. that the women cannot do as well as the .. that the women cannot do as well as men .. its a sort of traditional belief .. so we have to prove ourselves .. that we are capable .. also doing the course as men//

> at Agritex here .. I think there is one woman who is at DAO[1] and at province .. er .. I don't know any province which is being headed by a CAO[2] female .. but I know at head office .. the chief of branches .. the chief of branches .. is headed by a female .. but of course there are not many ..

> if a man wants to add to my point then its OK .. but not just to summarise and you know take my point .. saying he is the one who brought it up

> sometimes I hide my knowledge to .. to .. to save his face but there's a lot of education on gender .. so actually when I am knowledgeable .. I try to show my knowledge and then its up to them .. but at times they can brush aside your argument .. or .. or .. they check your point with other members .. at the end you sit back .. you get frustrated//

> if the man was dominating and she accepted that .. then its something probably natural .. to .. women of our culture .. because even when we are at work .. or in a class .. you see men .. er .. trying to go on top of the situation .. sometimes you let them do that .. because its actually modified by our culture

> *Various Zimbabwean Wye woman students*

13.5.2 Recurrent features of the Zimbabwean women's studying patterns

The women students' considerable duties impact on **how, when** and **where** they study.

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[1] District Agricultural Officer

[2] Chief Agricultural Officer

First, it appears that studying periods are 'snatched', wherever feasible, in sporadic, short bursts which are often threatened by tiredness, lack of concentration, lack of spousal support, lack of continuity, distractions and isolation.

> honestly .. you get to a situation where at times you are so tired you don't know where to read

> like yesterday .. he (*the student's husband*) was telling me .. er .. I was complaining a lot .. about providing conditions which are conducive for my study .. so he was telling me .. tell me .. whatever you want I will do .. but when I tell him .. he says but don't talk about .. when you are not going to cook for me .. when you are not going to sleep early .. I am not interested ..

> you go for some time without attending to reading .. and when you come back you really have to pick yourself up and say where do I start ..

> I have to make some adjustment [*laughs*] especially for me to concentrate .. for example I've got a kid now which is sucking=

> a lot of reading is needed so as long as .. um your babies needs do not coincide with your reading times .. it will be OK//
> *Various Zimbabwean Wye woman students*

Common strategies for dealing with these demands on their time included the temporary abrogation of duties or, for the women on the course, attempts to control the chaotic and disrupted nature of study by efficient time management, compartmentalising study periods, packing study into intensive periods.

> I'm amazed at how many women do actually leave their husbands behind and do go overseas to do courses .. because people do value education so much .. they will leave their whole family behind with mother .. aunty .. what have you .. and go off to the UK for a year .. I mean you and I wouldn't do that==

> the time demands you know .. in terms of the time you've got to put to the family during the course period .. I think you tend to concentrate more .. I mean it's not easy but I am already used to making space

Secondly, visits to two women students (one based in a remote rural area, the other in an urban office) revealed that pressures around home-study tended to resulted in their choosing to study **away** from the home. In the rural case, the student allocated a daily three-hour morning slot for studying (7 to 10 am) in an isolated outhouse (with no power in the middle of a field) ten minutes walk away from her home and family commitments. The urban-based woman student commuted with her voluminous course materials every day and snatched study before

work, in lunch breaks and then at home after her domestic duties. Both solutions challenge the idealised vision of the home-based female DE student.

'Field' Office in remote rural area

13.5.3 Problems within the course

The snatched and sporadic nature of women's studying patterns immediately sets up various problems in a print-centred course like Wye in which the design principles are based around fairly extended reading and writing task periods and resource-based reading.

1. One problem is that a DE writers often write to time-units; that is to say, a unit is often designed to be completed in a set time - in Wye's case a unit is equivalent to a maximum of 2 week's work where a week is defined as 7-8 hours of work; a unit may also consist of a series timed tasks to be completed in 1 or 2 one hour sittings. For women students, this tasks might in reality be studied discontinuously in 4-5 snatches.

2. As previously mentioned in chapter 11, there is also the danger that some of the advantages of resource-based learning can be inadvertently lost in the complex mechanics of multi-source reading. The concentration required to hold and make cohesive links between disparate parts is challenging for male and female students alike but perhaps becomes particularly problematic if, like women students, studying occurs in short snatches.

3. This type of resource-based reading also sets up 'ergonomic' difficulties where women students study away from home or, because of unequal access to staff vehicles, commute on public transport (and often with shopping)

    its really .. a big job because you have to carry what .. the main book .. this book .. you have to carry the Gittinger .. you have to carry extra material to read because they also sent us .. you know .. some of the information .. look for project planning .. I have volume one of the readers .. volume one is in my bag .. then the volume two

    Women Wye student

4. There is also a suggestion that tutorials and study groups, although unanimously stressed as important by **both** men and women students, assume a **particular** value to the women students.

    the regularity of meetings is very important .. suppose we are alone there .. isolated .. and you only meet people after two months .. you've met quite a number of concepts that you can't understand and no one can explain to you .. then the only solution is to have meetings which are more regular .. it can help that woman who is alone there .. and always busy .. but I think if you ask all the students they will say they want more meetings ..

its very important meeting with other students because you get to know more and you can even .. you can even be helped in your weakness .. you know at times you can understand your student better than say a teacher .. so from that point .. meeting with other students is very essential ..

Various women Wye students

2 particular areas emerge. First, on a purely pragmatic basis, tutorials and local study groups represent non-negotiable, 'dedicated' study time outside the domestic situation for women students who are juggling work and family commitments. Secondly, there is the suggestion that the women students put a high value on the local study group and informal opportunities to discuss the course outside the more formal local tutorial system; that they did not conform to the European model of the independent student working in relative isolation at an individual pace.

Other literature seems to support the idea that group work assumes a particular significance for women students in general. For example, various studies about women DE students in India (Kanwar & Janannathan 1995) link high women drop out rates and low participation rates with poor support networks. Ecofeminists claim this as evidence of women as 'connected knowers' (Belensky et al, 1986), a cognitively preferred 'interactive' learning style.

If it is true that opportunities for interaction assume a particular value to women students, then they face disadvantages when learning by DE. First, it could also be argued that implicit in independent learning in general, and ODL in particular, is the notion that the ideal type of student is one who makes the least demands on an institution for support and can complete the course in the minimum or set time - the 'Turbo-student' (von Prümmer 1993). From this perspective, women 'are less likely to approximate to the ideal: a deficit model of women students' (Kirkup, 1997:11); placing a high value on tutorials and study groups could easily be constructed as evidence of an immature, needy stage on the road to a more valued independence.

Secondly, as discussed previously, local level DE tutorial and support systems are particularly precarious in developing countries. For example, to cut the subsistence expenses involved in bringing in students from the different Zimbabwean provinces, the administration cut tutorials

336

from half a day once a month to one day in two months.

> so when you're reading and you've got questions coming up .. you don't get the answers when you need them .. you make a note of it .. but by the time it comes to the tutorials you've forgotten what the importance was ..
>
> *Women Wye student*

13.5.4 The role of female extension officers in the developmental fan

There is also the argument that adopting a woman-friendly pedagogy might contribute towards wider developmental aims of increasing female representation at higher management and decision-making levels.

> I appreciate this programme .. because we haven't done this .. and if I manage to pass .. that will give me a wide choice .. a wide area .. I can compete with other officers .. probably for the next post .. DEO[1] post .. I can easily do that now because I will be competent enough .. but **without** that .. there's a degree wanted for that post .. so obviously one cannot get it because you are a woman you know .. you see they want the degree people .. which I think is going to be the line from now onwards .. and this one also gives us the opportunity to say if we are to be promoted to the next step even .. then this would be having the rightful ammunition//
>
> *Woman Wye student*

Perhaps the most convincing argument for a focus on the women students is because of what they, as part of an educated elite and as female agricultural officers, represent in a much larger developmental 'fan' as potential **mediators** and **advocates** in a range of contexts. Lalage Bown (1990:14), for example, advocates giving 'opportunities to educated women to gain skills necessary to develop mechanisms for the less educated to become literate'. She lists the potential impact of greater female literacy in **health** (e.g. infant mortality reduced, better spacing of child-births), **education** (e.g. positive decisions about attending schools) and **economics** (improved methods of food production and processing, small business credit and savings organisations):

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[1] District Extension Officer

at times when we get a meeting .. in most cases .. especially in communal areas .. the dominant farmer .. or the dominant group participant is a woman and .. the men EOs .. they at times feel out of place .. but when I get there .. I feel at home.. and the women .. actually .. they accept me better than him .. and I think in this case its because .. at times .. soon after a session .. I can .. we can interact .. I can probably hear .. you know what are their problems .. their domestic problems .. and probably give them advice .. or at times .. they can ask you something which is not related to extension work .. but it's in a women field .. like they can ask me for a pattern .. a pattern for a particular jersey or what .. so apart from the work itself .. I have got a lot to share and in most cases they ask

The long hours of work for these women farmers make it difficult for them to participate in literacy programmes or deploy the necessary concentration and energy. It would take the intervention of extension officers such as these to remove the considerable impediments to study/literacy (such as ensuring a village water supply to free up time and energy).

13.6 Emerging implications

In many ways, the findings here about the Zimbabwean students seem no less relevant to women students anywhere; that is to say, their presence on the course, their status within the course and the time they can devote to it are all matters of continual negotiation. In terms of pressure on time, the difference appears to lie in degree.

In summary, the significant differences that emerge from the particular context, are the relative rarity of women studying this subject at this level, the rarity of women in this professional field in Zimbabwe and, as a consequence, their role in a much wider developmental fan.

It is also clear that social and professional pressures present considerable hurdles and that as a result, tutorials, study groups and opportunities for discussion that exist outside the home assume a particular significance as dedicated, non-negotiable time, away from other duties. The course design itself compounds the study pressures on these students by unnecessarily complex reading mechanics.

These findings suggest that ODL producers should embrace a range of strategies throughout the course, which draw on the different concepts of equal opportunities (liberal, legal **and** radical) to support and encourage the participation of women students. But in particular, these findings illustrate the need to recognise the (typically unrecognised) gendered nature of study

and address those differences at a policy and pedagogical level; that unless they recognise the different study conditions of women they may unwittingly disadvantage them.

The clear implication is that course developers could develop more women-friendly structures, content and pedagogy if they worked **with** the constraints faced by their women students as their frame of reference for the design principles of a print-centred, resource-based learning environment. The argument here is that the strategies that flow from this would not disadvantage men whereas working from study conditions more characteristic of male students, such as the potential for more extended study time and concentration, does disadvantage women.

Several possible 'women-friendly' pedagogical implications emerge:

First, that opportunities for interaction between students and between students and tutors are 'an indicator of more or less women-friendly DE systems' - (Burge 1990). This suggests that DE producers need to involve themselves in encouraging donor pressure not only for female representation on the course but also for the safeguarding, financing and promoting of a quality local level support system, one which understands its specific role towards women (and which encourages further research into the needs of their women students). Study groups should be given more formal recognition than its present voluntary local basis by, for example, providing additional time during the tutorial visit.

Support for the local tutorial system might come in the form of attempting to influence funding donor policies, good practice guidelines accompanying the course, promoting tutorials and study group as important within the course (by, for example, delegating more responsibilities to the local tutors and administration, promoting group activities in tutorials, study groups and in assessment, securing long-term relationships with local tutors in the form of training, exchange of materials, the compilation of a compendium, greater weight given to local tutors feedback).

Secondly, women friendly strategies might include thinking closely about the **time** demands of reading and writing tasks and 'chunking' them (say in half to one hour tasks) particularly at

the start of a course for women returnees rather than working from the assumption of extended study. This should include strategies which maintain the broad advantages of **resource-based learning** but which **simplify** the **reading mechanics**, such as:

- reducing overcomplex cross-referencing by, for example, locating all subject reading in resource books and replacing the present dense coursebook with an all-purpose 'wraparound' student workbook which contains introductions, tasks, cross-references, writing space and study skills components, point-of-need, in-course provision of study skills advice rather than in a 'pre-sessional' separate study guide).

- provide more **coherence** to short, sporadic reading periods by means of more comprehensive cognitive hooks than are presently supplied by typical DE bald, bullet point introductions (e.g. fuller orientations to subject areas by outlining different schools of thought or the plurality of scholarly positions; a cassette recording of an author talking about the background and influences to their work and the particular piece of writing (Graddol, 1993); written, spoken or graphical introductions and summaries with a strong emphasis on purpose, pre-reading skimming tasks over a full unit, information-transfer tasks such as chart filling for readings 1, 2 and 3).

- exploiting the **audio + print combination** in a variety of ways. For example, when used separately, the audio input can act as the overview voice to a unit or series of readings, providing introduction, reviews, summaries, extension tasks. When used simultaneously as print, the audio input can set a pace and stage reading activities; it can talk the learner through an illustration or text; the spoken input and the written input can be alternated, varied, mismatched, etc. This type of design requires careful forward planning and precision about the roles and functions of each media at an early stage. (Durbridge 1982, 1990).

Thirdly, ergonomic issues need to be addressed as women may need to work **away** from home and also may have differential access to private transport. Heavy, bulky printed course components could be reduced by a greater emphasis on their transportability for peripatetic and

340

commuting workers (detachable pages, use of audio-cassettes for Walkmans or in cars, cutting down on prose by greater use of graphics, using note/symbol forms, compact resource books, etc).

13.7 Close

This concludes the five chapters on data analysis. The one remaining chapter will draw out key themes that have emerged and make recommendations for policy and practice.

Farmer, Communal lands, MashonalandEast, Zimbabwe

PART D

POLICY AND PEDAGOGY

Chapter 14 - Summary, recommendations and conclusions

14.1 Introduction

In this last chapter, I pull together enduring themes that have emerged in this research. First, I review significant methodological questions that have shaped the research and then argue the case for a more principled approach to international DE course design. This will be followed by recommendations about potential policy and pedagogical strategies which, among others no doubt, appear to make a contribution towards this type of framework.

14.2 Summary

14.2.1 Methodological questions

The increasingly internationalised context of distance education courses mean that course producers and tutors often only get to know their students through assignments and general registration information about age, profession and gender. The risk here is that without adequate feedback or knowledge about learners course producers, like those at Wye College, might make inappropriate assumptions about them or be unaware that their own taken-for-granted practices present difficulties. The problem is exacerbated because of the practical difficulties of conducting research among distant and disparate learners. This research has grappled with many of these practical challenges.

One is that in a situation where a researcher is dipping into a relatively foreign sociocultural context for a short space of time, the carefully planned research design is rarely achievable. In this case, a whole host of practical and protocol constraints affected when and how I undertook the research. Indeed the constraints underlined the degree to which research methodology is itself a social practice and that certain conditions cannot be assumed in all contexts. In my case, conditions such as the desirability of research, a willingness to

be researched, a presumption of open access to data and participants, an ease about talking openly and individually could not be taken-for-granted. Rather than bringing people round to these ways of doing things, the context made demands on me and those were about letting go of a fixed way of doing things and being prepared to rework the original plan of interviews, observation and group discussions into something which was both feasible and appropriate to the setting.

There are also issues of 'trustworthiness' - Lincoln and Guba (1985). The small-scale, one-off nature of the visit, often the norm for educational consultants, revealed the degree to which research can be about dealing with the feasible rather than the ideal and as a result there is the need to develop research strategies which help the researcher tap into the situation quickly and extract as 'thick' a description as is feasible in the short-term available. A one-off situation inevitably impacts on the degree to which you can achieve a thick description. In an effort to cover yourself, an understandable tension is created between maximising, to the point of redundancy, the amount of data about a variety of themes or focusing on one discrete area in greater depth. Both approaches run risks. In the former, depth of description may be sacrificed for breadth; there may also be the problem of distinguishing between the core and peripheral data sets. The latter runs the risk of missing out on a broader perspective, of not seizing such a rare opportunity to the full.

My choice was a mixture of both and the data analysis reflected some of the strengths and limitations of both approaches. In some areas I had an extensive range of data sources collected by different methods and amenable to comparative analysis; in other areas, the limitations in time, access and choice meant that sometimes I could only get data from one source. The original aim was to focus equally on both the culture of reception (the Zimbabwean learning context) and the culture of production (the Wye College course and tutors) and undertake a flip-flop comparative analysis between the two, concentrating on mismatches between the two. The Wye focus had to be dropped for a variety of practical reasons: the preparation for the visit was time-consuming and involved several re-schedulings; the overseas visit generated a lot of data and was time-consuming in its transcription and analysis.

All these issues impacted on the eventual depth of the analysis and status of the findings. It was not possible, as originally conceived by Glaser and Strauss (1967), to build the sort of ambitious comprehensive conceptual system 'from purposively sampled sets of relevant cases' - Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996: 101. Instead, grounded theory informed my analysis and in some data areas, I was able to undertake the three characteristic analytical stages - preliminary analysis, development of conceptual understandings to wider theoretical interpretations - while in others, the limited data meant that I could only operate at the level of preliminary analysis. In my research, grounded theory was used for less ambitious and more achievable research activities which included 'basic taxonomy development, focused conceptual development and cycles of interpretation' - op cit. I therefore cannot claim this research to be more than a small-scale, preliminary investigation which offers tentative interpretations but one which, it is hoped, may be built upon in the future by the Wye producers in some way. Also, I cannot, on the basis of a single case-study, claim these as generalisable to other cases but I nevertheless hope that the findings will find some resonance with other educational practitioners dealing with cross-cultural learning situations in different contexts.

Another consideration in this short overseas visit was the degree to which you can undertake research that is participatory in 'intent and procedure' - Guy, 1989: 59. The word is widely used nowadays, particularly amongst aid workers but the rhetoric often has little meaning. Lynch (1997: ix) alerts us to four different degrees of participation, each of which confer different rights to the consulted: provision of information, exchange of information, participatory consultation, rightful consultation. Participation in the first means little more than providing information about a pre-determined project to those who are likely to be affected. This is a 'right' to be informed. At the other end of the scale, however, rightful consultation gives those consulted the right to involvement in decision making and to sharing the control of a given project. In the context of an international course, this might involve students, or more likely, the importers of a course in the co-determination of the course design, content or employment of tutors. The type of participation achieved in my piece of research is at the level of exchange of information in which 'reactions are invited from those involved, which may or may not result in changes and accommodation or even a

process of 'interlearning' among the various parties concerned' (op cit).

But do these acknowledged limitations and constraints compromise the value of the research? I would argue that in spite of the limitations, this type of research is increasingly vital as we move towards a globalised educational market, dominated by market leaders. Higher education institutions are implementing aggressively competitive and ambitious strategies for expansion to enhance and entrench their advantage as world market leaders of educational provision. Unless the Wye course producers undertake to know more about their diverse students, they stand in danger of making inappropriate assumptions about them on the basis of limited knowledge.

> In order for distance education to fulfil an appropriate role in the Third world, its underlying assumptions must be critiqued, and rather than reproduce the structures of the developed world, distance educators must seek to generate appropriate and sensitive models and practices, derived from forms of research which are reflective, participatory and emancipatory in intent and procedure and are situated in the cultural contexts of the Third world.
> *Guy, 1989:58*

Without research, course producers like those at Wye also stand in danger of continually positioning these Zimbabwean learners as passive consumers of knowledge and practices produced elsewhere, a position which in the long term erodes and marginalises Zimbabwean experience and knowledge. The danger here is that the one-way direction of knowledge becomes taken-for-granted by all participants and the lack of practice and respect accorded to local experience might (as was often evident) lead to a crisis of confidence. The one-way production of knowledge and the obscuring of different 'voices' also precludes the question of whether new models can be learned from different contexts, like Zimbabwe.

> if you take the view that education is moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar .. then Africa hasn't been given a fair go .. in the area of agriculture for example .. the world is learning from Zimbabwe because we have things like zero tillage .. we don't use .. well now we use because of whites imposing it .. nitrogenous fertilisers .. but crops have always been successful in Mashonaland long before the arrival of the whites .. in fact the citrus estates at Mazoi used to make sure no one had scurvy on the discovery ships of the Portuguese .. they grew oranges and got them to the coast at Beira .. its been going on for longer than the whites have been around
> *University of Zimbabwe lecturer*

The research reveals that the Zimbabwean students had a lot to say about the particularities of their country and its practices and were generous in their time and commitment to the research process.

International course developers, like those at Wye, will benefit if confronted with the contingency of their own thinking; significant changes and improvements in educational practice are more likely to come about as a result of an emerging reflexivity and insight on the part of course producers rather than, say, learners or importers of courses who are unlikely to have such a powerful platform. If the trend is towards internationalised and globalised learning contexts, then a framework for addressing the risks and strengths of the context needs to be placed prominently on a DE course producer's agenda. It becomes important to fight this corner in DE because the focus of the literature is on managerial and technological aspects of ODL while debate about the 'philosophical, ethical, socio-political and pedagogical questions .. is much thinner on the ground' - (Chambers, 1994:6).

Research in this context indicates a commitment to a process of reflexivity, one which will inevitably engage the course producers in considering the commonality/difference and specific/general divides between participants in an international learning context and ways in which to address them. But research which provides an opportunity for listening to obscured voices raises interesting questions about objectivity and representation. Can a researcher claim to speak on behalf of the Zimbabwean students? Can one act as an conduit between the unknown students and their distant tutors and authentically transmit their views. In practice, I found this position increasingly untenable and the question of whether the researcher is, should be or can be an insider became central. I would argue that it is not possible to have an insider view of a very different sociocultural context and one cannot claim to represent people across such a divide. You might, however, capture something of the differences (and commonalities) between yours and their meaning systems and social practices. This, in itself, is useful as long as it is also recognised that you are looking at everything through your own sociocultural perspective and cannot step outside it; that people do not necessarily have unitary perspectives and that you cannot claim to have an overview of their situation.

349

The reflexive aspect of the research inevitably makes this an outsider perspective or an account of a case from an 'external point of view, one which may contradict the views of the people involved' - Hammersley (forthcoming: 4).

14.2.2 The value of international courses

One overarching theme, which has gathered weight throughout this research, is an affirmation of the value of international and intercultural education, in the form of the Wye course, and especially where courses are destined for use in developing countries.

This is perhaps surprising in view of, first, the current preoccupation with the dominating and uniformist risks of globalised courses and second, the often unsuccessful history of imported educational models into African countries. The lessons drawn from both these areas suggest that DE - in terms of its models, content and pedagogy - cannot be considered as a 'universal panacea' (Hawkridge, 1997:5); that there is a need for courses and models which are more appropriate and sensitive to the sociocultural contexts in which they are situated. It is therefore unsurprising that the recurrent response to the risks is that African educationalists would be better off developing their own models of DE (e.g. Creed 1990, 1993, John 1996a &b, Hawkridge 1997).

Nevertheless, different aspects of this research combine to endorse the view that despite the risks, the Wye producers must not, at the same time, lose sight of the value of courses which are internationally available and which bring learners from different countries together in a unique intercultural classroom.

One characteristic of this research is that it has taken the shibboleths that accompany the contemporary debate around globalisation and learning, such as cultural and linguistic imperialism, neo-colonialism, and provides insight into some black Zimbabwean perspectives on them rather than those of European critical theorists. What emerges very strongly is that these voices inject a rather different insight and lucidity into the abstruse nature of much contemporary postmodernist, post-colonial debate; they seem to counterweight a current preoccupation with colonial guilt which, however well-intentioned,

still tends to tell us about our own practices while continuing to obscure specific African ones. In contrast, these Zimbabwean perspectives remind us of points that frequently get lost in debates about educational and linguistic imperialism.

First, if you work (as I initally did) on the basis of simplistic groupings (colonised/colonisers, powerful/powerless) and become preoccupied with colonial guilt, you can fail to recognise other truths. For example, in relation to the political interference and volatility that occurs in Zimbabwe and other African countries - in language planning, in educational provision and policies, in agricultural and land distribution policy - international courses produced elsewhere can ironically stand out almost as a bastion of independence, quality and stability. Students, like these Zimbabweans, are attracted to precisely those qualities and the rare opportunity to side-step some of the limitations and restrictions of their own educational systems. Another uncomfortable truth to consider is the idea that you may be teaching educated African elites whose main interest is in preserving and entrenching an 'elite closure' (Myers-Scotton, 1993:149) rather than in the welfare of the majority of people in their country. Aid workers, in education or otherwise, invest a lot in the training of intermediaries and we can fool ourselves that our aspirations are the same as theirs.

If you respond, as Edwards (1995:265) suggests, to the 'articulated requirements' of your diverse students, you may need to consider that you can become implicated in strengthening inequalities in the communities in which you teach. These sort of considerations act as a powerful antidote to the misplaced romanticism which often seems to come into play in the context of educational aid to African countries.

Second, it is easy to overlook that 'decolonising the mind' (Ngugi's phrase) is a two-way process and that it is by means of an emerging (and belated) reflexivity and understanding on the part of the colonisers - perhaps more so that the colonised - that significant changes in educational practice might be brought about. British understandings of long-term colonialism are not those of personal experience and are therefore fundamentally different in perspective to those of African ones. Successive African generations have, after all, had to live, deal and come to terms with the paradoxes surrounding imported languages, curricula and educational practices, over decades, in colonial **and** post-colonial times. It is we who have a lot

to learn from African experiences which is why these Zimbabwean participants and African writers are so instructive in the way they have rationalised their continuing use of a colonial language and educational system.

14.2.3 A commitment towards a defined developmental role

At a broader political level, it is easy to underestimate the significant role that imported higher education courses like Wye play in African educational systems and overlook the fact that conditions within African countries are not always, as assumed, conducive to mounting home-grown, higher education initiatives. This is particularly so in the smaller 'niche' courses such as the one under study here, where economies of scale could not be achieved in home-grown courses.

World Bank economic structural adjustment programmes (ESAP) and policies in African countries, have tended to shift the focus of educational aid away from higher education in favour of a concentration at basic education level. At the same time, the phenomenal success of many African governments' policies on universal education have, paradoxically, created a huge bottleneck of educated people competing for very limited educational opportunities in the national tertiary level system.

Imported educational aid, in whichever form it comes, plugs that gap and will do for the foreseeable future on a permanent, temporary or transitional basis. ODL, in particular, by dint of its open access ideologies, APL (accredited prior learning) and ready-made packaged nature, holds a particular attraction to African educational managers as a means of addressing these shortfalls in higher education provision.

At the same time, we must not forget that the actual participation of many African students on international courses, like the ones in this study, is a rare opportunity reached after a struggle for funding. This injects a burden of responsibility we must appreciate and respond to.

On the basis of my experience in Zimbabwe, it appears that what is required is a commitment, on the part of the Wye course producers, to assume a responsibility towards

352

their diverse learners which extends beyond just the production and provision of a course; a responsibility which, in developing countries, attempts, within an asymmetrical donor-recipient situation, to establish a north-south relationship of an empowering and emancipatory kind.

This implies the commitment to bring into the mainstream methodology and pedagogy, a defined developmental role which recognises, while teaching in a British academic tradition, that it is not the only intellectual tradition; it should also seek, particularly in long-term provision, to build on and strengthen the academic development of the country in which the course is situated and to build up, wherever feasible, collaborative relationships which can operate on a permanent, temporary or transitional basis. This would involve Wye in identifying, legitimising and strengthening existing resources, however fragile.

The data suggests that there would be advantages if the developmental role drew on, but also extended beyond the limitations of, three dominant conceptualisations of 'development' - modernisation theory, underdevelopment theory and a Gramscian concept of hegemony - (Kuster, 1984). For example, one key shortcoming of them all is the tendency to obscure African practices and resources and accept simplistic notions of the 'oppressed'.

The danger here is that without African perspectives, the course producers could overlook an African road to development; that Africans, as much as Europeans, are the protagonists for change. Without those perspectives, the tendency has been to work from conceptual frameworks which pathologise difference and offer remedial fare. It may also be helpful to think of their responsibility towards students in developing African countries, like Zimbabwe, in terms of a strategic partnership; that is to say, that members in a partnership have different strengths at different times.

One current strength (and liberty) that the UK producers have, is something that is often overlooked - the ability to submit their materials to a process of continual revision and themselves to a process of continual professional development. This is a distinct advantage over their Zimbabwean counterparts who are often expected to produce materials in a hurry, with minimal training and with an expectation of a long shelf-life.

The implication here, for example, is that although both partners have the capacity for compiling and authoring academic materials, the UK producers often have the better capacity to produce and develop them. The UK producers could, for example, engage in the commissioning of African writing and act as 'developmental' editors towards African writers within a system which incorporates regular updating, revision and fast production lead times. That role need not necessarily be permanent; it could be a transitional stage towards independent production but the experience and exposure would undoubtedly make a contribution towards that end.

Another strength of the UK producers is the capacity to adopt a proactive role towards areas which have particular significance in developing countries. For example, the haphazard introduction and inequitable distribution of computers in African countries means that tertiary level institutions (African and otherwise) have an important role to play in introducing students, wherever possible, to computer literacy and towards contributing to the 'catch-up' with contemporaries in other countries. Other long-term areas to which the UK course producers could play a proactive and supportive role are, from Zimbabwe, gender (as an aspect of inequality and difference), the fragility of DE tutorial systems in African contexts and developing students' academic literacy (to serve the immediate demands of the course but also the longer-term demands of public forum presentations).

Perhaps the most convincing argument for adopting a fuller developmental role towards third world students than just the delivery of the course is because of what they, as part of an educated elite and future decision-makers, represent in a much larger cross-cutting, 'developmental fan' (Hilton, 1994) as potential mediators and advocates in a range of contexts.

14.2.4 Incorporating different concepts of equal opportunities

As part of this developmental role, the research also suggests the need to incorporate educational practices that draw on different **concepts of equal opportunities (EO)** - liberal, legal and radical (Jewson & Mason 1986; Faith 1988; Kirkup 1990, 1996, 1997; Kanwar & Jagannathan 1995; Bailey 1996). The **liberal** concept of EO (or equal access to

354

an existing system) is a distinctive strength of ODL; the ideological commitment to wide access and APL has, in Zimbabwe, successfully extended educational opportunities to people who might otherwise have missed out on or been excluded from mainstream provision. Nevertheless, the evidence of this research shows that, by itself, this approach is an inadequate response to realities of developing countries such as Zimbabwe.

The liberal approach needs to be matched, particularly in African countries like Zimbabwe, with the concept of equity (or a challenge to the existing system); this might take the form of a **legal** concept of EO, such as formal auditing procedures (monitoring ethnic and gender representation in recruitment, on boards and in educational textbooks) or conditions for funding. The potential to influence policy in this regard could only really be brought into play where regular recruitment occurred within one country and on a long-term basis with an institution in another country. In this sense, the long-term link between Ministry of Agriculture in Zimbabwe and Wye College in Britain is ideal for the development of legal concepts of EO. This might take various forms such as the issuing of good practice guidelines to regular funding donors (such as Rockefeller, NORAID in this particular case) and to those responsible for local level recruitment.

Nevertheless, a **radical** concept of EO also assumes particular significance within international education contexts like this since it stresses the importance of accounting for broad differences between students (e.g. male/female, European/African) rather than assuming that what is required is assimilation into a homogenous group. This assertion of difference, as I will now discuss, can be reflected in the content, organisation and pedagogy of the course.

14.2.5 Valuing the politics of voice and difference

This last point ties in with the most significant merit of international education - its potential capacity for valuing difference. Driving this focus in international and intercultural education is thinking that draws on post-colonial, postmodernist, postfeminist and critical education theories. A common strand is the rejection of mainstream assumptions about culture, identity, about representations of self and about the ownership of knowledge as fields of

shared experiences defined in western ethnocentric terms; instead they suggest a pluralism, a 'hybridity' (Bhabha 1992) of possible worlds and in the words of Lyotard's (1989) celebrated phrase, 'an incredulity towards meta narratives'.

International distance education, could actually promote the recognition of these notions because it has the potential to act as,

> 'a site of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences, and voices intermingle amidst diverse relations of power and privilege. Within this pedagogical cultural borderland .. subordinate cultures push against and permeate the alleged unproblematic and homogeneous borders of dominant cultural forms and practices.
> *Giroux, 1992:205*

Crucially, that potential depends on the degree to which the course methodology and pedagogy facilitates that intermingling of 'multiple and heterogeneous borders'. This inclusionist approach throws an altogether different light on arguments about the degree to which various local/global configurations of course production and management **can** safeguard cultural differences.

14.2.6 Locating the site of struggle

The all-local route, in terms of, say, DE course production and management can be seen as a defensive stance which seeks to safeguard cultures by maintaining differences. The problem with this route - and this is an argument which can be applied to other areas such as linguistic separatism - is that it often produces a politics of assertion, of difference which is both essentialist and separatist and which very often works from a static view of identity (feminist, black, Jewish or Shona or Ndebele-speaking). This neglects the notion of identity as something that is multifaceted, shifting, evolving and sometimes contradictory.

The all-local route also precludes the possibility of new alliances, exposure to new ideas and the voicing of difference in powerful arenas.

There is also the danger that an all-local route recreates the problems it is trying to avoid:

> all too often this position results in totalising narratives that fail to recognise the limits of their own discourse in explaining the complexity of social life and power such a discourse wields in silencing those who are not considered part of the insider group.
>
> *Giroux, 1992:208*

By contrast, locating that assertiveness and protectionism **within** international education provides a powerful basis for several potential emancipatory objectives:

- to promote opportunities for communication between cultures which might serve as the basis for the recognition of, and support for, cultural difference

- to experience the contingency of one's own perceptions/assumptions and to interrogate others

- the exposure to new ideas and forms of expression on the part of all participants

- the opportunity to challenge dominant players both in a powerful language and in powerful forums

- the pedagogical recognition that without those opportunities for comparative study and 'answering back' there is a danger that alternative voices can be obscured by dominant players and their discourses

From a Zimbabwean perspective, **both** positions run risks. The protectionist stance (in, for example, vernacular language education and home-grown DE) risks cultural isolation and ghettoization; the proactive stance risks, without pedagogical intervention, being swamped by foreign norms (in, for example, the use of standardised English, literacy pedagogies, sociologies of knowledge). These two positions hold true of other 'imperialist' debates such the use of English in Africa; on the one hand, we find Ngugi's linguistic separatism and on the other, Achebe's (1975) espousal of the 'stretching' of English or Pennycook's (1994) promotion of the 'appropriation' of English. The key point here is that **both** stances can be seen as protectionist; they simply differ in where they locate the struggle for the protection and assertion of difference. It is, however, this last 'inclusionist' route, in both English language and international education, that the Zimbabwean participants unanimously

coveted, and in full recognition of 'imperialist' arguments:

INF14:	there is a danger in the third world .. that you end up fishing in your own tank==
INF11:	==we don't want to be trained only for Zimbabwe=
INF's	= no .. no .. no

Zimbabwean Wye students

we can bring in our own experience .. that way we can say this is **our** tradition .. this is **our** culture .. and we are conscious .. that it has value in the programme .. **that** way our culture is not being endangered .. we can hold our heads up high and look at the rest of the world of which we are a full adult member .. not a little kid lagging behind our mother

University of Zimbabwe lecturer

This suggests that there is much to be gained from the construction of an inclusionist pedagogy which values differences within a global or international course. The question becomes not **which** language but which pedagogy and which content **within** English?

14.2.6 The limits of hybridity

However, in defining that pedagogy and content, the data from Zimbabwe appears to endorse the view that, within international education, the extremes of **both** relativism and universalism are unhelpful. What emerges is the need for intercultural pedagogy and content which attempts to transcend the constraints set up by a world of dualism (colonised/coloniser, oppressed/oppressor, universal/local) but without falling into the trap of complete relativism.

The appropriate remedy for xenophobia and ethnocentrism is not a culturally relativist embrace of all cultures .. but the development of bi-cultural or hybrid awareness, followed by more pluralistic perspectives, in all of which one's own culture (or cultures) or origin are modified, and related to time, place and history, but not abandoned in a wholesale way. Being European is not ethnocentric if it is a form of being open to the adventure of living in other cultures.
Young, 1997:504

The challenge here for the course producers is to construct a pedagogy that avoids both a

358

tokenistic or heritage approach towards other cultures and which also values and searches for both differences and common ground, the relative and the universal. This is an alternative route to the 'great big melting pot' approach in which differences tend to be downplayed and commonalities stressed. By contrast, the implication is to actively look for teaching opportunities which clarify rather than blur difference.

Certainly, the Zimbabwean findings seem to confirm Gidden's (1990:7) notion of 'intensified reflexivity' as an effective outcome of courses which incorporate international perspectives; that is, we have greater potential for making sense of the particular and the unique against some understanding of the global and general; we might also gain insight into real rather than assumed commonalities.

This endorses Edward's (1995:245) notion that the 'integration of the globe .. reconfigures rather than supplants diversity in its contradictory effects'. This 'reconfiguring of diversity' is an attractive and useful notion and appears to offer more mileage than an overly contingent, localised and finally static view of identity.

14.2.8 The recognition of unequal power relations

A commitment to difference, however, also needs to take account of power issues; people from different countries, backgrounds and groups do not participate in international arenas, of which education is one, as equals.

> Educational sites are subject to discourse but are also centrally involved in the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses, the 'social appropriation' of discourse. Educational institutions control the access of individuals to various kinds of discourse.
> *Ball, 1990:3*

Without recognising this power dimension, a pluralist approach is likely to 'nurture illusion' (Judd, 1983:271) and teachers stand in danger of simply facilitating unequal dialogues between nations and deceiving ourselves into believing that we are helping other countries to 'develop' or 'participate'. The implication is that the course producers need to develop pedagogies which, first, acknowledge that established academic discourse communities

'impose requirements for recognised participation' (Lankshear, 1997:42) but secondly, which go beyond just the reproduction of dominant discourses and practices. This suggests an in-course pedagogy in which two seemingly competing strands - **acculturation** and **counterdiscourse** (Peirce, 1989) - co-exist.

I shall now describe the functions of each strand and indicate particularly significant areas in the Zimbabwean context. Later, in the recommendations section, I will provide pedagogical examples under these two pedagogical strands (which draw on the experience gained in the Zimbabwe context).

14.2.8 Description of the acculturation strand

First, a pragmatic acculturation strand would need to ensure that students have access to standardised forms of spoken and written English which have significance in particular discourses (i.e. within specific academic subject areas) and are linked to social and economic privilege. The strand should attempt to make explicit the implicit, taken-for granted social practices that surround dominant educational discourses in a given academic discipline.

In terms of academic literacy in this print-centred context, this would mean raising the learners awareness of, and success in, the specialised literacy practices in internationally dominant academic discourse communities. This, however, should not be viewed as rigid repertoire to which the students must accommodate; the norms governing and defining a given discourse and its membership are **not** necessarily precise, static or immutable.

Nevertheless, an acculturation strand should raise awareness that there **are** implicit conventions and expectations which, if you are reading academic materials you need to recognise, and if you are writing for the international arena, have to attend to, either by 'knowingly' reproducing or flouting them.

In order to be effective, the acculturation strand would also need to take into account that different social practices surrounding language and literacy practices, in African contexts, will create particular difficulties when brought up against taken-for-granted, UK academic traditions. This implies exploring literacy as social practice (drawing on, for example, Street

1984, 1990a &b, Kress 1985, Martin 1985, Wallace 1986, Lankshear 1987, 1993, 1997, Gee 1990, Cope & Kalantzis 1993, Freedbody & Welch 1993, Barton 1994, Maybin 1994, Luke & Walton 1994).

This study, for example, appeared to reveal that the UK course producers made very heavy demands upon the Zimbabwean learners who were unpractised in academic writing. This seemed to manifest itself in, for example, 'the baldness of their style and their inability to use modification devices appropriately' - Bloor 1993:166. This appeared to arise from both writing inexperience and a clash between different constructs of knowledge; in the Zimbabwean context, there appeared to be the view of knowledge existing within known limits and possessing inherent correctness and this was matched with a UK tradition of presenting knowledge as something open to criticism, contention and a multiplicity of scholarly positions.

Other difficulties flowed from these different constructs - different notions of the authorial self; collective notions of authorship matched against plagiarism; the precise reproduction of teaching against the unique, individualistic writer; traditional teacher-student relationships against the right to challenge; the competitive collective versus the competitive individual; the primacy of the spoken word against the written.

In this study, the course producers did not seem to address these differences, underestimated the literacy implications of their academic areas and, characteristic of the UK sink or swim tradition, offered minimal guidance. The implication here is that useful pedagogical strategies could draw on broader definitions of literacy in which verbal communication abilities are viewed as a constitutive part of literacy (Pattison 1982; Street 1984; Chisman 1990; Finnegan 1992; Barton 1994; Baynham 1995); discipline-specific genre theory (e.g. Swales 1981, 1990; Bazerman 1981, 1988; Bartholomae 1986; Christie 1989; Martin 1985; Cope & Kalantzis 1993; Flowerdew 1993; Bhatia 1993; Berkentotter 1996); English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approaches (e.g. Dudley-Evans 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991; Bloor & Bloor 1991; Richards & Skelton 1991, 1994; Henderson et al 1993; Paltridge 1996).

An example of the latter would be an awareness of the hedging devices commonly used in

academic English which 'mark the claim .. as being provisional and awaiting acceptance by the academic community' but also conceal writers' shifting positions (Dudley-Evans, 1993:135).

However, learning 'written genres is more complex than the genre theorists imply' and is not best achieved by the prescriptive, direct teaching of 'text types' - (Barrs 1994:249). In addition to direct teaching strategies, a student's awareness of genres (which are complex, hybrid and dynamic) is likely to arise as the result of examples (rather than rigid models) placed before them in the course; one overlooked source here is how the instructional design of the course, in itself, could contribute to the broader development of the learner's academic literacy in the very textual design principles of the course.

The findings suggest that the instructional design could play on the crucial relationship between reading and writing and speaking and writing within a text-rich environment, in contrast to the uniformist, textual straitjacket of traditional DE instructional design. This also fits in with a broader developmental aim; that materials carry a special burden of responsibility in text-poor environments and need to compensate by providing a print environment which is rich in different types genres/registers of reading (and speaking) materials to aid reading and also act as learning texts for writing.

14.2.10 Description of the counterdiscourse strand

The second, counterdiscourse, strand exists in an attempt to rescue the less dominant from a process of incorporation and to open up the possibility for a more dialectical potential within the course which might promote 'intensified reflexivity'. This strand could attempt, in different ways, to make room for discourses and social practices that emerge from a range of sociocultural contexts other than the mainstream 'host' and shift the focus away from a unilateral accommodation process towards the idea that international awareness is a two-way partial accommodation process, in which all participants are willing to recognise and accommodate for difference.

One implication is a challenge to the assumption that there is **one** 'caretaker' of knowledge

and pedagogy and to promote an approach which takes into account learning resources and teaching opportunities which exist (or could exist) **beyond** the control and ambit of the UK course producers.

For example, the findings revealed that the Zimbabwean participants needed to mediate and supplement the non-African course with a significant range of Zimbabwean resources. In terms of languages, for example, the fact that the course is English-medium is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Students drew on a rich multi-lingual repertoire - indigenous languages, standardised English and different varieties of English - to negotiate meanings. In terms of content, the course was heavily mediated by local tutors and a range of discussions and local literature.

The Wye course producers could recognise the importance of these resources in several ways. They could promote an ethos of multilingualism around the course while recognising their students' needs **within** English. They could safeguard the opportunities for linguistic choice and interaction by, for example, supporting the local level tutorial system, commissioning the local amassing of (print and audio) resources and reflecting different English varieties within the mainstream course.

At the **macrolevel** of course production and design, the implication is that the course producers should actively seek out potential input from academics within the country of destination, particularly where there are long term links, for inclusion within the course or for use as country-specific resources. In Zimbabwe, for example, where there was an established long-term link between the UK producers and their Zimbabwean counterparts, there was ample scope for the development of a compendium of locally-relevant resources (print, audio, videos, etc) which could contribute to the local learning context but which might also, given liaison channels, become part of the 'main' internationally available course.

In consultation with their overseas counterparts, the course producers need to seek out the potential for both collaborative and devolved teaching and learning opportunities. The different course design models (identified in Chapter 11) would provide the basis for discussions among the course participants about long-term aims around the course.

The research also underlined the central importance of the local level tutorial and study system as a means for promoting 'intensified reflexivity' and the means by which Zimbabwean knowledge structures and social practices can be both safeguarded and understood. Support from the UK, in different forms, would undoubtedly contribute towards putting the local system on a more permanent footing with a higher status.

The counterdiscourse strand would also encourage learners, within the course, to adopt a **critical** stance towards the dominant discourses they are being exposed to within the content and pedagogies of a course; the notion of critique is extended here beyond the traditional view of challenging the propositional content of texts to include a 'critical' awareness about the socially constructed nature of all knowledge and practices and the normative authority of dominant languages (such as English) and academic literacy conventions. This strand embodies an emancipatory aim - to introduce a greater potential for self-assured decision-making or choice on the part of the learner. That choice may take the form of the student knowingly conforming to dominant discourses (by reproducing them as they are) or in resisting or challenging them (by breaking new ground).

This approach is consistent with Critical Language Awareness approaches (Ivanic 1988, Shor 1988, Clark 1991, Wallace 1992 1990), the pedagogical branch of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1985, 1989) and reader-response theories and approaches (Iser 1974, 1978, 1980; Rosenblatt 1939,1978; Eco 1981; Jones 1990; Hirvela 1996).

14.3 Recommendations

Below I identify some policy and pedagogical areas which have emerged as appropriate to the needs of the Zimbabwean participants on this international course and in relation to language and academic literacy demands of a print-centred course. These recommendations are based on the implications that emerged in Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13.

14.3.1 Policy level

Three areas emerge at policy level.

First, there appears to be a need for Wye College to develop good practice guidelines for international DE course design which address pedagogical issues and attempt to define, in more than just broad liberal terms, their developmental role in third world countries. Different strategies could facilitate this:

- an internal consultation process at different levels - institution-wide, within specific departments and within particular course development teams

- the setting up, as in the OU, of an institution/department-wide 'international activities review group(s)' in which a range of course developers and pedagogical advisers within the University of London are well-represented

- greater liaison between the disparate DE course teams within the University of London

- the development of (regularly up-dated and widely disseminated) written good practice guidelines (co-ordinated, for example, by the equal opportunities office)

These sort of mechanisms are often in place (or easy to put in place) within dedicated DE institutions or units. In dual-mode institutions such as Wye, DE tends to have been introduced in a more haphazard way, dependent on the tenacity and commitment of individual departments or course managers rather than any overall strategy.

These individual pools of experience can, if brought together, drive the development of pedagogically informed principles within international course design. This is needed to provide a balance to the more dominant managerial and technological aspects of ODL.

Second, the findings from Zimbabwe suggest that the Wye producers need to get involved at a policy level to protect important local resources and overcome difficulties specific to recipient countries.

For example, the experience in Zimbabwe revealed the central importance of the local tutorial system, particularly in terms of providing opportunities for linguistic choice and interaction. Interaction between the students and tutors assume a particular significance in multi- or inter-cultural educational contexts where life experiences are not necessarily shared between

(distant) teachers and students; that discussion allows for a genuine, intercultural understanding and orientation/challenge to new ideas. If there is little commitment to local aspects of the course - tutorial, discussions, local reading resources - in which this intercultural learning occurs, then students are locked into a one-way, passive relationship with knowledge produced elsewhere.

Tutorials also assumed particular significance to the Zimbabwean women students as non-negotiable, dedicated study time outside their considerable work and family commitments. There was also evidence of a far more collaborative orientation to studying among the students in the form of collective TMA planning and writing, well-attended voluntary study groups and vociferous tutorials. This underlined the status of oracy as a key to academic literacy.

External support for the local tutorial system may not be an option - the contract might simply be the selling of a ready-made course overseas. Nevertheless, where institutional links are made, the value of the tutorial system in its role to preserve local resources should be enshrined in a range of policy strategies surrounding the course; these could come into play, in different combinations, according to context. Strategies might include: attempting to influence funding donor policies; good practice guidelines accompanying the course; promoting tutorials and study groups as important within the course (by, for example, delegating more responsibilities to the local tutors and administration, promoting group activities in tutorials, study groups and in assessment); securing long-term relationships with local tutors in the form of training, exchange of materials, the compilation of a compendium of local resources for use in tutorials; greater weight given to local tutors' feedback; cooperative and/or devolved course design and authoring.

The findings also suggested that the ODL producers could embrace a range of strategies to support and encourage the participation of women students who, as in many African countries, face considerable barriers to participation. There also appears to be a need to recognise the (typically unrecognised) gendered nature of study and to develop more women-friendly structures, content and pedagogy. The argument here is that if the producers worked with the considerable constraints faced by their women students as their frame of

reference for the design principles of a print-centred, resource-based learning environment, the strategies that flow from this would not disadvantage male students whereas working from study conditions more characteristic of male students, such as the potential for more extended study time, **does** disadvantage women students.

Support could take various forms such as monitoring the representation of women on and in the course (e.g. donor pressure and good practice guidelines) and gender issue options within the course, safeguarding opportunities for collaborative study and dedicated tutorial time, writing study activities which reflect the time constraints of women students, helping women students with minimal study time to make fast cohesive links in the course (e.g. bitesize summaries, simplifying the complex reading mechanics of the course, the transportability of course components, the provision of audio-cassette summaries and extensions of units).

Third, at the level of individual courses, the evidence from Zimbabwe suggests there is a need for a new Wye team member whose role is a combination of pedagogical adviser/editor, instructional designer and applied linguistics (with teaching experience and knowledge about English as an International language and academic literacy).

Subject specialist ODL writers (usually lecturing academics in mainstream universities) are often short of time and the pressure to produce materials 'limits their willingness to spend time learning how to write ODL materials, even if they are convinced of the need to do so' (Perraton 1998). In common with their mainstream university counterparts, they do not always appreciate the linguistic implications of their own subject area.

An exception is where DE courses originate from academic departments specialising in language education and cross-cultural communication. The departmental awareness of the pedagogical issues surrounding the use of English and academic literacy is likely (though not guaranteed) to inform the pedagogical principles underlying their own ODL course design. Examples here would include the mushrooming distance versions of MA's in English for Speakers of Other languages, the RSA Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and courses from the Open University's Centre for Language and Communication.

Experienced team members from these types of departments would be in a particularly strong position to offer advice and training about pedagogical strategies (around language and academic literacy) to ODL writers working in other subject areas or else to adopt this role themselves on other ODL production teams.

In some ways this is an argument for the duplication, in the DE world, of a common teaching situation found in mainstream universities - the English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) teacher who works alongside and supplements the work of the subject lecturer (to differing degrees of co-operation and, it has to be said, success). The differences, however, are important.

Firstly, that specialist pedagogical adviser needs also to be an educational technologist and must have developed pedagogies appropriate to given media and technologies; in the Zimbabwean case, as in other developing countries, the pedagogy needs to be geared towards the particular demands of a print-centred learning context. It should adopt, wherever feasible, a multi-media approach and, as suggested earlier, adopt a proactive role towards computer literacy by including a computer element in mainstream course.

Secondly, since the pedagogy draws from literacy and language as social practice, the scope of their work should be equally relevant to all students, whether they have English as a first, second or third language. In this sense, the job has a wider remit. It is all too easy to ghettoise 'remedial' English for second language speakers; this is apparent in the low status of EAP[1] and ESAP teachers in mainstream universities and their continual battle for resource allocation and recognition (in spite of the fact that overseas students bring in huge levels of university revenue).

In contrast to the generalist approach of some EAP teachers and DE instructional designers, this specialist adviser needs to work on a long-term collaborative basis with subject specialist course teams and academics so that they can develop, over a period of time, a much deeper knowledge about the 'sociology' of a particular subject and discipline area. This might lead

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[1] English for Academic Purposes

368

to pedagogical strategies that could help the student to develop, in the words of a Wye tutor in his feedback to a Zimbabwean student, the ability 'to write as an economist, using the language and methods of an economist'[2]. This sort of subject-specific academic literacy approach can be witnessed in the work of, for example, Bazerman (1981, 1988) and Berkentotter & Huckin (1995) in the applied linguistics field and Northedge (1992, 1995), Chambers (1993, 1994), Graddol (1993, 1995, 1996), Lea (1996b), Coffin (1997), Stierer (1997) in distance education. This route would certainly be a natural extension of this research. I would, for example, match my increased understanding of the cultures of reception with a study into the cultures of production (e.g. more in-depth discourse analysis of the course materials with concordancers, tutor/writer interviews, studying the sociology of the subject area and its characteristic linguistic implications).

This pedagogical editor work could, on the basis of this subject-specific knowledge and further monitoring of their DE students, focus on extending appropriate 'acculturation' and 'counterdiscourse' pedagogies into different aspects of the course (the instructional design of the course, the TMA feedback and academic literacy support strategies, etc).

They could also function as the editorial assistant of **both** the academic and student writers; their role towards the student is to develop the learners' awareness of the 'specialised literacy' of the particular academic discourse community (Berkentotter & Huckin, 1995) as it manifests itself within the course but also beyond, in more public forums. This editor could, by research, build up a picture of the sort of periodicals, conferences and presentation types common in the agricultural field and use this knowledge to inform the DE academics, the editorial comments back to the students and the pedagogy within the course.

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[2] Reference withheld for reasons of confidentiality

369

14.3.2 Acculturation strand: pedagogical strategies

An acculturation course could provide discipline-specific language awareness support

throughout the course and aim at illuminating aspects of 'standardised' English use within

the particular academic subject area. This support could be incorporated at two different

stages:

1. **Pre-course induction** with focus on a return to study, introducing the international
   ethos of the course, discussion about aspirations and ambiguities surrounding the use of
   English and writing essays.

2. **Interwoven** throughout the entire course but with a particular concentration at the
   beginning of the course.

Support could be given in **three** main forms:

1 **direct, point-of-need support** (such as TMA wrap-around materials, margin notes
   on the global, local and formal implications of essay types, skeleton essay plans,)

2 **specific linguistic/rhetorical awareness-raising** - in-course, boxed text and
   marginalia drawing attention to different points as they emerge in the academic materials.
   Examples include: recognising the implications that different genres types hold in terms
   of focus (writer, reader, subject), use (specify, expand, examine) and organisation (time,
   group and theme) at a global, local and formal level (from SAIL framework); classifying
   the different sections (or moves) of academic papers (based on Swales 1990) such as
   focus, criticism, falsification, claims, reinterpretation, justification, summary of positions
   and background; hedging devices such as the use of modal verbs, modifiers, non-factive
   verbs, framing expressions, attribution of claims to impersonal agency (based on Myers
   1989, 1990a, 1990b & Dudley-Evans, 1993); teaching the main patterns of academic
   writing (problem-solving, compare-contrast, general-particular) and concrete/abstract
   language differences (Mason 1990, 1997); a focus on 'evaluative lexis' and the position
   of the writer in relation to the issues being described and evaluated (Richards, 1991:34).

3 **general** linguistic/rhetorical awareness-raising - deliberately adopting a typographical
   design which uses a wide range of standardised English in different media (spoken,
   print, visual), registers (degrees of formality) and text-types (academic articles,
   journalism, government directives, etc.)

The last two strategies should build on the natural 'scaffolding' relationship between reading,

listening, speaking and writing; rather than separating students' learning of subject area

content from developing thinking and language skills, the processes of reading and writing

become intertwined in mutually supportive natural language activities.

The third strategy, in particular, provides an alternative model to the heavily formatted and

370

structurally simplified English of traditional DE instructional design. To avoid this the Wye writers could be encouraged to:

- incorporate a range of different text-types, media and registers where appropriate

- avoid a narrow adherence to recipe-book formulae for DE writing and rather than rely overly on structurally simplified English, include a range of strategies to enhance the accessibility of their writing but without using subject-specific language that is atypically simplistic.

This last point suggests that the writers could work from the notion of a continuum as a basic writing principle which moves from the known/familiar toward the less known/unfamiliar and assists learners to make connections between their discourses, their particular backgrounds and textual histories and the discourses found in the subject. For example, to move from the familiar cultural and often orally transmitted practices of everyday social practices towards the less familiar written discourses of specific disciplines and to make explicit the difference in literacy practices; to use informal contexts and language as a bridge into the more formal decontextualised language in an academic domain. This is a new take on the 'friendly tutor in print' who engages the student in an 'avuncular chat' (Jeffcoate 1981:76) and instead suggests the deliberate co-existence of different registers and discourses to point up their differences.

Different pedagogical 'bridging' strategies could supplement a DE writers' repertoire: in the Applied Linguistics field, Widdowson's (1979) 'simple versions' of complex texts staged to lead up to the 'real' thing; Bhatia's (1983) - 'easification' strategies (such as providing the skeleton rhetoric of a text); Richards' (1993) general-to-specific, given-to-new guidelines for writing; from the DE domain, Chambers (1993, 1994) and Northedge (1992, 1995) with their 'intermediate discourse' and 'discourse initiation' strategies. A greater use of illustrations could also be employed to serve 'simplification' aims.

One key strategy would be to play on the status of oracy as a key to literacy by increasing the use of speaking (on cassettes and in tutorials) as a bridge into writing and reading.

371

14.3.3 Counterdiscourse strand: pedagogical strategies

I have already dealt with policy implications of this strand so I will restrict myself here to some in-course strategies suitable for a print-centred context.

For this strand, the course producers would need to make the socially-constructed nature of knowledge more transparent to the learners in order to encourage a more distanced, critical appraisal of the content. It would emphasise the notion that course participants (teachers and learners) have particular knowledges and diverse interpretations. This type of approach problematises mainstream DE instructional design which, despite the rhetoric about student-centred learning and interactive texts, tends to submit a student to the hoops and hurdles of exercises with pre-determined ends.

At the level of 'textual strategies' (Graddol, 1993), this suggests a deliberate disruption of some of the traditional facets of mainstream DE instructional design. One example would be the overt signalling of differences between authors. This implies moving away from the traditional DE instructional design in which the team of writers are often disguised and mediated through a constructed 'personal' voice within the text - the avuncular 'tutor-in-print'. There is a danger here that this voice assumes a continuity role and gives the impression of a course as a seamless and authorless entity rather than a collection of disparate texts from different authors.

The personalised voice may also have the effect of shifting the reader's attention to the voice rather than to the text and of pre-digesting the materials on behalf of the 'typical' learner.

Graddol (1993:26) , for example, notes the tendency in DE towards closed texts (Eco, 1981) which 'speak with a single voice; to control stage by stage the state of knowledge of the learner' and which presume to predetermine the reader's response. To create open texts, he introduces into DE textual strategies Bakhtin's notion of social heteroglossia or dialogism. In other words, an attempt to relativise a unitary or monologic discourse of truth by reflecting the multiple social languages (heteroglossia) of different generations, professions, epochs and their different ideological-belief systems.

372

One adopted strategy is to disrupt the high factual status, teaching voice in typical DE texts by inviting course team members and external authors to take up a variety of voices in formal and informal registers (Graddol 1993:28). Examples include authors directing students away from their teaching voice 'to an article (by themselves) written in a more formal academic register .. at which claims can be safely disputed'; to distance themselves from their own assertions; to talk informally, on cassettes, about the background to and orientation of their work (to highlight the intertextuality or the relationship of the current study to other texts in the field).

Another example would be to **physically** highlight the resource-based rather than course-based nature of learning. The weak version of this might be a main coursebook with accompanying resource books; the strong version would be to offer courses based almost entirely on resource-books (containing, for example, a mix of classic and topical articles about the subject under study) accompanied by a pedagogical 'wrap-around'. In other words, the re-locating of the navigational voice **away** from the academic resources.

The OU have set a precedent in this last approach although, it has to be said, their reasons for doing are often more financial than pedagogical (the resource books are available on the open market and are geared to attract a wider readership than course participants). One beneficial by-product of this resource-based approach is the relative ease, in contrast to a course-based approach, with which different combinations of authorship can be achieved.

Nevertheless, the evidence from Zimbabwe suggests that the course producers need to ensure that the advantages of resource-based learning are not lost in the complex mechanics of multi-source reading. Making cohesive links between disparate parts is challenging for all students but particularly so if studying occurs in short snatches and where students are more accustomed to teacher- or coursebook-led teaching. Strategies to overcome this might include reducing overcomplex cross-referencing and having a maximum numbers of course components; providing more coherence to short, sporadic reading periods by providing more comprehensive orientations, overviews and summaries to reading units (in written of spoken form) in contrast to the bald, in-this-unit-you-will-learn bullet point starts so typical of DE

instructional design.

Another example would be to highlight the differences between authors and their own orientations, e.g. by introducing a deliberate plurality of scholarly positions, using provocative or contentious texts and by juxtaposing competing accounts.

A more comprehensive critical approach could draw on Critical Social Literacy (Lankshear, 1997) and Critical Reading pedagogy (Wallace, 1992, 1990). Wallace's critical reading pedagogy seems particularly apt as print-centred teaching makes content and pedagogy far more 'visible, fixed and open to analysis that is generally the case' - Northedge 1995:2.

Her pedagogy addresses the wider aspects of social literacy practices (the characteristic reading practices of particular social groups and the writing practices of published reading material) and also in the narrower sense of critically responding to specific texts.

With regard to the latter, for example, Wallace argues that readers need help to 'resist certain kinds of assaults presented by written texts' (1992:61-62) and that more attention should be paid to pedagogies which address 'ideological assumptions as well as propositional meaning'. Working with familiar pre-reading/while-reading/post-reading strategies, she avoids the 'personal opinion approach' (the equivalent of the friendly tutor-in-print). Instead, she concentrates on situating the text socially and in terms of its 'broad political effects' (Lankshear, 1997:50). She builds her pedagogy around Kress's (1985:7) three key underlying questions,

1. Why is this topic being written about?
2. How is this topic being written about?
3. What other ways of writing about the topic are there?

and supplements them with,

4. Who is writing to whom?
5. What is the topic?

Pre-reading tasks could include considering the range of ways a subject could be written about, why the text has been written and what it is about. It could involve considering the history behind the text and its intertextuality (or how it relates to other texts in the field).

374

While-reading tasks focus the reader's attention on the linguistic choices made within the text and their effects in terms of reader positioning and the way a discourse community typically constructs its reality. This might include a marginalia voice which explicitly draws attention to subject positions, choices in active/passive or modal constructions.

Post-reading tasks focus on inviting the student to consider alternative ways of writing about the topic and why these options were not employed.

These strategies have the effect of actively involving the learner in re-reading the text in different ways to create a critical distance to the specific text; it also attempts to contribute to the learner's awareness of the specialised literacy of the academic discourse community.

14.4 Conclusions

My aim in this study has been to provide feedback from (and about) the Zimbabwean participants in the hope that we might reflect a greater understanding about differences and commonalities in our educational practices. Providing that feedback, however, has continually involved me in dilemmas concerning the ethics and politics of representation. That is to say, in an effort to give a platform to largely unknown voices, I have placed myself in the paradoxical position of speaking apparently on the behalf of highly articulate people, of mediating their feedback and stand in danger of assuming that I can represent them and 'their best interests'.

In this process, I recognise that I have fallen into the trap of filtering those voices; that what is presented here inevitably reflects my interpretation of their perceptions, my priorities rather than theirs. This is perhaps nothing new. At one level, I am simply joining the lengthy queue of outsiders who have been offering answers to (our perception of) African problems for a long time. Nevertheless, my hope is that in providing as wide a coverage as I can here, something of their perspectives has survived my mediation and that I have brought back from my journey to Zimbabwe fuel for a reflexive examination of taken-for-granted educational practices.

Appendices

Postgraduate Diploma in Agricultural Development

General Course description taken from the 1996 Prospectus

'The Agricultural Development programme is aimed at those working in agricultural development or in a related area. The programme pioneered the External Programme highlighting the central and varied contribution of the agricultural sector to general economic development' - pg 5.

Individual course description (pg.10)

Agricultural economics for development: The first part of the course covers production economics, including production functions and technical change. The second part focuses on supply and demand, including the analysis of market structures. The third part deals with welfare economics, and introduces the analysis of international trade in agricultural commodities, and of food and agricultural policy.

Agricultural policy analysis: is concerned with policy in the agriculture and food sectors of developing countries. The first part introduces agricultural policy analysis and incorporates a case-study of a country undergoing economic reforms. The second part examines macroeconomics influences on the agricultural sector, with consideration of expenditure, revenue, monetary, balance of payments and exchange rate issues. The third part is concerned with trade, agricultural and food sector policies. Part Four deals with policy analysis techniques. Finally part five covers issues in policy reform in the agricultural and food sectors including adjustment programmes, theory and evidence on the economic and social effects of adjustment and problem in the transition of the formerly centrally planned economies.

Project planning, monitoring and evaluation: considers the planning and management of public investment in the agricultural sector. It teaches economic concepts for project identification, preparation and appraisal and the methodologies of logical framework, and financial and economic cost benefit analysis. Detailed financial analysis from the viewpoint of the farmer, project organisation and government is explained. Exercises are used at each stage to reinforce understanding of techniques. Social and environmental issues in planning are identified and approaches for their more effective integration into project appraisal reviewed. The course also provides guidelines for the design and management of project monitoring and evaluation, essential activities for effective project implementation and the project cycle. It concludes by assessing the relation of agricultural projects to their wider macroeconomics and policy context.

Research methods and data analysis covers two main areas of interest to students of developing countries, one focusing on research methods, the other concerned with statistical techniques relevant to social scientists. The first part introduces the student to the nature and role of research in developing countries, including how to identify and formulate research problems, as well as the use of secondary information. In addition, a variety of research and data collection methods are explored, emphasising both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The second part of the course, which begins with an examination of formal sampling design and methods, focuses on techniques of data analysis, including hypothesis testing, measures of association and correlation, and an introduction to regression analysis.

Target group:

The courses are aimed at the needs of managers, planners, economists and other

professionals working in agricultural development from both the public and private sectors. The present student profile reflects a variety of backgrounds including agronomists and other scientists, engineers, veterinary personnel, anthropologists and sociologists involved in:

• area development projects, typically focused on small farms and the households associated with these farms

• government ministries performing planning and/or policy analysis work

• aid agencies and non-government organisations concerned with development, including agricultural processing and marketing organisations

• the management and planning of large scale agri-business and agricultural production units, whether in the public or private sector

• programmes concerned with health, nutrition and other rural development issues

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Zimbabwe Running diary

The purpose of this diary is to:

- to collect isolated impressions and queries
- to maintain a record on thought and emerging emphases/issues

These are isolated, unorganised notes with occasional comments/thinking, action notes by the researcher.

2.6.96.

The Sunday Mail - 2 articles to keep

1. English is not superior to Shona & Ndebele - argument for MT medium with English as additional taught language rather than medium, snobbery of black Zimbabweans insisting on English.
2. Proposed Zimbabwe Open University - careful re associating with Wye too much

3.6.96. Issues arising - Tsododo meeting

- research methodology - importance of briefing the students re recording discussions and anticipating a negative response

- importance of seeing where the students study - light, conditions, work pressure, etc.

- gender issues - a topical issue for the training branch. I had anticipated this area, having noted the lone woman student (1 on the 2nd year Diploma course) and her TMA's written from a woman farmers pov but felt that as it is worthy of a PhD in itself, no particular coverage of it would be better than a superficial one.

- NAME thinks there is a big discrepancy between TMA marks and exams (with TMA's being substantially higher and therefore an exclusively exam-orientated course penalises the students.
  ACTION - comparison of TMA marks to exams?

- NAME comments that the students do not have difficulty with English but with concepts - separates language from concepts - view of language as neutral, transparent

- typical third world DE rhetoric - DE can overcome huge problems of access, quality, cost .- low emphasis on tutorial infrastructure, believes that if DE materials need additional tutoring there is something wrong with the materials - they should be clear and unambiguous. Resentful about tutorial costs - 2-3 student sacrificed in the process

- ?contrast with his view that socio-economic political issues should be discussed within the materials and that the students should be provided with a principled framework but a critical discussion of alternative strategies/context problems

- difference in the perception of the course - clearly students have something to say about the tutorials/supportive

- importance of an international perspective rather than an exclusively Zimbabwean focused course but all case-studies should be drawn from Zimbabwe
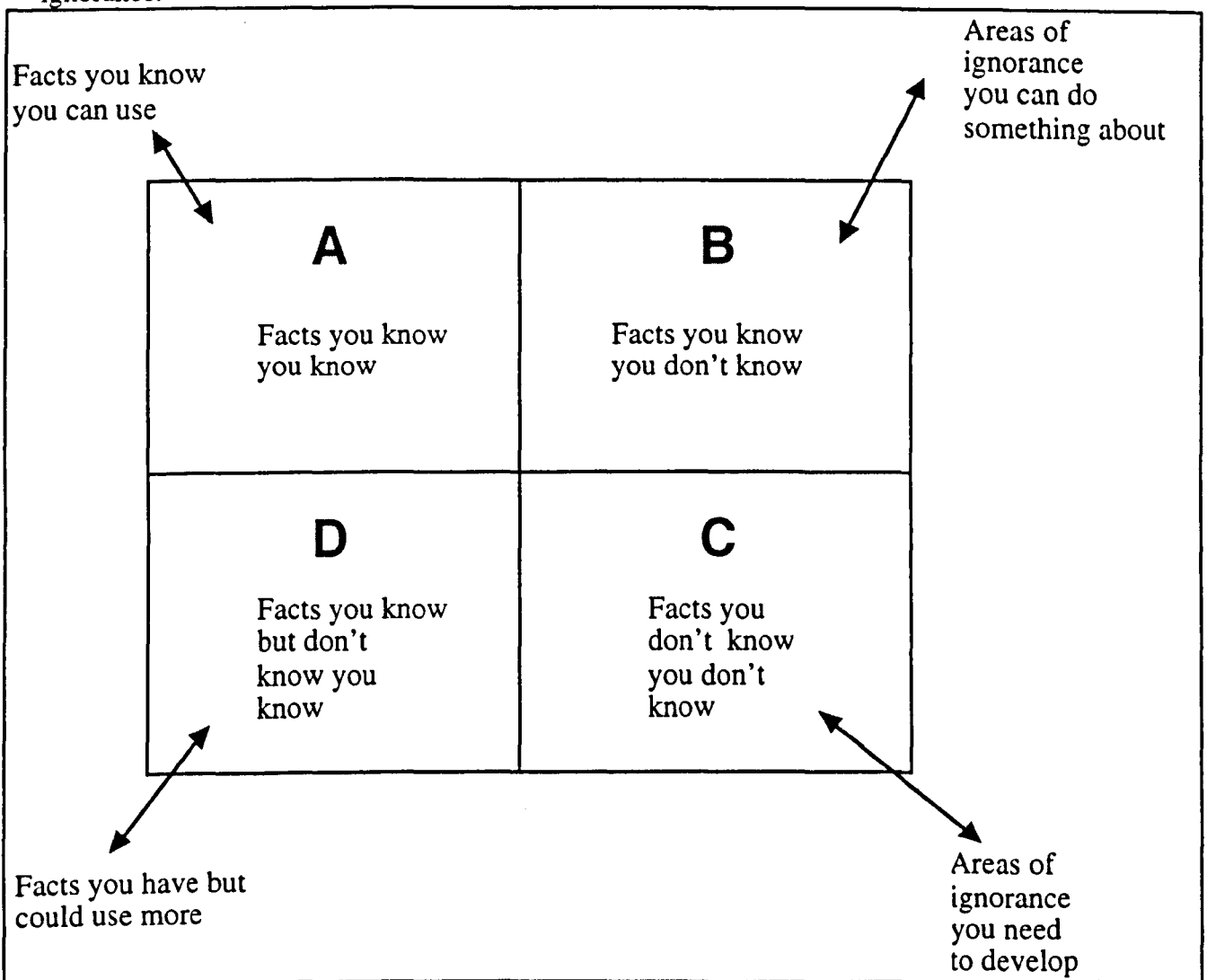
4.6.96.

During my 15 minute walk to the office, 4 men respectively stuck up conversations with me telling me about family problems, sickness, unemployment, homelessness, hunger and asked me to loan them money.

4.6.96.

2 large posters in NAME office:

If you consider that training is an expensive, time-wasting exercise, consider the cost of ignorance.

Facts you know
you can use

Areas of
ignorance
you can do
something about

A	**B**
Facts you know you know	Facts you know you don't know
D	**C**
Facts you know but don't know you know	Facts you don't know you don't know

Facts you have but
could use more

Areas of
ignorance
you need
to develop

- very heavy emphasis on accumulative factual learning

- gender issues arise again - female secretaries/assistant emphasise the importance of meeting up with female students on a one-to-one basis and when the boss suggests he would like to sit in on the interview, they jump to the students defence and say, teasingly, 'she will not want to talk when you are there'. When he is on the phone they whisper conspiratorially 'there are more of us now...we're coming through' and we all raise arms in power salute and laugh. They point to the fact that there are 3 women out of the 4 new students

- growing feeling that I should give much more emphasis on the 1st year diploma students. This was my original aim but at the time of arranging the visit, any new enrolment for the academic year (March-Oct) was under serious question due to funding problems. Only 4 students. ?Consider funding them to stay over an extra day and schedule in some meetings after tutorial and at supper time?

ACTION: Visits out to students in situ, in Mashonaland East , include 2 women 1st year students and 1 male 2nd yr tomorrow
ACTION: Take camera with photoslides

4.6.96. Telephone with NAME

Points arising:

- gender issues can also be explored in computational linguistics - looking for collocates (i.e. co-occurring words) with words like girl, she, women and an exploration of co-text - functions, frequency counts - fine in literature, newspapers but will it work in an Agricultural course - more a question of omission?

ACTION: Explore gender issues in the corpus linguistics software of Graddol

Thoughts of the day:

- recurring problem of PhD is one of scope - in the 'old days' one could hive off 2nd language issues into a discrete area - largely surface features and an underlying rationale of teaching convergence with Standard English + readability research treatment of text but now with greater and greater emphasis placed on the constitutive role of language in learning, in power issues, discourse, World Englishes (e.g. Zimbabwean English, Indian English as established, legitimate (rather than legitimised) culturally appropriated Englishes, comparative rhetoric (different traditions in argumentation) it becomes increasingly difficult to think in terms of 2nd language learners, difficult to separate out language learning issues from learning issues, i.e. BIG AND UNMANAGEABLE

- issues connected with Northedges approach with UNISA DE materials - simple narrative versions to bring out conceptual issues but leading up to a transition into the way those concepts are talked about in academic language within a given subject area - has certain limitations, can it be used throughout or is it a strategy for discourse initiation only, i.e. particularly important at the beginning of courses? Requires a suspension of belief. Would a narrative approach work in any discipline, in certain topic areas? NAME seem to think there is a lot a relevance in genre theory - Swales and universal moves. Ties up with orality questions.

- Zimbabwean English - increasingly thinking about making connecting with work environment. Importance of asking students about the sort of writing they do in work context and how it connects or doesn't with the written work on the course.

ACTION

Thought - Emerging pedagogical implications

- Range of strategies emerging: easification v simplification (importance of authentic materials), simple versions leading up to 'authentic' material, Northedges narrative route as discourse initiation. marginalia as study skills voice and pointing up the way language is used, building in connections between traditional ways of learning and alternative, weaning away from transmission tendency via more dialogic teaching (Freire), mixing inductive and deductive reasoning, multivocality (Graddol) pointing up the intertextuality of the course content and its relativity' as knowledge, glossary strategies, wrap around TMA material re structuring of essay, cumulative (scaffolding) sociolinguistic and critical language points drawn from genre analysis leading up to TMA's, building more on students experience via case-studies, the relationship between orality and literacy in an oral culture, increased use of the audio-cassette to support the course, feedback, introducing a critical voice, range of learner strategies

- cline - content areas which can be virtually culture-free and those that need lots of heavy local level adaptation - how decide?

- trying to make more than lip-service to culture - Litraid - attempting to bring to life forms of traditional teaching, what learn from traditional ways and transitions from. bill thinks that once the students have been exposed to alternative methodology, there is no turning back - the students themselves generate the interest and reject old form - ethical issues, liberal tentativeness irrelevant?

5.6.96.

Field visits at to Mashonaland West - Chegutu and Mubaira

- transcription - ideology in transcription - look at Celia Robert's refs to this are - how to represent non-standard English in transcripts and issues around

ACTION: Celia Roberts Stuff

- careful labelling of tapes - lost part of a very good interview through forgetting to label one side and lost in the next interview.. set it up very carefully for other sessions and lay them all out on the table before hand...care to be taken when turn over in mid-interview

- NAME to reiterate his job on tape when in the group meeting? NAME to reiterate the different types of farmers in his region and the agro-ecological region

- the two one-to-one interviews also acted as a dry run, a piloting/orientation to flesh out what questions worked, what didn't, what were sensitive areas - very useful activity as I was quite nervous

- NAME and NAME - light, where NAME work - conditions element to questions - when do you work? where do you work?

- bang straight into the pedagogical stuff, very easy to get long-winded diversions in the cultural aspects of content what rather than **how** they learn, very careful when talking about

384

language - educated Zimbaweans are extremely sensitive in this area because they consider themselves and **are** usually highly proficient English language speakers and have been using English as a medium of instruction since first day in Primary school so must handle/plan this are very carefully, both are clearly nervous about criticising the materials and hedge their criticism with a nervous that's my own point of view or say it their fault - play on Gittinger, how to incorporate gender issues, how incorporate the materials side of thing, talking about academic literacy - more the way they write in academic books which gets in the way of understanding key concepts - lots of reassuring needed - they are nervous - focused on actual materials and also include feedback. ? discuss language issues alongside areas like writing rather than as a topic by itself? Keep it simple so that you can respond to what they are saying trust yourself to remember your agenda rather than relying on notes. focus on writing essays 1st year look at some feedback from last second year? feed back to them Tsododo comments re TMA's and why it is useful for you all to be studying on the course - common language but disguise the fact that its the boss's ideas. contrast in perception?

- Key areas: Pedagogy rather than vague discussions on content

orality v literacy
contrastive rhetoric
Zimbabwean English
Litraid - introducing the dialogic
? Language background- facts and figures
Percentage of English language speaker

Different levels:

1. Bottom-up student pov feedback to producers of the course

- general study difficulties
- specific difficulties/attitudes related to studying on a course produced and marked in the UK feedback to Wye

2. Arguments around internationalised courses v local level v regional level

- models of adaptation

- feasible to incorporate Zimbabwean aspects in internationalised courses(inclusionist argument) or exclusionist argument (not possible and better to have local level course)

- mismatched assumptions between culture of production and culture of reception (typical strategies adopted for English-medium learners, assumptions about what & how learners learn)
-
3. Implications at a microlevel of text design

- relationship between orality and literacy - implications in terms of textual scaffolding
- genre theorists aims but not technicist means, i.e. not writing component but how to scaffold the materials in-text and in audiocassette to achieve a more naturalistic progression to those aims
- Zimbabwean English - implications in assessment, in-text models, audio-cassettes, appreciation on the part of markers
- Comparative rhetoric - implications
- transition from traditional - implications building on traditional
- politics of difference
- dialogical, problem-posing, critical voice

- multivocality, critical voice
- ergonomics
- adults bringing in their own experiences

- tutors not seeing writing

- tutors mediating on audiotape?

- strategies - general textual strategies, culture specific, or just universal open strategies

- research methodology - combination of careful planning and flexibility, i.e. - one-shot occasion, with built in piloting. orientation for interviewer - planned for big meeting towards end of visit so that earlier issues that arose from interviews, impressions from ss/tutors/other professionals would contribute and dovetail into the content of the big sessions. Limit to how much you can plan in the UK - must be flexible

- buy paper every day this week and count/cut no of refs to Agriculture - the vast importance of Ag to Zimbabwean economy

APPENDIX 3: _Workshop schedule and worksheets_

Workshop Schedule

<u>Wednesday 12th June</u>

10.00 - 10.30 Tea	
10.30 - 11.00	Session 1 - full group
11.00 - 12.20	Session 2 - full group
12.20 - 12.30	Session 3 - two groups
12.30 -1.00	Plenary - full group
1.00 - 2.00	Lunch (chairperson for session 4 meet me @ 1.45 in classroom)
2.00 - 2.45	Session 4 - all group for first 5 mins and then two groups
2.45 - 3.30	Plenary - full group
3.30 - 3.45	Tea
3.45 - 5.30	Session 4 (contin) - all group for 5 mins and then **three** groups

<u>Thursday 13th June</u>

9.00 - 10.00	Session 5 - full group for 5 mins, then two groups
10.00 - 10.30	Tea
10.30 - 11.30	Plenary session
12.00 - 1.00	Session 6 - full group
1.00 - 2.00	Lunch
2.00 - 3.30	Session 7 - two groups
3.30 - 4.00	Tea
4.00 - 5.00	Plenary Session

TOPICS OF SESSIONS

Session 1	Introduction to workshops
Session 2	Introducing yourselves
Session 3	Describing the course
Session 4	TMA's/exams
Session 5	Local languages
Session 6	Looking at text
Session 7	Classical models and their relevance to Zimbabwe
Session 8	Planning for Zimbabwe

- introductions

Introducing myself

Overview: 15-20 minutes talk/break for tea
- who I am
- why I am here
- type of research and use of data
- why you have been chosen
- how organising the sessions

Thank you

First of all let me thank you for agreeing to meet me. I know you are all busy professionals and I very much appreciate you giving me your time and for travelling such long distances to see me. I expect you will want to know what we will be doing in these sessions and what is in it for you. Mr Mukwidigwi has already explained that during the sessions you will have the opportunity to discuss any problems you have with the course both amongst yourselves and with me. For example, we will be looking at issues connected with the writing of TMA's. I understand that you only see each other once in two months for pre-planned tutorials so I hope you will regard this as an opportunity to review your progress and to discuss any general or specific problems. As you know, your accommodation and travel expenses have been paid and a fee of $100 ZD per day will be paid to each of you.

Who

Charlotte Creed
Lecturer at Kings College, University of London in Communication Studies - help overseas students coming to UK to study at Masters level. Help them with how they can bring their own knowledge and experience into their essays, seminars.

Research area - DE in developing countries
<u>From the writers pov</u> - how to write DE course materials so that they are interesting and accessible and relevant to the students.
<u>Students pov</u> - In what ways are the materials relevant to Zimbabwean students both in what they learn and how they learn and where it isn't relevant how can the materials be adapted. Been to Zim, Nigeria, Mozambique, South Africa, Jamaica, India I have been to Zimbabwe 6 years ago but spoke only to DE writers so I feel very privileged to meet up with students.

Why I am here

I understand you are taking a course in research methods so this will relate to your work. Let me tell you what sort of research I am doing. Bottom-up research, looking at the course from a students point of view - broadly qualitative, ethnographic approach which will draw on lots of different types of data - interviews, group interviews, one-to-one interviews, observing tutorials and study groups. Some of this research has already been done last week mainly with 1st and 3rd yr students but I have also met some of you here today. The work that we will do in the next two days - Wednesday and Thursday - will largely be workshop based and a typical workshop will consist of you being split into 2 groups discussing some topics on a worksheet and then reporting back your discussion to the full group. I will nominate a chairperson and notetaker when you are split into two groups. The chairperson will make sure about things like timing, taking you through the worksheets. The notetaker will be taking notes from the discussion and then giving feedback in a plenary session. So during the course of the two days each one of you will probably assume those roles. When the group is split into groups, I will be kicking you off and will leave you alone but will occasionally return and sit in - disregard my presence

off and will leave you alone but will occasionally return and sit in - disregard my presence as far as is possible - if there are things that need to be clarified, please ask. in these groups session you may use any language you feel comfortable with. Please don't feel that you have to use English if I am present. However, I will be fully present at the plenary session and that plenary session will be held in the English language. I'll talk about the details of the schedule later on. The schedule is open to suggestions from you if you wish to discuss or extend the sessions in any way.

Any questions so far?

Who am I doing this research for and what will it be used for?

<u>Employed by Wye as an independent researcher:</u> Let me stress the word independent - any contributions you make will be anonymous, no names will be given - the notetaker must not give any particular names, you needn't say who made the contribution. The aim is to give you the opportunity of thinking about the course as a whole and to ask you some questions about the course, summarise those ideas as a feedback to Wye who are very interested in what you say and will use what you say in various ways:

- redesign any aspects of the course to make it more relevant for Zimbabwean ss
- add components to the course to make it more relevant for Zimbabwean ss
- to be more aware of Zimbabwean issues in for example, TMA assessment, tutorial, examinations

So what you say will be of great use to future Zimbabwean ss on the course. Let me say here that I will summarise back to you your comments before I approach Wye so that you can be sure of what I am reporting back and at the same time correct any mistakes I have made. I will be distributing an address sheet later on.

- don't get to meet students and actually know very little about them and the cultural and their socio-economic and political contexts, make assumptions, right? wrong? what you say is very important to them, they want feedback from you. Essentially I am looking at the culture of production - Wye and the culture of reception - you Zimbabwean students and asking where the two meet and where they don't. Where they don't, what can be done? Ss pov v imp now we are moving into a world of internationalised DE courses like this course where the course is produced in one country but studied by ss in other countries - and unless the producers of the course understand better who they are writing for, it becomes a form of instructional domination in the sense that it stifles your own creativity - set you along certain tramlines - and perhaps very British tramlines - which marginalise Zimbabwean ways of doings things.

In brief:

- how could these materials be better adapted to Zimbabwean ss?
- need to know what you think is helpful about the course and what you think unhelpful or where you have difficulties and to think about how to overcome these

Stress independence:

- not represent Wye or Agritex. That's a plus and the reason that Wye are particularly interested in these discussions - they feel that if a Wye person came here you might feel obliged to be overly polite about the course, find it difficult to criticise and think that what you say might influence your marks.

Confidentiality - what you say will be summarised, no student will be identified (complete confidentiality assured), nothing to do with assessment.

Mr Tsododo - director of Agritex - has asked to hear a summary of your views - if there is something you particularly want me to say to him, or not say to him, please tell me.

These session are for you to tell me what about certain issues - you are the teachers and I am the student. so although I have chosen the questions to ask, I am learning from you. I am not an expert in your field. If there are other questions you think we should consider, as a group. I would be very interested. You can ask me questions about if you don't understand something or you want to know why I am doing something. If you want to see me individually after the sessions, please ask. I will be taking lunch with you and around at all tea breaks.

why you have been chosen as a group

- over midway through the course - time to settle into the course, you are in a position to have an overview of the courses that you have done, and people who have finished the course tend to forget problems, people just at the beginning of the course are thinking Help!

- Wye have provided me with course materials, I have looked at the exam paper and they allowed me to look at TMA's from the whole student body, i.e. not only Zimbabwe. Let me tell you that the Zimbabwean students are by far the most impressive.

how I have organised the sessions

distribute copy of schedule - take through - it may get out of time and I may have to rearrange timings for the following day. If so I will issue you with a new schedule.

admin

- circulating paper for you to complete tonight and hand in to me tomorrow morning
- payment made to cover your expenses has been made to the college
- recording - I want to be able to listen to you talking without taking copious notes and the only way round that is to record the sessions and make notes from them afterwards. The tapes are for my use only. Any objections?

Any questions?

Introducing yourselves

Briefly introduce yourselves - name, job, district, province

Answer these questions about your work

- what do you find the most satisfying about your work?
- what do you dread?
- what problems do you regard as insurmountable?
- what problems can be overcome and what is needed to be done to overcome them?
- Where does the study with Wye fit in with your aspirations?

NB. You've got 8 minutes each!

Chairperson's notes

1. Introduce yourself to the group and have them introduce themselves too. Nominate a notetaker to take careful notes of the discussion for feedback in the plenary session.

2. Tell them your group is going to draw a diagram to describe the course (5 minutes max.) on flip chart paper, using blue and black pens and the notetaker will present their chart at the plenary. Start the task.

When the diagram is finished, ask them to add to the diagram (with a red pen only) any **unofficial** parts of the course. Explanation of unofficial, e.g. discussion of content with colleagues , spouses, other Zimbabwean readings/books/articles, how to write essays books, time management wall charts, dictionaries (8 minutes max.)

On completion, check that the diagram represents the consensus of the group. Any differences in opinion should be encouraged and indicated on the diagram.

Return to plenary.

Personal notes to chair: (do not read out to the group)

Your job it to make sure everybody contributes to the discussion and that nobody overdominates the group. Differences in opinion are to be encouraged and developed.

Instruct the notetaker to cover all points raised - both agreement and disagreement and to make sure all comments are anonymous (no names are to be mentioned in the feedback). Cover for the notetaker if they are speaking.

You are responsible for setting strict time-limits, for making sure all the activities are completed and for operating the tape-machine.

If you are unclear about some any instructions, call me!

Activity 1

Using the pieces of TMA feedback below, discuss the following questions:

Is the person who sets the person who sets the TMA someone who is easily satisfied? (Give reasons for your answers).

How are students to know what is required of them?

Summarise what the tutors are trying to get at.

TMA Feedback

VERY GOOD
IMPROVEMENT NEEDED
SATISFACTORY

You give the two reasons for this process being called a cycle, but with little explanation - you could have developed a more critical discussion.

The main problem is that your answers are too short and do not fully answer the questions. You need a more systematic approach in developing answers.

These are essay type questions, in other words you are expected to write an essay to answer each question.

You will gain marks if you use examples as much as possible.

Use examples but don't go into too much depth or detail.

You are now expected to be an economist. You have to write as an economist, using the language and methods of economists. Practice on some of the remaining questions on the TMA 3.

These should be written in continuous prose. It is only appropriate to write in note form if you are listing a number of specific and related points as for the cycle in Question 4, or if you are extremely short of time.

You've obviously got a very good memory of the course text but the same forms of words come up which causes me to mark the papers down.

There is no one correct answer to this question. Be more experimental and have more faith in bringing in your own experiences and opinions.

I think that TMA's should be 20-30% of the overall assessment and focused around Zimbabwean case-studies.

Mr Gideon Tsododo, Agritex

Students Feedback

I cannot write the way they want me to...I do not write the way they want me to..and...I don't want to write the way they want me to write..
Nigerian student

I can discuss these sort of complex things better when I'm speaking rather than writing...also when I'm in my own language...what I end up doing is coming in and out of English...sort of translating ideas...
South African student

I found it really difficult getting back into this type of writing... I lost all my confidence at the beginning..I couldn't make any connections to the way I normally write... you know in work or at home
Belgium Student

I'm not really clear about what they want...what they require from an essay..
English student

I find all the new terms difficult to compile
English student

...The trouble with all these readers ..textbooks and manuals is getting all my notes and ideas together when I'm writing for essays or revising for exams
Zimbabwean student

Activity 4 - group 1

Below are some typical beginnings to assignment and exam questions:

1. Discuss what they mean
2. Identify 2 parts of the Wye curriculum that would naturally demand the word (in, for example, a TMA question).

evaluate

describe

Activity 5

Using the exam questions below, pretend you are in the exam and write your short planning notes as if you were about to answer it.

Briefly describe an agricultural project with which you are familiar. Imagine that you have been asked to plan the feasibility study for such a project. Describe the range of data that will be needed and, in detail, the sequence of analyses.

Activity 4 - group 2

Below are some typical beginnings to assignment and exam questions:

1. Discuss what they mean
2. Identify 2 parts of the Wye curriculum that would naturally demand the word (in, for example, a TMA question).

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discuss

critically assess

Activity 5

Using the exam questions below, pretend you are in the exam and write your short planning notes as if you were about to answer it.

Critically assess the project cycle as a process for the planning and implementation of public sector investment in developing countries. Do you think that a participatory approach to the design and implementation of public sector investments in agriculture can be compatible with the conventional project cycle?

Activity 4 - group 3

Below are some typical beginnings to assignment and exam questions:

1. Discuss what they mean
2. Identify 2 parts of the Wye curriculum that would naturally demand the word (in, for example, a TMA question).

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compare

provide a definition

Activity 5

Using the exam questions below, pretend you are in the exam and write your short planning notes as if you were about to answer it.

Compare the main criteria for financial analysis at farm level and at project level. How are the two connected?

Chairpersons notes

Introduce yourself to the group and have them introduce themselves to you too. Nominate a notetaker to take careful notes of the discussion for feedback in the plenary session.

Tell your group that you will be discussing issues around TMA's. Describe that you are going to be discussing them in the following different activities:

Activity 1. TMA feedback from Wye tutors
Activity 2. Reactions from students to TMA feedback and writing
Activity 3. Deciding whether additional help is required in the course.

Distribute the worksheets, read out Activity 1 and begin.
Allow 20 minutes per activity and then return to the plenary.

Post Plenary return to group

Tell your group that you will discussing common TMA words like evaluate, discuss, etc. and what they mean in two separate activities. distribute the worksheets. Take them through Activity 1 and begin. Allow 30 minutes per activity and then return to the plenary.

Personal notes to chair: (do not read out to the group)

Your job it to make sure everybody contributes to the discussion and that nobody overdominates the group. Differences in opinion are to be encouraged and developed.

Instruct the notetaker to cover all points raised - both agreement and disagreement and to make sure all comments are anonymous (no names are to be mentioned in the feedback). Cover for the notetaker if they are speaking.

You are responsible for setting strict time-limits, for making sure all the activities are completed and for operating the tape-machine.

If you are unclear about some any instructions, call me!

Activity 1

The sooner the medium of instruction in anything to do with agriculture is switched away from English and back to local languages (Shona or Ndebele) the more meaningful the debates will become within the field of Agriculture.
Zimbabwean agricultural specialist

Discuss.

Activity 2

1. Identify 6 particular areas where local languages are better at talking about agricultural phenomena than English, e.g. types of cattle

2. List local language examples under each category and opposite supply a translation/description of their meanings in English

Activity 3

1. Discuss whether and where you could build these issues into the Wye course, e.g. TMA's, fieldwork, audio-cassettes. This may mean that you are adding new parts to the course or incorporating them into the existing course.

Chair notes

1. Introduce yourself to the group and have them introduce themselves too. Nominate a notetaker to take careful notes of the discussion for feedback in the plenary session.

2. Tell the group this is a discussion workshop around the topic of vernacular languages and based around 3 activities of 20 minutes each. followed by a plenary session to the full group.(the plenary session is to be conducted in English but the activities can be discussed in whatever language they feel comfortable with).

3. Give out worksheets

Activity 1

Read out quote and ask group to discuss
Notetaker to take notes of discussion

Activity 2

Read out question and ask if clear. Ask group to discuss.
Notetaker to write down categories.

Activity 3

Read out question and ask if clear. Notetaker to take notes

Personal notes to chair: (do not read out to the group)

Your job it to make sure everybody contributes to the discussion and that nobody overdominates the group. Differences in opinion are to be encouraged and developed.

Instruct the notetaker to cover all points raised - both agreement and disagreement and to make sure all comments are anonymous (no names are to be mentioned in the feedback). Cover for the notetaker if they are speaking.

You are responsible for setting strict time-limits, for making sure all the activities are completed and for operating the tape-machine.

If you are unclear about some any instructions, call me!

Activity 1

If Wye is going to improve and expand their curriculum, perhaps their manuals should be accompanied by a compendium of readings which is country-specific. Discuss.

What would a Zimbabwean compendium of parallel readings for Unit 12 (Project Planning) contain? Confine your discussion to page 2 and points (1) - (v).

Chair notes

1. Introduced yourself to the group and have them introduce themselves too. Nominate a notetaker to take careful notes of the discussion for feedback in the plenary.

2. Distribute the worksheet and read it out. Check the group is clear about the activities. Allow 10 minutes for discussion of quote and 30 minutes for the compendium.

Personal notes to chair: (do not read out to the group)

Your job it to make sure everybody contributes to the discussion and that nobody overdominates the group. Differences in opinion are to be encouraged and developed.

Instruct the notetaker to cover all points raised - both agreement and disagreement and to make sure all comments are anonymous (no names are to be mentioned in the feedback). Cover for the notetaker if they are speaking.

You are responsible for setting strict time-limits, for making sure all the activities are completed and for operating the tape-machine.

If you are unclear about some any instructions, call me!

Activity 1

Which of the following factors is most likely to cause the phases of project development identified by Wye/Gittinger to fail or need modification in Zimbabwe? Give specific examples from projects with which you are familiar:-
1. political factors
2. socio-economic factors including ESAP (Economic Structural Adjustment Programme)
3. climatic factors
4. factors relating to the soil
5. Issues of logistics, communication and delivery
6. gender roles (either traditional or modern)

Activity 2

Briefly describe an agricultural development project with which you are familiar. Imagine that you have been asked to plan the feasibility study for such a project. Describe the range of data that will be needed and, in detail, the sequence of analyses that should be undertaken.

Notes to the Chairperson

1. Introduce yourself to the group and have them introduce themselves to you too. Nominate a notetaker to take careful notes of the discussion for feedback in the plenary session.

2. Have each member of the group state the project/s in which they are involved in summary form. (No more than three minutes each.)

3. Tell them that the group is going to discuss the validity of the taxonomies for project development as presented in Gittinger (1982) and the Wye manual. You are going to discuss its validity in relation to Zimbabwean projects. (40 minutes)

4. Distribute the worksheet and read it to them.

5. Discuss each factor.

6. Ask each member of the group whether they feel that Gittinger's taxonomy is valid for Zimbabwe?

7. Turn to Activity 2 - ask the group to read the essay question and ask them to discuss how they might write the essay from a specifically Zimbabwean perspective.

Personal notes to chair: (do not read out to the group)

Your job it to make sure everybody contributes to the discussion and that nobody overdominates the group. Differences in opinion are to be encouraged and developed.

Instruct the notetaker to cover all points raised - both agreement and disagreement and to make sure all comments are anonymous (no names are to be mentioned in the feedback). Cover for the notetaker if they are speaking.

You are responsible for setting strict time-limits, for making sure all the activities are completed and for operating the tape-machine.

If you are unclear about some any instructions, call me!

Activity 1 - chair notes

1. Introduce yourself to the group and have them introduce themselves too. Nominate a notetaker to take careful notes of the discussion for feedback in the plenary session.

2. Tell the group that they will discuss whether they would add more Zimbabwean components to the original flipchart drawings of Session 2 bearing in mind the issues that arose from other sessions. Remind them of the topic of those sessions and discuss what implications could be drawn from each:

Session 3 - TMA issues, tutor feedback, essay questions, etc.
Session 4 - language issues, the role of vernacular languages, the role of   English
Session 5 - the social factors behind the interpretation of text
Session 6 - classical models and their relevance to Zimbabwe

Indicate to your group that the discussion needn't be confined to these sessions only. If there are other elements the group think is important, encourage them. the diagram should represent a consensus of the groups' ideas but note that differences of opinion should be encouraged!

Personal notes to chair: (do not read out to the group)

Your job it to make sure everybody contributes to the discussion and that nobody overdominates the group. Differences in opinion are to be encouraged and developed.

Instruct the notetaker to cover all points raised - both agreement and disagreement and to make sure all comments are anonymous (no names are to be mentioned in the feedback). Cover for the notetaker if they are speaking.

You are responsible for setting strict time-limits, for making sure all the activities are completed and for operating the tape-machine.

If you are unclear about some any instructions, call me!

APPENDIX 4: _Workshop activities completed by post_

Activity 1

TMA's
What do you consider to be your rights and responsibilities around TMA writing?

What do you consider to be the rights and responsibilities of the Wye-based TMA writers/markers?

Activity 2

Languages

What languages do you speak? What language do you use in which situation (give at least 8 examples)

Which language(s) would you choose to study in. Why?

Which languages do you read in? What type of reading?

Which language do you prefer to use for praying/poetry/diary?

What is/are the language(s) for success? Can you explain your reasons?

MINI-QUESTIONNAIRE/WYE ACADEMIC MATERIALS WRITERS

Postgraduate Diploma in Agricultural Development

I am doing some case-study research at Wye college in connection with my work - the problems of overseas distance education students who are studying a UK produced and tutored course in another country and in the medium of English (which for many is a second or foreign language).

As key players in this field, I would very much value your insight on some of the issues. Could you answer a mini-questionnaire? I enclose a series of questions. I would be most grateful if you would supply some response (as lengthy or brief as you would like) and return on a separate sheet to Jane Bryson. Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Charlotte Creed

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1. A course produced in the UK but studied mainly by overseas learners

1.1. How do you incorporate the real contexts of your students? For example, relating material via case-studies, incorporating cross-cultural perspectives, cross-national comparative materials, etc?

1.2 How do you help the learners bring in their own contexts?

1.3 Do you see the academic materials as having generic principles which students have to then apply to a local level situation or otherwise. For example, grounded in real-life contexts, a mixture of both or other?

1.4 Some Trinidadian academics thinking about adapting the Wye course for Caribbean learners commented that some of the materials were not 'provocative' enough. They meant they did not raise contentious issues, present issues as problematic. Is this a fair comment?

1.5 Current debates about international courses focus on:

- the notion that you dilute the Britishness of the materials/qualifications by taking an overly multi/cross cultural approach

- that a cross-cultural approach only achieves a tokenistic gesture towards other cultures

- the need for academics to be more explicit to the students about academic expectations (in writing, for example) and more aware of the Britishness of their own academic orientation

- the need to legitimise differences by encouraging students to adopt an outsiders critical stance towards UK-produced materials

How do you respond to these issues? Do you feel there are different priorities?

1.7 Materials revision - on what grounds do you revise the academic materials?

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2. Many of the learners are studying through a language which is a second/foreign language (albeit at an advanced level)

2.1 Do you adopt particular strategies to help learners who are studying in a second/foreign language? If so, what are they?

2.2 Do you see yourself as responsible for developing the 'communicative competence' of your learners (e.g. their ability to write discursive essays, their reading skills) of do you feel this should be dealt with separately (e.g. in a study skills

component, via a specialist editor/tutor, via a local level tutor)?

2.3   A lot of markers' comments (on TMA & exam feedback) suggest that the students finding difficulty in writing discursive, argumentative essays and the critical appraisal of complex situations. Do you agree and if so how do you account for this?

2.4   Are certain exam questions misinterpreted? Any explanations?

2.5   To what extent do you expect the students to write according to British norms of academic writing? How important is correct use of English in marking of essays? Do you, for example, turn a blind eye when the content if fine but the English isn't?

2.6   Would/do you recognise different varieties of English, e.g. Zimbabwean English, Indian English or feel it important to insist on a standard English for all students?

2.7   Would/do you recognise different rhetorical traditions, i.e. different cultural traditions of arguing?

2.8   Are there other areas/questions you feel are important to raise and for me to explore when I visit your Zimbabwean students?

Thank you and can you please return your answers to Jane Bryson as soon as possible.

APPENDIX 6: *Example of tutor reply to questionnaire*

Dear Charlotte

Sorry to have taken so long to reply to your questionnaire. I hope this response is not too late to contribute to your research. I wrote the (*deleted*) course for Wye - so my responses reflect my experience of writing this course and marking student's work.

1.1　The course is designed as far as possible to relate to the contexts in which students live and work. This is done with the extensive use of case studies - drawn from Africa, Asia an Latin America - and questions encouraging student to reflect on their own situation, and experiences, the similarities and differences with the case studies they are reading.

1.2　I see the academic materials very much as reflecting the context and experiences of the authors and encourage students to take a critical view.

1.3　I think this varies from course to course. I would say that the (*deleted*) course does not take a 'line' on gender analysis in development - but endeavours to present students with a range of view in order to form their own opinions. This therefore includes some materials that is quite radical, politically challenging and in this sense controversial, as well as material that depoliticises gender argument, and therefore in a sense also quite controversial.

1.4　I think it is helpful and interesting to incorporate different perspectives into the course, and students can learn from experiences in other countries. I would not therefore feel it was useful to localise a course to the extent of making all the materials 'local'.

1.5　I would be interested to learn more about these debates. The theoretical analysis in the course is by no means exclusively British. The course includes many articles by Asian, Latin American and North American academics. I am British, however, and it may well be that the way I have put the materials together reflects a 'British' view. I am conscious that I have little access to the academic gender debates taking place within Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. It may also be that the method of assessment is 'British' and possibly not well understood or appropriate to some of the cultures within which we are working.

1.6　The (*deleted*) course was revised last year. This is the first year it has run in its modified form. I was not the original author. Revisions were made on the basis that the course had been

411

written time ago and therefore was to some extent out of date. It was also being revised to fit with both of the Wye Masters programmes. The revisions were not to my knowledge informed by feedback from students. I am very interested to hear students views on the new course, however, and there are certain revisions I will be asking for at the end of this year to reflect these.

2.1 No I don't adopt any specific strategies although I am very aware that this is a great problem for some students.

2.2. In marking TMA's, I try to give students guidelines on writing essays, etc. I find many student have a fairly limiting understanding of what is expected of them in this and I do feel that it would be helpful to deal with this separately and more comprehensively. If this does not happen, one of the revisions I would like to make to the course at the end of this year is to incorporate some basic guidelines on writing essay.

2.3 I agree with this - in some cases. My own understanding of this is that as far as I am aware, students are given no guidelines on, and possibly little support in developing these skills.

2.4 I have yet to mark any exams.

2.5 Yes, I do turn a blind eye to student's use of English. I am most concerned that they have understood and thought about the argument they are discussing.

2.6 I do not feel it is important to insist on standard English - I would resist any attempt to any such regulation.

2.7 I have not marked enough papers to recognise national patterns - I can recognise individual patterns of argument.

2.8 I guess you must also be writing to students to ask them about these issues. I would be most interested to hear what they have to say.

I hope this is of some help to you.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX 7: *DE survey*

1. Courses teaching learners how to write and run DE courses.

All 18 such courses cited in the ICDL database were contacted, out of which the following five returned course materials relating to good practice guidelines for DE writing:

- University of London, Dept of International and Comparative Education with the International Extension College (MA/Diploma in Distance Education,)

- Athabasca University (Training for Improved Performance Project)

- UNE Distance Education Centre, Armidale (Distance Education: Foundations and Theoretical Perspectives)

- Central Queensland University, Distance Education Centre (Creating Flexible Learning)

- Association of European Correspondence Schools (Diploma in Distance Education)

2. Internal institutional guidelines within single-, bi-, or mixed-mode DE institutions in the UK and internationally.

All 20 of the teacher education DE courses cited in the ICDL database were contacted, of which the following 5 returned internal guidelines:

- A guide to writing of correspondence courses for DE learners (University of Lagos)

- Guidelines for study guide design (Rand Afrikaans University)

- Introduction to Distance Education (University of Lesotho)

- A writers' guide to Distance Learning (Wye College)

- Writing guidelines (Southern Cross University)

3. Standard books about DE writing

- Teaching through self-instruction (Rowntree, 1990)

- The Open Learning Handbook (Race, 1994)

- Materials Production in Open and Distance Learning (Lockwood, 1994)

413

- Distance Teaching for the Third World (Young et al, 1991)

Teacher Education Courses were contacted in the following institutions:-

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University of Namibia

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National Teachers Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria

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Dear

Guidelines to DE Authors

We are doing a survey and a collection of the guidelines which are issued to authors of DE materials. These are often internally produced booklets which cover such areas as instructional design, writing readable prose, etc.

If you produce such guidelines, we would be very grateful if you would donate them to the International Centre for Distance Learning.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Harry
Director

APPENDIX 8: _SAIL Marking scheme_

There follows two descriptions of how the SAIL marking scheme is used to assess a written argument. These consist of criterion-referenced 'indicators' of achievement for the different - global, local and accuracy - levels.

The first, is an introductory description of the indicators for Argument.

The second, outlines the marking scheme in detail for practical use. In the second, the indicators are made up usually of 4 codes, with code 1 indicating mastery of a particular attainment target. This is reproduced (with permission) in summary form from Johnson, 1994:137-162. His accompanying, explanatory comments about what each 'indicator' means are also reproduced and act as a guide for a writing assessor trying to apply this framework, say, to a batch of arguments essays. The resulting codes should indicate to the teachers (and students) areas of weakness.

No	Indicator	Description
FG1	Writing Focus	An overall judgement as to whether the writing is directed towards the writer, reader, subject matter or indeed has no clear bias
UG2	Writing Use	An overall judgement about whether information work: (i) particularise (ii) generalise (iii) to place events in a wider context
OG3	Writing Organisation	An overall judgement as to whether information is arranged: EITHER (I) as a chronological sequence of events (ii) into categories by grouping together like information (iii) by theme in which content is liked to a focal point using affective or logical connections. OR whether there is no clear organisation principles at work in ordering the information in the text as a whole.
FG4	Reader Agreement	An attempt is made to involve the reader in the discourse by influencing his/her point of view
UG5	Stated Premise Stipulation	Central statement, expressing a viewpoint, is made together with claims in support of this
UG6	Classification	The grouping of information
OG7	Evidence	(I) Evidence drawn from a number of contexts (ii) evidence drawn from one are (iii) no evidence is forwarded
OG8	Topic Statements	The writing is divided into sections each of which is marked by a general statement which classified the information which follows
FL1	Personal Reference	The writing is objective. The generic of 'we' may be evident in the writing but there should be no evidence of the first person 'I'
OL2	Markers of Causality	Words and phrases such as, 'for example', 'this results in', 'thus', which explicitly mark condition-consequence, concession-contra-expectation and reason-result
UL3	Semantic Links	Sentences linked by the causal relations of condition-consequence, concession-contra-expectation and reason-result
OL4	Conjunctions	The use of a variety of causal conjunctions or alternative devices such s 'juxtaposition'
OL5	Cohesive Links	Evidence of substitution and ellipsis
OL6	Thematic Patterns	Structural links between sentences. Either these are links between adjacent sentences or (ii) links between non-adjacent sentences in the form of a hierarchical pattern
FA1	Legibility	A minimum of 1000 words which can be at least read
OA2	Syntax	Overall control of advanced forms of sentence structure being achieved through the use of embedded subordination
OA3	Sentence Forms	A variety of sentences forms including rhetorical questions and nominalisations are used to effect
OA4	Punctuation	The overall control and effective use of punctuation including within sentence punctuation
UA4	Word Choice	The use of abstract vocabulary throughout the script
OA6	Spelling	The accurate spelling of common words including those with prefixes and suffixes
OA7	Paragraph Divisions	The organisation of information through he division of text into units with specific communicative functions
FA8	Drafting	More than one draft of a text with noticeable variation

Key:
FG = Focus Global   FL = Focus Level   FA = Focus Accuracy
UG = Use Global   UL = Use Local   UA = Use Accuracy
OG = Organisation Global   OL = Organisation Local   OA = Organisation Accuracy

Global level of text

Indicator FG1 - Writing Focus

In written argument, focus requires writers to influence or engage their readers. Characteristic linguistic devices include words and phrases which are covert requests to readers for their agreement being presented such as 'obviously'; 'it is clear that'.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Writing Focus (FG1)
Code 1	Reader interests are paramount
Code 2	There is a dominant writer presence
Code 3	The subject matter takes precedence over either writer or reader
Code 4	The focus of the writing changes so no one type is dominant

Indicator UG2 - Writing Use

Writing use in argument is for the purposes of examination or evaluation. Successful arguments employ such language strategies as 'building a case' or making claims, supported with relevant data, demonstrating the connection between claims and data and then discussing the consequences of the claims.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Writing Use (FG1)
Code 1	Information is used for the purpose of examination in a substantial portion of the text
Code 2	The writing is mainly explanatory in which the topic is expanded on by enlarging on specific statements
Code 3	The writing is mainly descriptive and stages at the level of descriptive statement
Code 4	No one particular use of information dominates or is carried through the whole piece of writing.

Indicator OG3 - Writing Organisation

This indicator focuses on the way a text is ordered. Where writers of narrative would be expected to order their information in a temporal sequence, writers of argument would be expected to employ more sophisticated ways of structuring their writing (e.g. grouping information to support the development of the argument or linguistic principles like 'causation' and 'classification'). An argument usually develops in stages with each stage following on from another and combining to provide support for the central claims.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Writing Organisation (OG3)
Code 1	Information is grouped into categories which themselves are not presented in time order.
Code 2	The pattern of organisation is established by associating ideas to a common theme.
Code 3	A temporal pattern of organisation is followed.
Code 4	Inconsistent organisational patterns are evident.

Indicator FG4 - Reader Agreement

This indicator focuses on the extent to which writers of argument successfully address readers and convince them that their argument is sound. Characteristic linguistic strategies include words and phrases such as ' it is clear that', 'we can only conclude', 'we can see that'.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Reader Agreement - FG4
Code 1	Attempts to involve the reader in the argument are identifiable and sustained throughout the whole of the text
Code 2	Attempts to involve the reader in the argument can be identified in parts of the writing
Code 3	Attempts to involve the reader in the argument are not identifiable

Indicator UG5 - Stated Premise and Stipulation

This indicator examines the extent to which writers are able to present a case by making and defending claims. In written argument, writers have to account for the fact that readers are unlikely to accept claims without careful consideration and that they therefore may have to anticipate counter-claims. Writers of argument have to play the part of both the writer and reader - establish the worth of their own claims and anticipate and answer likely counter-claims.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Stated Premise, Stipulation (UG5)
Code 1	A stated premise which is supported by claims and counter claims
Code 2	There is a stated premise which is supported by claims
Code 3	Claims are made

Indicator UG6 - Evidence

To turn relevant facts into evidence by showing how they support the claim. In written argument, there is an expectation to present an opinion as a persuasive statement, show the 'grounds' for their claims, possibly the evaluation of other point put forward by other writers and the expansion and support of these with evidence.

Indicators of Achievement - Evidence - UG6

Key	
Code 1	Evidence is drawn from a number of contexts
Code 2	Evidence is drawn from one area
Code 3	No evidence is forwarded

Indicator OG7   Classification

Writers of argument are expected to categorise and group ideas in such a way that they lead the reader through the stages of the argument. Material must thus be organised in a logical and consistent fashion. Classification is a linguistic device which is used by writers to classify their information by reference to a key noun.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Classification (OG7)
Code 1	All information is grouped appropriately and the groups are linked
Code 2	Information is grouped appropriately
Code 3	Evidence of some grouping of information
Code 4	EITHER no noticeable attempt to group information OR information is inappropriately grouped.

Indicator OG8 - Topic Statements

Topic statements are used in written argument to indicate the dividing points between stages in the argument.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Topic Statements (OG8)
Code 1	The writing is presented as a unified whole with categorisation of information marked by topic sentences which relate to restricted aspect of the topic
Code 2	All the information is categorised with some sections marked by topic sentences
Code 3	Topic sentences are used in some sections
Code 4	Related information is grouped together

Local level of text

Indicator FL1 - Personal Reference

Here the expectation, when focusing on the reader, is that a writer or argument addresses a wide audience rather than a particular individual and therefore a formal and distant style is assumed.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Personal Reference (FL1)
Code 1	The writing is free from the first person pronoun 'I'
Code 2	Parts of the writing are free from first person pronoun 'I'
Code 3	The first person pronoun 'I' is used throughout

Indicator OL2 - Markers of Causality

Writers are expected to link sentences in hierarchical fashion by setting out the grounds or conditions and their conclusion or consequences. Thus writer are expected to set up causal relations between sentences, often denoted by words and phrases such as 'therefore', 'it follows that', 'thus'.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Markers of Causality (OL2)
Code 1	Markers of causality predominate
Code 2	Only occasional indicators of causality
Code 3	No markers of causality

Indicator UL3 - Semantic Links

This is the way in which information is used across sentences. In argument information functions as a means of evaluation. Certain sentence relations come into play most forcibly when the intention is to examine the information selected. One is setting up a hypothetical situation in one sentence and realising its outcome in the following. This is termed 'condition-consequence". Another is 'reason-result' where a statement given in one sentence can be deduced from the evidence given in another sentence.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Semantic Links (UL3)
Code 1	Relations of condition-consequence; concession-contra expectation and reason-result are evident throughout the script
Code 2	Relations of condition-consequence and reason-result are present in part of the text
Code 3	No causal or consequential relations are present

Indicator OL4 - Conjunctions

Certain strategies emerge as appropriate to the linking of sentences in written argument. Some of these include 'adversative' conjunctions, such as 'however', 'nevertheless', in contrast', 'on the other hand' or causal conjunctions such as 'therefore', consequently', as a result', 'for this reason'.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Conjunctions (OL4)
Code 1	A variety of conjunctions is used
Code 2	A heavy reliance on one or two types of conjunction
Code 3	Alternative devices are used, e.g. juxtaposition

Indicator OL5 - Cohesive Links

These are words and phrases used in a text which rely on other parts of the text for their interpretation or significance. These linguistic strategies link information across sentence and require writers to control the textual range of the 'tie' they establish. The distance between the elements which make up this connective device is to some extent established by the genre form. If well handled cohesive links achieve an advance form of organisation but if ill-conceived could lead to a breakdown of communication. Strategies for achieving cohesive links in written argument include devices such as substitution and ellipsis. Substitution is used to avoid repetition and ellipsis like substitution is used to eliminate redundant words.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Cohesive Links (OL5)
Code 1	Substitution and/or ellipsis are noticeable features
Code 2	There is the occasional use of substitution and/or ellipsis
Code 3	No substitution or ellipsis is noticed

Indicator OL6 - Thematic Patterns

Writers of argument are required to classify information and produce writing with a group structure. Information has to be ordered by abstract associations to provide a thematic structure to the writing.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Thematic Patterns (OL6)
Code 1	Hierarchical linkage is the most evident
Code 2	Stepped linkage is the most evident
Code 3	The text can be read fluently but neither pattern of linkage is evident
Code 4	The text is not fluent

Formal Accuracy level of text

Indicator FA1 - Length and Legibility

This focuses on the overall requirements of the writing task such as the length and legibility. However, it may be assumed that HE students would have little problems with the physical demands of transcription.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Length & Legibility (FA1)
Code 1	Looks long enough and is legible
Code 2	EITHER does not look long enough or legible

Indicator OA2 - Syntax

This refers to the expectation that the writer will use complex sentences, for example, by means of embedded subordination.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - syntax (OA2)
Code 1	Overall control of advanced form of sentence structure being achieved using embedded subordination
Code 2	Overall control of advanced forms of sentence structure. Lapses in sentence construction will be minor
Code 3	Complex sentences are used
Code 4	The conventions of sentence construction are not mastered

Indicator OA3 - Sentence Forms

This focuses on the forms of sentences used in the writing of argument for involving the reader in the argument. Writers are often expected to put down a question on the readers' behalf, preferably one to which they have an answer and one that readers are likely to agree with. Another is the hypothetical sentence, for example, 'if it were the case that...'.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Sentence Forms (OA3)
Code 1	Rhetorical questions and/or nominalisation are used to effect
Code 2	Rhetorical questions and/or nominalisation are evident
Code 3	Neither rhetorical questions nor nominalisation is used

Indicator OA4 - Punctuation

This signifies that writers are expected to use within-sentence punctuation such as semi-colons, colons or dashes appropriately and effectively.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - punctuation (OA4)
Code 1	Overall control of punctuation and effective use of within sentence punctuation
Code 2	Correct location of capital letters and full stops and use of some within sentence punctuation devices
Code 3	No attempt is made to use within-sentence punctuation devices
Code 4	Attempts are made to use full stops and capital letters

Indicator UA4 - word choice

In the writing of 'argument' the increased use of abstract vocabulary is required.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Word Choice (UA4)
Code 1	Use of abstract vocabulary throughout the script
Code 2	Use of abstract vocabulary in sections of the script
Code 3	Minimal use of abstract vocabulary

Indicator OA6 - Spelling

In written argument, the attention of writers is drawn to precision and accuracy in the selection of words. They are encourage to check their spelling of words, particularly those with a derivational ending.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Spelling (OA6)
Code 1	Accurate spelling of words with prefixes and suffixes
Code 2	Accurate spelling of common words
Code 3	Misspellings follow a systematic pattern
Code 4	Misspellings are unpredictable

Indicator OA7 - Paragraph divisions

It is expected that in written argument students organise their writing into paragraphs where all the information relating to a particular stage of the argument is grouped together. It is expected that such paragraphs are introduced by topic sentences which together provide a clearly defined structure to the writing.

| Key	Indicators of Achievement - Paragraph divisions (OA7)
Code 1	The whole text is divided into units with specific communicative functions
Code 2	Divisions are made throughout the text
Code 3	Divisions are made at points in the text
Code 4	No divisions are made

Indicator FA8 - Drafting

Reviewing or revising work is often seen as an onerous task and they are often at a loss to know which direction to take. Many students think that revising and redrafting work involves simple editing at the word level (spelling and punctuation). This indicator diagnoses whether students have produced more than one draft of a piece of text, revised in such a way that it incorporates more than checking spelling and punctuation. The appropriate form of revision, editing and redrafting at this stage would be for the final draft to be distinctly different to earlier drafts in structure, form and organisation.

Key	Indicators of Achievement - Drafting (FA8)
Code 1	Two pieces of text which have noticeable variation
Code 2	Two pieces of text
Code 3	Notes plus one piece of text
Code 4	One piece of text with subsequent amendment
Code 5	One piece of text

424

TEXT	PURPOSE IN DL	EXAMPLES	FEATURES/CHARACTERISTICS
1 text	conveying academic/ professional content	DL input text	fully-constructed 'linear text' full prose coherence & cohesion conversational style
2 metatext	organisation of DL text: • structure of text • chunking of argument • chunking of time	pre-input access devices - objectives, chapters, etc SAQ 0 - diagnostic pre-test argument chunking - titles, chapter headings	sequenced lists text organisation devices - titles, headings, etc metalingual comments - *coherence, direction, certainty, etc*
3 context • knowledge • situation	• relating to existing knowledge • recalling relevant experience • handling *intertext* by relating to previous reading or referring to further reading • applying to subsequent professional experience	• advance organiser • pre-reading tasks • pre-reading list • post-reading list • while-reading application tasks • post-reading tasks	frameworks of assumed knowledge structured application questions/tasks
4 co-text	• mediating text supporting content	definitions & glosses reference knowledge-extending SAQs	in-text glosses reference/discourse markers deconstructed texts - eg gapped texts
5 paratext	non-linguistic input to text • typographic • illustrative semi-linguistic output from text	typographic features: fonts, capitals, italics etc illustrations guided notes	non-linguistic semi-linguistic - notes (coherence but not cohesion)
6 hypertext	additional support outside input text	annotated bibliography further reading appendices boxed text	outside the main text
7 'retro-text'	reflection on input text	post-access devices • summary • post-tests	

Figure 2: A textual framework for distance materials
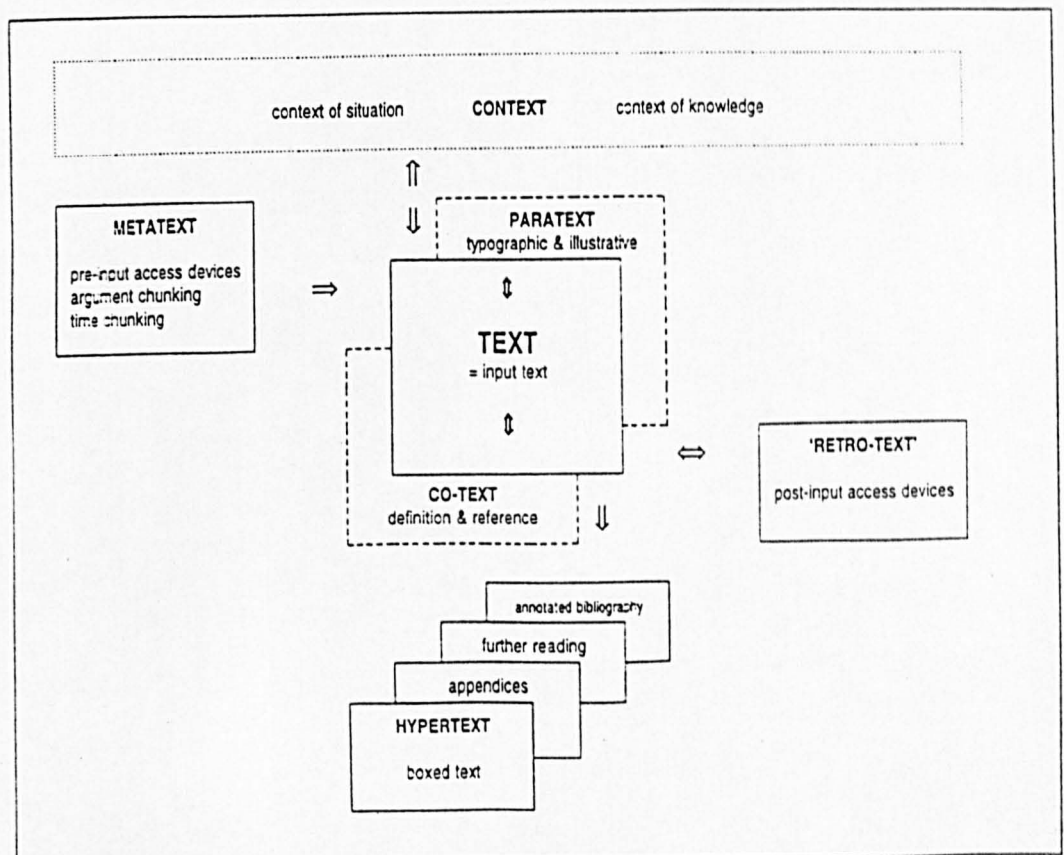
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442

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